

April 2007

Parable Of The Sower

“He spake by a parable:” Luke 8:4

Intro:

Many have wondered over the years why is it that some people believe on Christ and some don't. Many Pastors have also wondered as to why some believers continue on with the Word over the years, while most seem to fall by the wayside. The Lord gives us understanding in this matter in the parable of the sower.

A parable is a method of communication to get a point of truth across to an intended audience. The Greek word is *parabole* which refers a placing of one thing alongside another thing for the purpose of comparison. It was a subdivision of the literary device of an example. If one wants to teach a truth you can use an example to illustrate it. If one needed to go further into the example, then something that is commonly known and understood would be brought in alongside the unknown truth as a comparison to aid in understanding.

In the New Testament the parable is used of a story with a hidden meaning without pressing every detail of the comparison. The emphasis of the parable is on its interpretation not its application. It is important that one avoids two errors in this. The first error is missing out on the important points. And the second one is trying to interpret every detail.

Another thing about the use of parables in the New Testament is that parables are designed to make things clear and plain to the intended audience, but kept hidden from those not designated. As the Lord stated in Luke 8:10, *“And he said, **Unto you** it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.”*

The Lord is using a commonly understood concept found in everyday life, that of a farmer sowing seeds out in his field to illustrate a spiritual phenomenon. They not only grasped this concept, for it was going on all around them everyday, but they understood even the smallest details of the example.

This parable is divided up into four groups: the wayside, the rocks, the thorns and upon good ground. Each group has certain things involved in it, certain things occurring in it and certain results as the outcome.

Once the Lord establishes the example used in his parable, which they immediately understand, then he goes on to use it to explain what is occurring on a spiritual level with the Word of God.

A. The Wayside

1. The Physical Concept

“A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.” [Luke 8:5](#)

The first thing we want to do is look at the physical example first, then at its spiritual interpretation. When planting seeds today large farms will use different types of machines to plant the seeds, so that they are laid down where the farmer wants them without a lot of waste. But in those days the seed was distributed by the sower carrying a bag with the seed in it and with a sweeping motion he would take his hand and cast the seed out. He could cover a large area, (larger than planting each seed by hand), but he did not have the control over where every seed landed.

As the result, some of the seed would fall by the way side. The word for *way side* is *hodos*. Now *hodos* referred to a path that people walked on. And if one had a field, you could be sure that close by, or at the edge of the field, was a path that people used. So, as the farmer was scattering his seed, invariably some of the seed would fall on the path.

When comparing the dirt of the field and the dirt of the path you would find out that they are exactly the same kind of dirt except for one thing, because the people used the path over the years their constant walking on it had compacted the soil to the place where it would be as hard as a rock. And soil that hard does not allow for the seed to put down its tender roots.

Another problem is the concept of trampling down, *katapateo*. *Katapateo* speaks of walking on something, to tread upon it, to trample it underfoot. If seed is there, then it is going to be disturbed, kicked around and ground down with the result that it will not germinate and put forth roots.

So the seed just lies there on top of the soil and along come the birds and the birds will do what they normally do and that is eat. To them the seed is just a free lunch and they eat it and are on their way.

There's a lesson here for all to learn about living life immersed in the society of our respective nations and communities and the negative impact that negative, hardened people can not only have on our souls, but our families as well. And to see the need to move our families to areas more conducive to spiritual growth and the things of the Lord.

We need to look at the crowd around us and ask, where are they going, what are their values, what are the things that are driving them, do I want to be like them, do I want to end up like them at their age? And if you don't, then we are going to have to make some serious changes. We are going to have to change our priorities from money, homes, cars the accumulation of things and our careers to making our souls and the souls of our families the most important priority

2. The Spiritual Concept

“Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.” [Luke 8:12](#)

The field is the world, the sower is the Lord, the seed is the Word of God and the soil represents various types of people found in the world. And the first type for consideration is the *way side* type of person. The way side refers to the dirt being trampled upon by the multitudes. The point is that being around the common man on the street and exposing your soul to all that is found with the multitudes will end up hardening the heart!

And Satan is always there waiting, like the birds in the air, to snatch the Word out of hearts. The unbeliever needs to believe on the Lord as soon as he hears the Gospel, and the saved need to believe on it and act upon it lest they “*forget*” it.

The Word of God is being scattered among these places even today, but the impact of the crowd of the masses on the soul is that people rend it under foot as they go on their busy way in life. Even in the big cities today you will occasionally find someone standing on a sidewalk with a sign stating to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, or quoting [John 3:16](#), but sadly most people walk right by it considering the man a kook. Why is that? Their hearts are hard! They have spent too much of their lives around people with the result that the impact of all the people on their souls has hardened their hearts toward the Gospel with the result that they don't get saved! And, as we see from the passage, the devil comes along and takes the Seed/Word away from their hearts, *airo*, so they won't believe on Christ and be saved.

What one finds in the masses of humanity is nothing but the expression of the old sin natures that they acquired from Adam and Eve. The coarse jesting, the lusting, the drive for success, ambition, money, material things, the harshness, the hatred, the bitterness and anger, the hurt, all these things and more are found wherever society accumulates and the effect they have on people's hearts is that it hardens them!

The Lord is talking about the condition of people's hearts in the matter of salvation and Christian growth and comparing it to the conditions found in soil. But there is one thing that people can do in the matter of Christian growth that the soil can't do and that is **walk!** Walk to an area where the seed can grow and thrive. If you have been given a precious thing, such as the Word of God, then you need to recognize how precious it is and make certain that its environment is conducive to growth.

Lot was a righteous man in the Old Testament, but he made a tragic error by moving down to the area of Sodom and Gomorrah. Now the reason why he did that was because of money, security, community position, success and all the other things that people are motivated by to move to the city. But oh what tragic consequences it had for his entire family. His wife died, his two daughters got him drunk and committed incest with him, and everything he had worked for his entire life went up in smoke. Not to mention that there was zero growth in his spiritual life.

B. The Rocks

1. The Physical Concept

“And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.” [Luke 8:6](#)

Redding is located at the northern end of the Sacramento valley here in California. Now down on the valley floor there is rich topsoil that goes way down. Almonds, walnuts, rice, vegetables and just about everything else grows quite well there due to the depth of the topsoil and the availability of water.

But when you get off the valley and come up on the mesas you find a very different type of “soil”. (Actually it's rocks held together by red stuff). Olive and citrus trees that are cultivated do quite well on it. But, if you were to go scatter seed on it, the hot sun, (up to 120 degrees in the summer), will just bake the seeds. North of town there is soil, but right under the soil are rock formations, which are not always visible, but there never the less.

The same thing is going on in our parable here. When the farmer scattered his seed, some of it would fall by the way side where people walked, and some of it would fall on soil that had rock or rocks under the surface.

The problem is that when the seed germinated and started to send down its root it could only go far because the rock would stop it. The stopping of the growth of the root meant that the plant could not get the precious water and nutrients out of the soil. With the result that when the hot sun baked down on the plant it would wither up and die.

Nature has some interesting things to teach us. When the forest is gone, due to over logging, or forest fires, they found out that the hard soil being baked by the hot summer heat does not allow for trees to come back. The forestry found out there are cycles that nature goes through in getting trees to grow back in our area.

The first thing that happens is that weeds sprout up immediately. This is done to prevent the erosion of the top soil and to provide a little shade for the dirt. And after about forty years, the next thing that begins to start growing is the brush, usually buck brush or the manzanita, which further stabilizes the soil and providing more shade. And after about another forty years, you will find that the scrub oak starts to appear. Its seed, the acorn, is able to send down a long taproot to get at the water so it can survive the hot summers. The oak trees not only further stabilize the soil, but provide even more shade and a cooling effect. Then after around forty more years the bull pines start to grow, another forty years the sugar pines, then finally the Douglas firs make their comeback.

Now that's the way nature works in the wild, but when you're planting domestic seeds that will bring forth food for consumption, then things have to be different. These seeds are not designed to sprout and grow laying down on the top of hardened soil. Nor are they designed to send forth a shallow root and hit rock, then be able to survive the hot summer months. They must have water and the right kind of soil conditions.

2. The Spiritual Concept

“They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.” Luke 8:13

The first group, those along the wayside, refers to the unsaved who have heard the gospel, but did not act upon it by trusting Christ as their Savior. While this group of people are those who heard the Gospel and responded to it by believing in Christ. It tells us that *they welcomed the Word with joy.*

In this group we have those who believe on Christ, that's the seed taking root; there is some growth but their roots are shallow caused by rock underneath the surface. It has to go through the hot summer months, and as the result of the heat of the summer and the shallow roots the plant withers.

Heat, the hot summer and droughts all refer to the concept of **testing**, of having to go through the trials of life. Psalm 1:3 addresses this very issue, *“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”*

The background for this verse is a tree planted in a garden by a gardener versus one that is out in the wild and how the two of them fare when a drought, or time of testing, comes upon the two trees. The one tree in the wild withers because it doesn't have any water due to the drought. But the other tree is able to not only survive the drought due to the little streams of water that the farmer directs around the trees, but is also able to bear fruit.

The tree in the farmer's garden is a metaphor for the believer in Christ who is in his right geographical location, under the teaching of Bible Doctrine by his right Pastor-Teacher and his soul is nourished. When the storms of life, the trials, the droughts, the testings hit him, then he is able to survive them and to flourish, to go on in the Christian life.

The group of believers here are not able to do this because they have no root in their souls due to something hard beneath the surface of their souls. On the surface they appear to be just fine, **but there is something hard beneath the surface that they haven't dealt with that is preventing their spiritual growth.** It may be bitterness of heart; it may be a hardened heart, but they have something hard beneath the surface.

The word for *temptation* is *peirosmos* which actually refers to a very serious form of testing that is difficult to go through; one that can shake the very core of your existence. It is the fiery trial that Peter wrote about, which he also went through, and that probably all believers in time will go through. It is this category of believers, however, when they go through them, instead of dealing with their problem, they react with bitterness and anger, get mad at God, rebel at the whole concept and peel off from the true Christian life and the Word. They may attend some church, but it's only for show. In their heart they failed the test and no longer live the faith rest life under grace and Bible Doctrine.

Luke 8 uses the word *peirosmos*, or an extreme form of trial that one goes through. While in Matthew 13:21 and Mark 4:17 they use the words *thlipsis* and *diogmos* to explain the circumstances around these believers. And Mark tells us that they endure for awhile, or for a season, *proskairos*.

Proskairos meant that something went on for awhile, it has the idea of a temporary aspect to it. *Chronos* is a word used for a duration of time that emphasizes the aspect of quantity, while *proskairos* would bring out the idea of the **quality** in it. It doesn't tell us how long a period of time that we're talking about, it could be long or short, but that something was going on for a period of time, but it stopped short of bringing fruit to completion.

Luke tells us that the thing that stops some believers from going on to maturity and bearing fruit is having to go through a serious trial, *peirosmos*, in their life. It may be a loss of a parent, a child, loss of health, money, job, home, social position, it could be going through a divorce. They had to go through something very hard and painful in their lives, (most people in time go through them as well), but they reacted in pride and bitterness and stopped living the faith rest life around the Word.

Matthew and **Mark** use the word *thlipsis* to bring out the idea of pressure; something most are quite familiar with, whether the pressure of the work place, the home, health, raising a family, commitments we have, society, natural disasters, etc., etc., the list can be quite long. I think most of us would like to have life where every thing is coming up roses, but that's not the reality. The reality is that there are all sorts of things that put pressure on our souls, but the issue really is, are we going to handle pressure with the spiritual problem solving devices that God has supplied in the filling of the Holy Spirit, prayer, faith and getting the teaching of the Word in a local church, or are we going to react over the pressure and peel off? These believers have an unrealistic expectation of what the Christian life is about. They thought that now that they are saved everything is going to be “coming up roses”! And when it isn't, they get mad and walk away from the spiritual life dynamic of the faith rest life in the Word.

Matthew and Mark also bring in the word *diogmos* for persecution. Many believers pull away from the Word and the faith rest life, (which gives them their growth as believers), when they are persecuted because they are believers in Christ, or because they hold to certain doctrines the Bible teaches! The idea of persecution did mean to be put to flight; it can entail having to go to another area for survival, but it can also bring in the ideas of social ostracism in your community, ridicule by others, not being able to get a job because you're a believer, or not having people buy from your store because you're a believer. **The persecution can be physical, economical or social.**

What this tells us is that there are **three areas that certain believers stumble in** that keeps them from going on in doctrinal teaching, in grace, in the faith rest life, in the little churches that teach the Bible that God put them in, and they are: **one**, having to go through a very serious trial, or trials; **two**, getting tired of being under pressure all the time; and **three**, being persecuted in one form or another because of the Word. **They get tired of being the scandal over not being “politically correct”, (offended)!**

C. The Thorns

1. The Physical Concept

“And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.” Luke 8:7

Now the word for thorns here is *akantha*, which doesn't refer to a specific type of plant, but plants in general that have thorns on them. The *pyracantha* plant comes from the Greek *pur* and *akantha* meaning fire thorn. It has long thorns on it and red berries.

But it's a long list of plants that have thorns on them, the buck brush out in the woods, the blackberry vines, rose bushes; some plants are cultivated for domestic consumption, others for their beauty, and others just grow wild in the woods.

In the passage it's referring to the brambles and briars outside the cultivated field. In those days a farmer would have a field that he worked year after year, and outside the field would be the thorny bushes and what not growing wild. As he sowed his seed some of it would land outside the cultivated area into the thorns.

And there is one thing that nature teaches us is that plants fight for survival, and to survive they must have sunshine, water and soil. The competition for these three elements is fierce and generally only the strongest will thrive or survive. Weeds and brush are very strong, determined and rigorous, and if they are in competition with domesticated seeds, then they will win out choking the other seeds.

Thorns are mentioned throughout the Word as a reference to sin, the fallen nature of man, God's curse on man and the earth, and the society of unsaved man under Satan, also referred to as the World System. *“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: **cursed is the ground** for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; **Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee**; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;” Genesis 3:16,17*

When the Lord was crucified a crown of thorns was placed on his head signifying that he had taken the curse of our sin on himself. *“And when they had platted a **crown of thorns**, they put [it] upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King **of the Jews!**” Matthew 27:29*

The reference to thorns here is a reference to man's sinful nature, his sin nature driven activity, and/or the societies he creates on earth that reflect his sinful desires and actions and that also provide the opportunity to express his sinful desires. This is a reference to the indwelling old sin nature of the flesh that we inherited from Adam and to the cosmos diabolicus, or the World System run by Satan, and the spiritual problem that they create for Christians and their spiritual growth who become involved or absorbed in them.

*“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, **abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;**” 1 Peter 2:11*

2. The Spiritual Concept

“And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” Luke 8:14

The word for *cares* is *merimna* which speaks of the problem of worry. And worry, as we know, is an unbelief problem. It stems out of our basic nature of insecurity coupled with unbelief, then from out of that present fear comes the problem of worry.

Now worry can come about from basic survival issues, what shall we eat, what shall we wear, where shall we live, how are we going to make it; all those things that proceed out of basic survival concepts. But in context it's also tied in with the ideas of making money and getting ahead in life. Most of the worry problems that present day Christians have are connected to with their lust for money, pleasure and material things. **It is their lust for money and pleasure which has placed an additional burden on them, which causes them to worry about how they're going to get it and keep it!**

One of the main reasons why believers in Christ do not go on to maturity in the Christian faith and produce the fruit the Father has ordained for them, is that they fail to walk by faith. The fact that there is worry in the passage tells us that **they are worrying instead of living the faith rest life and worry hinders their spiritual growth!**

So many believers think that they have to have this thing or that thing, to be able to do this or that, after all everyone else is. But they need to learn to live by the KISS principle, Keep It Simple Stupid. **They need to learn to be content with what the Father provides them and not always wanting more!** *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and **be content with such things as ye have**: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Hebrews 13:5*

The word for *riches* is *ploutos* and it simply meant to have an abundance of something. If we have our basic needs met that is sufficiency. If we have an abundance of things over our basic needs, then that is the word riches; we have more than enough. For a complete study on this decadent phenomenon in present day Christianity see my On line study called, “The Laodicean Church”.

There was a time in America when people were just basically content and happy if they were **getting by**. But that has all changed and most believers are not content with that, now they want to **get ahead!** Having sufficiency in their basic needs is not the issue with them any more. Now they want to have **more!** They want **money!**

But this has created a serious problem for their spiritual development. In fact, the Lord states that it is one of the reasons why many believers do not go on to spiritual maturity, are not maintaining the faith rest walk in their lives and are not producing spiritual fruit. They are being choked by their desire for money! They are focused on money, material possessions, success and the desire for money.

For that spiritual seed that we received in the new birth to grow and become what God has ordained for us there has to be the environment of the filling of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the Word of God. And by the action of bringing all these other things into our lives we are depriving our spiritual life from its much needed nutrition, thus allowing the quest for money to choke out our spiritual growth.

Matthew says the same thing, but he brings out the added element of *the deceitfulness of riches*, και η απατη του πλουτου. Deceit, *apate*, meant to give a false impression. We think that money will make us happy, give us what we want, fill the void in our soul, or enable us to have what we want. But it won't! The soul was created by Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ and will only find its comfort, completion, satisfaction and joy in fellowshiping with Jesus Christ over his Word through the filling of the Holy Spirit!

When the term *go forth, poreuomai*, is used here it speaks of our journey in life. We are all on our own journey through life as pilgrims in this world. What this looks at is the person who has been on life's path and came to Christ for salvation. He believes on the Lord and is now on a new path. But as he journeys on his love for the Savior was not as strong as the day that he put his faith in him. Riches and pleasure now take over his heart. What Christ did for him on the cross no longer touches his heart as it once did.

The thorns growing up and choking the seed tells us of **the growth of old sin nature activity in his soul, plus his involvement in the world system**. Now he wants the things that the world has to offer, money, success, homes, cars, toys, travel, fun, the social life, partying, being accepted in the community, being a part of the community, being involved in community affairs; these are the things that choke out his spiritual growth.

The word for *pleasures, hedone*, refers to things that are pleasurable to the body, things that please the senses, things that are fun. The Israelites did the same thing throughout their entire history, eating, drinking, having fun and amusing themselves. "*Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*" 1 Corinthians 10:7

The word for play here is *paizo* and it did deal on the one hand with pagan revelry, but its basic meaning was to play, to have fun, to amuse oneself, to dance, to joke around, to act in a childlike manner, to act like children, (sounds like America doesn't it). To play is a good idea because it brings in the whole concept of the behavior of children where much of their life is given over to playing, which is fine with children, **but not with adults!**

Children playing is innocent fun and a part of childhood. But when adults play, not only are their toys more expensive, but they neglect the responsibilities of adult life. But there is another problem that comes in with childish adults and that is their games are often sexual because of the activation of hormones in puberty. They become involved in sex outside the marriage, promiscuous sex and treating marriage like a game. A nation cannot survive when you have adults acting irresponsibly like children. Their behavior is destructive to the family unit, to the national entity and to any spiritual growth and production they might have as mature believers in Christ.

D. The Good Soil

1. The Physical Concept

I imagine most of us have gardened to one degree or another and we all know that if you want to have a good garden the one thing you have to have is good soil. And to have good soil you must be able to work in it without having to use a jack hammer, it has to be of sufficient depth so you can grow your potatoes, carrots and what not, and the soil must be rich in nutrients. You can't put in the plant what doesn't exist in the soil.

So gardeners will spend a lot of time and money to build up compost piles, bringing in good top soil if they don't have it, perhaps developing worm beds, adding minerals to the soil and rotating their garden plots and crops around each year just so they can have good rich soil in which to plant their vegetables.

For they know that if they have properly prepared the soil and have good seed stock, and add the right amount of water and be sure to keep the weeds out of it, then they are going to have an abundance of good healthy tasty vegetables.

2. The Spiritual Concept

For the seed of the Word of God to grow in us making us into a healthy mature believer producing the fruit God intended for us, there has to be two things present. One, the doctrinal teaching of the Word of God, and two, the filling of the Holy Spirit.

And we will also have to remember to keep the soil of our souls workable; we can't allow our souls to become hardened, to become inflexible. Many believers get set in their ways as they get older. They think they know it all and no one can teach them. **To keep on growing in grace and the Word of God you have to be teachable! Legalism and pride prevent us from being flexible and gracious.**

Another thing that we have to always be on the watch for concerning our souls is the allowing of the noxious **weeds** of bitterness to spring up in our souls. We have to always **be on the watch for bitterness**, as the gardener looks out for weeds in his garden, and as **soon as we spot them, then we have to pull them up roots and all!**

One must also be aware of the **time factor**. It takes time from the planting of the seed, to the growing of the plant, to get to the place where the plant produces fruit. And so it is in the spiritual life. From the time that someone is saved it takes time to grow and to get to the place where they produce spiritual fruit. And even in that the fruit will not be as abundant as it will later on in maturity.

And the key to all this for the believer in Christ is that they have to be under the doctrinal teaching of God's Word, they have to live in the filling of the Holy Spirit, they have to walk by faith in their lives and they have to pass their tests and keep moving forward.

Pastor Mike

