

JESUS THE STORYTELLER

The Sower and the Soils

NOVEMBER 4, 2018 / NOVEMBER 7, 2018

TODAY'S TEXT

Text: **Mark 4:1-20**

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. ² He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: ³ "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times." ⁹ Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." ¹⁰ When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. ¹¹ He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹² so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" ¹³ Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? ¹⁴ The farmer sows the word. ¹⁵ Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. ¹⁶ Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ¹⁸ Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; ¹⁹ but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²⁰ Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

FIRST THOUGHTS

"The kingdom of God, through the preaching of the gospel, will break into this world like seed being sown by a farmer. It will fall in various places, receive various responses, but eventually experience a tremendous harvest." Daneil Akin

We see it everyday. From restaurants to movies to politics and everything in between, people can have a wide range of reactions to a single event.

- Share a time you disagreed with a friend about something trivial.
- Share a time you disagreed with a friend about something important. How were they different? How were they the same?

In the same way perspectives vary regarding issues in our day-to-day lives, Mark 4 points out how and why perspectives can vary regarding the gospel. How are we to share the message in such a way that people won't turn from it and from us? The "good" news is that this is not our kingdom, it is God's.

"What we may realize is that this parable is not primarily an exhortation to be fruit bearing ourselves but is rather an explanation of the mixed reception to Jesus' kingdom message... This parable is primarily descriptive of what happens when the Gospel seed is sown, by Jesus himself and, by extension, by his disciples as well." Jonathan T. Pennington

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

One of Jesus' most famous parables – the parable of the sower and the soils – was recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke, which are called the Synoptic Gospels because they tell the story of Jesus from a similar perspective with similar content. This story communicates how God spreads His message and ultimately how we must accept or reject His good news.

Mark gave the setting of this parable by telling us that Jesus was teaching "by the sea." The crowd that gathered around Him to listen became so large that He got into a boat so everyone could better hear Him.

At this point, we need to remember a distinction in all the Gospel writers between "disciples" and "the crowd." Mark was clear to tell his readers that while Jesus' disciples were present (see Mark 4:10-13, where Jesus addressed them privately, away from the crowd), the primary audience for this parable was the crowd who had come to listen to Jesus and to learn from His teachings.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

> Read Mark 4:1-4, 14-15

- ° What are some characteristics of a heart receptive to seeing and hearing the good news of the gospel?
- ° What are some things that can get in the way of a heart understanding the good news of the gospel?

> Read Mark 4:5-6, 16-17

- ° What are some characteristics of a true conversion?

> Read Mark 4:7, 18-19

- ° What are some worries and desires of this world that can "choke the word" and make it unfruitful?
- ° What role does the church have in affirming conversions and warning of false conversions?

> Read Mark 4:8-9, 20

- ° What new perspective are you taking from Jesus' parable of the sower and the soils and its explanation?
- ° In a culture where the kingdom does not seem to be growing, how does this parable encourage you?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

The parable of the sower and the soils is a helpful reminder of three truths.

First, Jesus teaches us that the word is to be cast among all. The sower did not evaluate the ground before he cast his seed. In the same way, we have a duty to proclaim to all people the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection and its effect on our sin and rebellion. The sower tossed his seed liberally as he went, and so should we.

Second, many who hear of God's kingdom ultimately will reject it. While we should feel a burden for those who reject the gospel, there is no reason to feel guilty for their choices. The Scriptures are replete with references that God's kingdom isn't the majority (with language like "remnant" [Jer. 50:20; Rom. 11:5] and "narrow gate" [Matt. 7:13-14]).

Third, there will be a minority who will receive the word and will produce a miraculous harvest of grace-filled, kingdom-affirming works. This should be satisfying to our souls. We can rest confidently that our efforts at sharing the truth about Christ will have an effect on some people. We can rejoice that God's kingdom is spreading and reproducing in miraculous ways despite the number of times it is rejected.

UPCOMING LESSONS

11/11/18	Jesus the Storyteller Week 2: The Unmerciful Servant
11/18/18	Jesus the Storyteller Week 3: The Good Samaritan
11/25/18	No LifeGroups
12/02/18	Jesus the Storyteller Week 4: The Father of Two Lost Sons

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

5th - Job 28-29; Galatians 1-2 | **6th** - Job 30; Psalm 120; Galatians 3-4 | **7th** - Job 31-32; Galatians 5-6 | **8th** - Job 33; 1 Corinthians 1-3 | **9th** - Job 34; 1 Corinthians 4-6 | **10th** - Job 35, 36; 1 Corinthians 7-8 | **11th** - Psalm 122; 1 Corinthians 9-11