

## "The Sower And The Seed"

Matt.13:1-23

We were studying I Thessalonians in our ZOOM Bible study this week, and a particular verse we read drew my mind back to these “**KINGDOM PARABLES**” our Lord spoke – “*For our gospel **CAME NOT UNTO YOU IN WORD ONLY**, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*”(I Thess.1:5) Having been deceived by and entrenched by a “false gospel”, and knowing what I thought in my lost estate of my PROFESSION of faith, this verse and these parables moved me to preach this message concerning true faith and true repentance, as opposed to a false profession of religion made by many under various circumstances. **Let’s read verses 1-3**. When Christ spoke to this “*multitude*”, He only spoke to them in **parables**, actually **EIGHT PARABLES** – “*All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them.*”(Vs.34) A “*parable*” is ‘an earthly story with a heavenly meaning’. If Christ’s **DESIRE** and **HIS DESIGN** was for all men and women without exception to be saved if they’d believe and accept Him as their “personal Lord and Savior”, **why speak in parables?** Why not speak with great plainness and openness of speech? Even Christ’s disciples made this inquiry – “*And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?*”(Vs.10) Our Lord didn’t hesitate in answering their question: “*He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.*”(Vs.11) **LET THESE WORDS OF OUR LOVING LORD SPOKE SINK IN!** We’ll see as we study this first parable of the Sower and The Seed, Christ **INTERPRETED** and **EXPLAINED** the meaning of the parable **TO HIS DISCIPLES**. Matter of fact, **HE TOLD THEM WHY** they could hear and understand His parables – “*Blessed are you eyes for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*” Isn’t that the case with all God’s redeemed in every generation – “*It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*”(Jn.6:45); “*He that is OF GOD, heareth God’s Word: you therefore HEAR THEM NOT, for ye ARE NOT OF GOD.*”(Jn.8:47); “*So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”(Rom.10:17)

Let’s read this parable of **The Sower And The Seed**, and then we’ll look at Christ’s interpreting His words to His disciples and its application both in **TIME** and to **ETERNITY** – **Vss.3-9**. If you’ll keep what I tell you in your mind, it will make Christ’s words easier to understand. With each of these **KINGDOM PARABLES**, the “*kingdom of heaven*” refers to the **VISIBLE CHURCH** as it exists in this present world, as well as establishing the eternal destiny of **ALL THOSE CHRIST REDEEMED** by His obedience unto death. In the “*kingdom of heaven*”, i.e., **the visible church**, there exists **all 4 of these hearers**, who all hear the message of the Gospel with their **PHYSICAL EARS**. Three of them **ONLY HEAR** with the natural ear, but one of them has been given the gift of hearing.

Drop down to Christ’s explanation of the meaning of this parable. Notice what He told them concerning their hearing – **Vss.16-18** – “*But blessed [are] your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous [men] have desired to see [those things] which ye see, and have not seen [them]; and to hear [those things] which ye hear, and have not heard [them]. Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.*” After this declaration that **THEY WILL HEAR** and **UNDERSTAND**, the **ETERNAL WORD** begins to

explain the meaning of the parable. Christ tells us that in the **KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**, i.e., in the visible church, there are 4 different hearers. **Let's look at all FOUR**.

The **FIRST HEARER** is described in **Vs.19** – “*When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth [it] not, then cometh the wicked [one], and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*” If you connect what Christ says here with the parable He spoke back in **Vss.3-8**, the “**sower**” is our Lord Himself, as well as all those He sends forth to sow, namely His Apostles, evangelists, pastor/teachers, and individual saints. The **SEED** sown by Him and all those that represent Him is the Gospel. Before Christ's ascension, He declared this responsibility for His people – “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen.*” (**Matt.28:18-20**) We are to preach the Gospel indiscriminately to all the Lord by His providence brings under our hearing. Those who we preach to, or share the Gospel with, are said by our Lord to be those that “*heareth the word of the kingdom*”, but they only hear it with the natural ear. The key is this – “*and understandeth it not.*” The word translated “*understandeth*” means ‘to set or bring together’ or ‘to put (as it were) the perception with the thing perceived’. In other words, they hear the Gospel with their physical ear, take the information into their physical mind, but because they are “*dead in trespasses and sin*”, they **cannot** and **will not** see the life or death issues of “sin, righteousness, and judgment to come.” Tragically, notice what happens to those who have no understanding – “*then cometh the wicked [one], and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*” What does the wicked one **CATCH AWAY**? Not the grace of God, because if the grace of God is bestowed, **ONCE BESTOWED** it can never be lost – “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*” (**Jn.6:45**); “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand.*” (**Jn.10:27,28**) What “*the wicked catcheth away*” is the word of truth from their memory. That's what the word “*heard*” means, ‘understanding, the faculty and seat of the intelligence’. The wicked one catches away the truth of the Gospel from their understanding in such a way that they aren't even aware of it. In the past, I thought these kind of hearers were the ones that turned out to be ungodly and immoral, but that's not the case. Remember, all these hearers are part of the **VISIBLE CHURCH**, so they can and often do continue in religion. But all they do, seeing they have no understanding of Christ as “the Lord their righteousness”, is dead works and fruit unto death. Our Lord described them this way: “*This is he which received seed by the way side.*” In other words, the true Gospel of grace had as much effect on them as seeds that fall “by the way side” or on the beaten path. I think of them as those Solomon described **TWICE** – “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof [are] the ways of death.*” (**Prov.14:12 &16:25**)

The **SECOND HEARERS** are brought before us in **Vss.20,21** – “*But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*” As with all the hearers, the **TRUTH** of the Gospel is declared in the stony ground hearers ears. Unlike the way side hearer, this one **HEARS** the word, and “**anon**” (which means **immediately or straightway**) with **JOY** receives it. In other words, they

claim they believe the Gospel of God's grace; claim they are justified by Christ's blood and righteousness alone; and even continue under a true Gospel ministry for some time. But here's the problem with them: "**Yet hath he not root in himself.**" The word translated "**root**" means 'the offspring or descendent of a person.' In other words, these hearers **ARE NOT "in Christ"**, nor is the truth of God's grace in them. The Gospel and the Christ declared by that Gospel aren't life or death issues with them. They don't "abide in the doctrine of Christ." **Notice what happens** – "**but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.**" When the heath of persecution over the Gospel comes, and tribulations heads their way – "**BECAUSE OF THE WORD**". The original word translated "**of the word**" is **LOGOS**, which means 'the essential word of God', **even our Lord Jesus Christ**. Because of Christ and His righteousness alone, "**by and by he is offended.**" The word translated "**is offended**" means 'to put a stumbling block or impediment in the way, upon which another may trip and fall'. They stumble at Christ alone as the **ONLY HOPE** and **CAUSE** of salvation. I know that because God's words tells us this is their case. The Apostle John wrote of these types of "hearers" – "**They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would [no doubt] have continued with us: but [they went out], that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.**"(I Jn.2:19); "**Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.**"(II Jn.9) They might continue in a visible church, but they **WILL NOT** and **CAN NOT** continue or abide in the truth the way our Lord said His disciples abide – "**As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**"(Jn.8:30-32)

Look at the **NEXT "HEARER"** - **Vs.22**. This group of hearers aren't profane and ungodly sinners, those unconcerned about the things of religion. These aren't men and women who persecute those who are religious. In fact these "hearers" show not only a love for the word, but appear to be those whose hearts have been broken by the hearing of the Gospel, and their consciences made tender because of the Gospel, even reforming their lives outwardly. Outwardly, they appear to be those who have truly received the word of truth in good ground, ploughed up by the Holy Spirit and the "thorns" plowed underground. But in spite of all this, notice what is said of them – "**and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.**" The things of time and sense are more important to them than Christ and His church. Don't get me wrong, true believers have things in this world that distress them, causing anxiety in their minds. Many true believers are blessed with great wealth in this life as well. So the issue isn't merely concern or wealth. But to these hearers who **ONLY OUTWARDLY** professed the Gospel, the things of time and sense "**choke the word**". This word "**choke**" means 'to choke utterly', or 'to press round or throng one so as almost to suffocate him'. Their spouses, their children, their job, their friendships with those who are "**of the world**", their success and possessions - all of it is more important to them, drawing them away from those means which point them to Christ who is the **ONLY TRUE, ETERNAL RICHES** to be found – Turn to **Heb.11:13-16; 24-27**. Listen to Paul – "**For here we have NO CONTINUING CITY, but we seek one to come.**"(Heb.13:14)

Let's close by looking at the **TRUE HEARERS OF GOD** – **Vs.23**. Luke writes of these same hearers, but his words are a bit different – "**But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep [it], and bring forth fruit with**

*patience.*”(Lk.8:15) A correct understanding of what is meant by this “*good ground*” is essential to a correct understanding of Christ’s words. Solomon asked this question: “*Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*”(Prov.20:9) Solomon also declared: “*For [there is] not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*”(Eccl.7:20) His father King David declared: “*The fool hath said in his heart, [There is] no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, [there is] none that doeth good.*”(Ps.14:1) Paul quoted David in his description of ALL MEN BY NATURE in Romans 3. **Job asked the ultimate questions:** “*What [is] man, that he should be clean? and [he which is] born of a woman, that he should be righteous?*”(Job 15:14); “*How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean [that is] born of a woman?*”(Job 25:4 **Here’s the question we have to ask and answer:** Since no man can make his or her heart clean, and since none possess “*an honest and good heart*”, how can any sinner’s heart be made “*an honest and good heart*”, able and willing to truly hear, receive, and abide in the truth? **ONLY ONE WAY – GOD MUST DO IT –** “*Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do [them].*”(Ezek.36:25-27) **NOTICE THE ORDER** – First, cleansed through Christ’s accomplished work of redemption, then in time regenerated and converted by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of God’s Gospel. **That’s exactly what Christ told Nicodemus!** These “*good ground hearers*” are elect sinners, those given to Christ in the everlasting covenant of grace, redeemed and justified by His obedience unto death, and born again in time by the Spirit, which always results with their hearing, receiving, believing, and continuing in Christ – “*Now the just shall live by faith: but if [any man] draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*”(Heb.10:38,39)

**Let me close with this:** All of these hearers **HEARD** the same exact Gospel message! The difference is that God Himself prepares the “*good ground*” by His sovereign grace, also giving the gifts of **TRUE FAITH** and **TRUE REPENTANCE** to every object of His love – “*And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*”(Acts 13:48) If we see and hear the **ETERNAL WORD:** “*Blessed are your eyes for the see, and your ears for they hear.*”