**Parable of the Sower**

**R. Giglio 3/26/20**

Eyes on Jesus – Our only hope, is to keep our eyes on him during these days.

Mark 4 begins with Jesus teaching in a boat to the crowds gathered at the lakeshore. He begins by using *parables.*

Jesus gave us about 50 parables, nearly 1/3 of his teaching was thorough parables. A *parable* is a story about a familiar subject to teach an important moral lesson. This was a common method of teaching and storytelling in the Ancient world in many cultures, but Jesus used His parables to teach us *important eternal truths about God and His Kingdom.*

Jesus was a “creative author”. He made up short stories that were brilliant and imaginative. His parables were carefully constructed with; character development, plots, conflicts, settings, themes and a significant ‘moral to the story’ each time.

They were not necessarily “Religious” works. They didn’t contain stories about God, Angels, Prophets, and scripture. They were about; Farmers, Kings, sons & Daughters, Seeds, Fields, Rocks, Birds, Soil, Plants, Coins, Sheep etc. etc. All elements that symbolized something else.

In fact if you collected all the short stories that Jesus authored, and had them published Into a book to sell at Barnes & Noble or Amazon.com, they probably would not even be in the “Religious” section, they would be in the “Fictional Short Stories” section along with other ancient authors like *Homer, Aesop* or *Aristophanes.*

He did this for many reasons, but he would use parables that;

 *“conceal truth, in order to reveal truth.” [repeat]*

Jesus spoke publically very often and would often say some very controversial things. Some of the things he taught, and the truth he revealed infuriated the Pharisees. It also frustrated them, because He would use parables with symbolism to condemn their attitudes and actions, yet they could not pin him to that offense because His words were cleverly disguised within a short story.

Later in his ministry Jesus spoke very plainly condemning the Pharisees directly knowing that they *would* take offense and arrest him just before Passover at the time He was to be crucified. *(His plan all along was to delay the inevitable)*

As we begin Mark 4, Jesus has already become very popular. He has now gathered all 12 of his Apostles, he has done many miracles, and cast out many demons. He also healed on the Sabbath, which in the thing that angered the Pharisees so much that they were plotting to kill him.

He now continues His teaching through parables.

**Mark 4:1-2**

 “And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat *in it* on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. 2Then He taught them many things by parables, …and said to them as He began His teaching…. “Listen!”

**(video) Mark4:3-8**

3“Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. 4As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. 5Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. 6But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn’t have deep roots, it died.7Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain. 8Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”

*[let’s hear it for the seeds that fell on fertile soil!]*

**Mark 4:9-20**

**9**And He said to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

**10**But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. **11**And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, **12**so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive,
And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And *their* sins be forgiven them.’ ”

*[This is quoted from Isaiah 6, immediately follow Isaiah’s “Heneni – here am I send me” commissioning.]*

(What Jesus is saying, is that there will be those who hear the word (the Pharisees) who can see what’s happening, and hear what is being said, but the condition of their heart is so hardened, that they can’t perceive or understand it.

**Mark 4:13-20**

**13**And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand *all* the parables? **14**The sower sows the word. **15**And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.

**16**These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; **17**and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.

**18**Now these are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word, **19**and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

**20**But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept *it,* and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

**Jesus does not *always* explain his parables, but he did this time.**

**Here are his explanations:**

**The Farmer plants seeds by taking God’s Word to others:**

**Seed = God’s Word.**

**In this text the seed is God’s Word, (the message of His Kingdom and salvation that Jesus was preaching to them about. )**

**It’s clear here that there were varying measures of success and all of it had to do with the *condition of the soil.***

**The seed was the same, but the soil was different.**

1. **Seed on the Footpath (hard soil) – Those who hear the message but Satan immediately takes it away.**
2. **Seed on Rocky soil – Those who receive it but have no roots, they fall away when problems come.**
3. **Seed that fell among thorny soil – Overcome by the worries and desires of this life and bears no fruit.**
4. **Seed on Good Soil – Those who Hear and Accept God’s word. Allow it to cultivate within them and experience abundant blessing.**

In this parable, three quarters of the seed were wasted.

Only the seed planted in *good soil* bore fruit. The key is the soil.

***Mark 4:15***

*15And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their* ***hearts.***

**Our hearts are the soil**

The condition of our hearts when we receive the word of God makes all the difference in how effective it will be.

All four scenarios have different results:

1. **If our hearts are hardened**,

 it will simply not take root. – Our hearts can become like soil in the foot path, pounded down and hard as a sidewalk. Maybe due to bitterness, unbelief, unhealed wounds or disappointment. Our hearts can become so hardened that even when we hear the Word it does not penetrate and take root.

Sometimes the hardest people to share the Word with, are those who once believed and then allowed their hearts to grow hardened.

**Heb. 3:12-15** **12**Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; **13**but [[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+3&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-30009b)]exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. **14**For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, **15**while it is said:

“Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” ( quoting Ps. 95:8)

1. **If our hearts are shallow**,

the seed may take root, but when problems and persecution come, they are overwhelmed. Our shallowness did not provide for growth and strength. These are those of us who have not allowed God to discipline us and develop us through years of perseverance and faithfulness.

**James 1:22** Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Many people hear the word, over and over again, but don’t take it seriously, and don’t “take it to heart”. It’s not enough to just listen to sermons, or Bible teaching and then just go about your business with no change. The Word should instruct us on how to live, and we should follow those instructions.

1. **If we dwell among thorns**.

Our hearts receive the word and allow it to take root and grow up, but the problem is the other things that we’ve allowed to grow along with it. Thorns. Jesus says that the thorns are things like; the worries of life, OR the lure of wealth and the desire for other things. These are things that will always compete for resources with God’s will in your life for time, attention, and devotion. They are thorny and if left unchecked will crowd out the good things that God has for you.

*[ it may very well be that in this season, God has deliberately taken away things in your life that Jesus calls “Thorns”]*

1. **If our hearts are like Good Soil**,

we will be fruitful. This is those who hear with a pure heart. They allow God’s word to cultivate within them and teach them through perseverance and faithfulness. Jesus says that these are those that hear and accept God’s word and produce a harvest of 30, 60 or even 100 times as much as has been planted.

This is His desire for all of us, “to be fruitful and multiply”

 (Blessing from Psalms:)

**Psalm 1:1-3 “**Blessed is the one
    who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
    or sit in the company of mockers,
2but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
    and who meditates on his law day and night.
3That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
    which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
    whatever they do prospers.”

God is the sower, he does the planting, He’s the one who places the seed (the word of God) upon our hearts. The “*condition of our heart”* is up to us, It’s what determines how fruitful that seed will be.

**James 1:21** “So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept ‘the word God has planted in your hearts’, for it has the power to save your souls.” (NLT)

How are you today when you receive God’s Word?

What about this **word right now**?

Is it hard sometimes to really believe it?

Do you struggle with doubt?

Do you ever listen and agree with the word, but go away and have a hard time applying it in real life?

All of us, at one time or another struggle with this.

Sometimes, our hearts don’t respond as they once did.

If so, It may be, that our hearts have become Fallow? (Fallow: Old farming term to describe a piece of land that is normally used for farming but that is left with no crops on it for a season in order to let it recover its fertility. During this time it is usually hard, rocky and overgrown by weeds, like the soils that Jesus described.)

But there is a purpose for the fallow season, it’s to restore the land of nutrients and soil, so that it can be fruitful again.

Hosea 10:12 (NKJV)

**12**Sow for yourselves righteousness;
Reap in mercy;
Break up your fallow ground,
For *it is* time to seek the Lord,

“IT IS TIME TO SEEK THE LORD”

Farm Bureau Website:

American farmers don’t have the option of staying at home and shelter-in-place during the Corona Virus. They have to go out and work, during the planting season, because if they don’t go now, and if they wait it out, there will be no food supply for the rest of the year.

**“Empty shelves can be frightening, but empty fields and barns would be devastating.”**

We have a limited time to act as well This global catastrophe has broken up a lot of people’s fallow ground. There is an openness to the Word of God like very few other times in history. People are questioning their mortality and eternal destiny. (Bible sections on Walmart and Target are sold out, more interest church online presence than ever before, many are asking questions about what the spiritual significance is of all this).

The seed is falling on ground all over the world, and it’s up to us to cultivate, fertilize and nurture it to fruition.

In order to do that we need to have our hearts right and ready.

If you feel it’s been hardened, shallow or choked by thorns, ask him to heal you.

It may require Him breaking your heart for the lost all around us!

Song lyrics*: “Heal my heart and make it clean,*

*Open up my eyes to the things unseen, Show me how to love like You have loved me
Break my heart for what breaks Yours, Everything I am for Your kingdom's cause”*

Let’s make this our prayer as we walk into this next season of unprecedented challenges, but amazing opportunities.

God’s Promise: He will give us a new heart:

**EZ. 36:26-30**  ”I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. 28Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. 29I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. 30I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field”