

“The Parable of the Sower – Part 5”
“The Good Soil”
Mark 4:1-20
(Preached at Trinity, May 12, 2010)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We've been examining the Parable of the Sower, sometimes called the Parable of the Soils. As I've pointed out, it is important to understand the nature of parables. One of the chief rules of hermeneutics regarding parables is they teach one central truth. The central truth of this parable is: *To show the excellence of the Word of God as it is received into the heart of a sinner prepared by the Spirit of God.*

2. But we've also seen this parable is unusual in that each of the soils is parabolic in its own right.

In addition, Jesus had several other designs in telling this parable

1. To convince the multitudes that it isn't enough to hear the Word preached. Many hear and are not effectually saved
 2. To show that few actually prove to be right hearers of the Word. There are three types of ground which are bad - only one which is good.
 3. To show that some people go very far in professing the Gospel without ever being changed. Those stony place hearers receive the Word with joy and then fall away
 4. To show that grace is not in ourselves - the good soil is that which has been carefully plowed and prepared
3. So far we've seen three of the soil types:
 - A. **Wayside Soil** - describes the hardness of men's hearts. They are unresponsive to the preaching of the Word of God. Under the influence of the wicked one the good seed of the Word of God has no effect.
 - B. **Stony Ground Soil**
 1. The seed comes up quickly because it is shallow
 2. Two causes of withering - too shallow, no root
 3. This marks the impulsive hearer
 4. They are barren - they do not bear fruit. When difficulty, inconvenience, or suffering arises they quickly flee.
 5. The true convert shows evidences of Christian graces. He labors for the Kingdom. The true Christian will persevere
 - C. **Thorny Soil**
 1. These hearers appear to be better than the former two
 - a. Satan did not pluck the word from their hearts
 - b. They seem to have much deeper roots - their hearts do not seem so hard.
 - c. They remain longer in their profession. These corruptions slowly eat away at the soul.
 2. But they did not bear fruit. Why? Because the things of this world choked out any passion for Christ.

3. There are three things Mark records that cause this professor of religion to fall away
 - “The cares of this world”
 - “The deceitfulness of riches”
 - “The lusts of other things”
 4. This is a great danger for all who profess to know Christ. There are many who have made professions of faith in Christ but bear no signs of fruit. The cares of this world have choked any passion for Christ as thorns choke the life out of a farmer’s crops. We must guard our flesh with great diligence.
4. This brings us to the final soil type. Of the four types of soil this is the only one that brought forth a fruitful harvest. Each of the other types were barren. Remember, the main scope of this parable:
To show the excellence of the Word of God as it is received into the heart of a sinner prepared by the Spirit of God.
- I. But some fell upon good soil and brought forth fruit"
- Mark 4:8** - "Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."
NAU **Mark 4:20** - "And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."
- A. Every farmer knows the characteristic of good soil
 1. It is soil that is rich in nutrients
 2. It is soil that has been carefully plowed and prepared.
 - B. The issue with the poor results of the previous examples, the wayside, the stony, and the thorny soils had nothing to do with the seed. It had everything to do with the soil
 1. In the Gospel of Matthew the seed is described as good seed. It represents the Word of God
 2. This seed is effectual in its operation – It accomplishes the will of God
NAU **Isaiah 55:11** – “So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.”
NAU **Hebrews 4:12** – “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
NAU **Romans 10:17** – “So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”
 - C. There are three characteristics of this good ground
 1. He hears the Word – both physically and spiritually
NAU **Mark 4:9** – “And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."
 a. Jesus isn’t talking about physical hearing. He is talking about the ability to understand it on a spiritual level

- b. The lost man is naturally ignorant to the things of God
NAU **1 Corinthians 2:14** – “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”
NAS **Romans 8:7** – “because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*,”

2. He receives the Word

- a. This means he embraces it as God’s Word – infallible, absolute authority
NAS **1 Thessalonians 2:13** – “And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God’s message, you accepted *it* not as the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”
- b. Paul described it as holding fast to it
NAS **1 Thessalonians 5:21** – “But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good;”
- c. Again, we see it with Lydia
NAS **Acts 16:14** – “And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.”

3. He brings forth fruit

II. Good ground presupposes a work of God's Spirit

A. There is no soil naturally good

NAS **Romans 3:10-12** – “as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; ¹² All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one.”

1. The difference is in God's making

- a. No one can make himself good. There is no natural goodness.
 b. There must be a new birth – a transformation
 c. Only God can bring this about

Again Lydia

NAS **Acts 16:14** – “And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.”

d. We also see it clearly in 1John 5:1

The ESV translates it most accurately

ESV **1 John 5:1** – “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whomever has been born of him.”

The word for “born” is a perfect passive participle – “has been born”

- e. We refer to this independent work of God as monergism. God works without the contributing work of man.
- 2. God changes our heart from a stony heart to a fertile heart
 - a. Conviction of sin – may last a long time
 - b. Illumination - God prepares us that we might hear the Word
 - c. Regeneration
- B. God makes our heart fertile - we bring forth fruit
 - 1. The unregenerate heart is always unfertile
 - 2. The Christian is never unfertile - he will bear good fruit and continue to bear good fruit - we were chosen to be holy or to bring forth good fruit
 - 3. God never accepts the fruit of an unrenewed person though he may preach, teach, read, hear, labor, give

^{NAU} **Isaiah 64:6** – “For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”

III. What are the various types of fruit Christians bear?

- A. There are different degrees of fruit
 - 1. Every Christian bears fruit

^{NAU} **Matthew 7:16** - "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ "So then, you will know them by their fruits. ²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*."
 - 2. Although every Christian bears fruit, we don't all bear fruit to the same degree - they bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."
 - 3. Human responsibility cannot be ruled out here
 - a. While salvation, justification, regeneration is monergistic God commands us to duty: prayer, study, meditation, obedience, watchfulness. We are to watch over one another
 - b. This stresses the importance of our church covenant
- B. Saving faith produces fruit – we could spend much time on this: but a few . . .
 - 1. Repentance, holiness, good works

Ephesians 2:10 – “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

2. Paul spoke of the “Fruit of the Spirit”
Love - for God and our fellow man – a passion for Christ
Joy - the thrill of being redeemed and adopted
Peace - the satisfaction of reconciliation
Longsuffering – (patience) patient perseverance
Gentleness – (kindness) kindheartedness towards others
Goodness - our actions towards others
Faith - or faithfulness - dependability in the kingdom
Meekness - not striving for mastery over others
Temperance – (self-control) everything in moderation
3. Saving faith produces a spiritual mind

Conclusion:

1. Do you bear evidence that God’s good Word has fallen upon fertile soil? Have you received it with the joy that perseveres?
2. Are you bearing the fruit of true faith and repentance?