

I. Introduction and review.

II. Jesus speaks in parables. v. 4-10

- A. What is a parable? An earthly story with a heavenly meaning. 4:23 5:36 6:39 7:41-43**
- 1. Parables usually illustrate one particular spiritual truth.**
 - 2. Understanding this first extended parable is crucial. Mark 4:13**
- B. This parable paints a familiar picture for the original hearers. v. 4-8a**
- 1. This is how agriculture operated in ancient Palestine.**
 - 2. The Old Testament also uses agriculture as a teaching illustration. Isa. 55:10-11 Hos. 2:23 Jer. 31:27 4:3-4 Co. 1:6 Acts 6:7 John 15:2**
- C. Jesus uses parables both to reveal and to conceal the truth. v. 8b-10**
- 1. The parables reveal the mysteries of the kingdom to those who have ears to hear. v. 8b-10a 10:23-24 14:35 18:34 Mt. 13:16 Jo. 20:29 Is. 54:13 1 Co. 2:7 Eph. 1:9**
 - 2. The parables conceal the mysteries of the kingdom from those who do not have ears to hear. v. 10b Mark 4:34 Mt. 13:14-15 Isa. 6:9-10**
 - 3. God sovereignly reveals and conceals. v. 10 Mt. 11:25 13:12,14-16 John 9:39**
 - a. The Holy Spirit enables us to understand God's Word, which is foolishness to those who are perishing. 24:44-45 10:22 1 Cor. 1:18 2:14 Mt. 16:17 Jo. 6:44**
 - b. The Lord hardens those who are under His judgment. Ro. 1:18ff 9:15ff**
 - 4. Jesus' mission is like that of Isaiah. v. 10b Isa. 6:8-10**
 - a. Both are sent by God to a hardened people. Isa. 6:8 1:2-3 3:12-26**
 - b. Jesus, like Isaiah, is rejected by His own people. 4:24 7:30 John 1:11**
 - c. God judges the hard by making them harder as they hear His Word. Isa. 6:9-10 John 12:37-40 Acts 28:26 7:41,51 13:46-47 Ro. 1:24ff**
 - d. Those who cannot understand only have themselves to blame. 7:30-34,39 6:11 John 3:19 9:39-41 Ex. 8:15 14:8 Pr. 1:22 Acts 7:51-53**
 - e. As in Isaiah's day there is hope –the hardening of the nation does not preclude the fulfillment of God's promise. Isa. 1:21-26 7:14 9:1-7 11:1ff 40:1ff**
 - 5. The parable of the soils illustrates how all parables work. 2 Co. 2:15-16**

III. There are four kinds of hearers. v. 11-15

- A. Jesus explains the parable. v. 11**
- 1. The seed is the life-giving Word of God – the gospel of the kingdom. 1 Pe. 1:23**
 - 2. Who is the Sower? 4:43 9:1-2 10:1ff Mt. 13:37 28:18-20 Acts 1:8 Eph. 2:17**
 - 3. The soils represent different human responses to God's Word.**
- B. Do you have a hard unresponsive heart? v. 12**
- 1. Some hearers are never affected by God's Word. Ps. 95:8 Pr. 28:14 Dt. 10:16 2 Ki. 17:14 Jer. 7:26 Neh. 9:29 Mt. 21:33ff**
 - 2. Satan (the devil) is actively doing all he can to prevent people from hearing and believing the Word. 22:3-4 7:30 1 Pe. 5:8 2 Co. 2:11 4:3-4 John 8:44 Gen. 3:1ff**
 - 3. God's purpose is the opposite of the devil's. v. 12b 7:50 Ro. 10:9 2 Pe. 3:9**
 - 4. The problem is not with the seed or the Sower, but the soil.**
- C. Do you have a shallow weak heart? v. 13**
- 1. Some who initially respond to God's Word with great enthusiasm fall away (depart) when trials occur. Heb. 3:12 1 Tim. 4:1 Jo. 6:66**

2. Many professing Christians are unprepared for the hardships of discipleship. 9:23ff 12:51-52 2 Tim. 3:12 1 Pet. 2:21-23 1 Jo. 3:13 John 6:66 Mark 4:17
3. Is Jesus saying that people can lose their salvation? 1 Jo. 2:19,3-4 1 Co. 10:13 John 10:28 8:31 Mt. 7:21-23 Phil. 1:6 Js. 2:14-17 Ro. 8:31ff 1 Pe. 1:6-7
4. Only those who endure are genuine. Jo. 8:31 1 Pe. 1:4-7,23 Mt. 24:13 1 Jo. 2:19

D. Do you have an infested divided heart? v. 14

1. These people also initially respond to the Word, but their interest is choked out by worldly cares. Mark 4:19
2. Jesus makes it plain that His disciples can't have it both ways. 16:13 17:32 11:34 16:19 1 Jo. 2:15-17 Js. 4:4 1 Tim. 6:9-10
3. Those who are double-minded are unfruitful and ultimately fall away. 12:13-34 18:18-24 21:34 2 Tim. 4:10 3:4 Js. 1:8

E. Do you have a true responsive heart? v. 15 8:3,21 7:44-47

1. The same word which produced no lasting results in the first three types of soil is very fruitful when it is planted in good soil. Isa. 55:10-11
2. Characteristics of those who have genuine faith. 1 Thess. 1:2-10
 - a. They hear and accept the Word. Mark 4:20 Mt. 13:23 Acts 17:11 Deut. 6:4ff
 - b. They persevere through trials. 21:19 1 Pe. 1:6-9 Acts 13:43 14:22 Ro. 5:3-4 Rev. 1:9 2:2,19 3:10 13:10 14:12 Heb. 12:1ff
 - c. They are very fruitful. 10:28 John 15:1-8 Col. 1:6,10 Gal. 5:22-23 Mt. 3:10
3. What is the difference between these people and the others? 6:43-45 10:42 23:50
 - a. From the perspective of human responsibility, these people have true hearts which choose to receive the Word, persevere in faith and bear fruit. 6:43-45
 - b. From the perspective of divine sovereignty, the Lord draws and keeps them. John 6:44,37 1 Pe. 1:3-5,23 Eph. 2:1ff 1 Co. 3:7 4:7 Rom. 3:10ff Isa. 53:6

IV. Concluding applications: What are we to take away from this parable?

A. Jesus teaches us about the nature of His kingdom.

1. The kingdom of God is breaking into the world through Jesus – we are in an exciting season of sowing and reaping.
2. Don't be surprised when many reject our message. 2 Co. 2:15-16 Ps. 119:136
3. The kingdom is producing a remarkable harvest of souls in spite of the opposition of Satan and the hardness of men's hearts. 10:2 Isa. 55:10-11
4. Keep sowing the Word. 10:16 1 Co. 9:16 3:7 Gal. 1:8-9 2 Pe. 3:9 1 Pe. 1:23
5. Be careful not to give false assurance – not all who respond are truly saved.

B. Examine yourself – what kind of soil (hearer) are you? 8:18,8 2 Co. 13:5 Rom. 15:4 Js. 1:22,3-4 Isa. 40:30-31 1 Co. 15:2 Heb. 12:1ff 10:23 3:6 Mt. 7:20 John 15:5

Discussion questions

1. Why does Jesus speak in parables?
2. What is the main point of this parable?
3. What affect do the parables have upon those whose hearts are hard?
4. Why do some who initially respond to the gospel fall away?
5. Why is the Word successful in the lives of some hearers?
6. What evidence is there that you are good soil?
7. Who sowed the seed which bore fruit in your life? Have you thanked him/her?
8. Is Jesus implying that someone can lose his or her salvation? Explain.
9. How does this parable encourage sowers?
10. When and how should you give assurance to someone who professes faith in Christ?