

## 11. Jesus Gave the Parable of the Sower and the Soils

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example the importance of yielding to the Holy Spirit moment by moment. That is the only way we can experience the Lord working through our lives instead of trying to do things in our own strength. In our topic today, we will see that we want our children to understand the parable of the four soils that Jesus gave.

We have seen that great crowds came to see Jesus heal and hear Him teach. As a result, Jesus went to the Sea of Galilee. Mark 4:1-2 say, “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. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching.” When Jesus had large crowds come to hear Him, He would often go either to the mountains or to the sea to teach the crowds. This did two things. First, it provided large open places where the crowd could gather to listen to Him. Second, the mountains and the water both make it easier to hear a person speak when there is a large crowd.

When Jesus saw the large crowd that was gathering, He got into a boat and sat down. Then, the boat was taken a short distance out into the water. Meanwhile, the entire crowd was on the land facing the sea and Jesus as He sat in the boat. Then, Jesus began to teach the crowd of people by giving many parables. This was a common way for the Jews to teach in that day. However, Jesus had a different reason for teaching with parables than most of the people who taught with parables. Matthew 13:34-35 says, “All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ‘I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.’” In these verses, we see that Jesus used parables to speak about things that had been kept secret since the creation of the world and had never been revealed in the Old Testament.

However, even these things were kept secret from most of the people. Matthew 13:11-13 says, “He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.’” Here, we see that Jesus used parables to reveal truth to the disciples and to hide that truth from the multitudes, because they did not repent of their sin of unbelief.

The first parable Jesus gave was a parable about a sower and the various kinds of soil on which His seed landed. In Mark 4:3-9, Jesus said, “‘Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, *that* some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some *seed* fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other *seed* fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang

up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.’ And He said to them, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’” Jesus began this parable by telling the people to “Listen” and concluded by saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Jesus knew that most of the people would not really listen or understand.

In this parable, we see that Jesus spoke about various kinds of soil that received seed. In our next topic, we will see that Jesus explained to the disciples what was taught by these various kinds of soils. We will see that the various kinds of soils are the different ways that people respond to the Word of God and the message of the Gospel. Whenever we share the Word of God with others, we are sowing seed. We cannot know the hearts of the people with whom we are sharing the Word. However, God gives a promise in Isaiah 55:11, “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.” Here, God gives the promise that He will accomplish His purpose as we are faithful in sowing the seed of the Word of God.

At the same time, it is important for us to know that there will be different responses to the Word as we share it with others. That is one reason why it is important for us to understand the four kinds of soils mentioned in these verses. First, we see that some of the seed fell on the wayside. The wayside is the road or the path that goes through a field. The dirt of the road or path becomes hard and so the seed stays on top of the ground. We see that the birds will find that seed sitting on the path or the road and will eat it.

Second, we see that some seed lands on the stony ground. Stony ground means that there are rocks just below the surface of the ground. Because the seed is just barely under the dirt and sitting on top of a rock, the sun will warm the rock and the seed will spring up quickly. However, when the sun gets hot, the plant will immediately wilt because there is no moisture on top of the rock to water the seed. As a result, the seed does not develop any roots, and the sprout withers and dies.

Third, we see that some seed lands on the thorny ground. The thorns and the weeds are already there and have taken root and so their roots get all of the water. In addition, the thorns and weeds grow quickly so they soon choke the small sprouts before they can develop into plants. As a result, the seed in the thorns also yields no crop.

Fourth, when a sower plants seeds, many of the seeds land on the good ground. Jesus said that these plants grow and produce a crop. When a farmer plants grain seeds, he will usually get about eight or ten grains for each seed that he planted. However, Jesus said that when the seed of the Word of God is planted, it will produce a great harvest. Some seed will produce thirty grains. Other seed will produce as much as sixty grains. Some seed will even produce as much as a hundred grains. That is a very great harvest! Jesus said that the Word will produce a great harvest when it is shared with others. That is why it is so important that we share the Word of God instead of our own opinions.

Then, Jesus made a very important statement to the crowd. Jesus said to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” This same statement is made to each of the seven churches in Revelation

chapters 2 and 3. In 1 Corinthians 2:12-14, we read, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” In these verses, we see that only those people who have spiritual life are able to hear with understanding. As a result, we see that the natural man cannot hear with understanding, but Jesus wants everyone with spiritual life to understand.

Jesus explained to the disciples why He taught with parables when He was alone with the disciples. Mark 4:10-12 says, “But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. 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, 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.’” Here, we see that most of the people who heard Jesus speak that day enjoyed the parables Jesus spoke, but they had no idea what those parables meant.

Jesus said that the parables explained the mystery of the kingdom of God. In the New Testament, the word “mystery” is used to talk about something that was not revealed in the Old Testament but was revealed in the New Testament. The phrase “kingdom of God” is found sixty-nine times in the New Testament. We see that the kingdom of God is both present and future. In Luke 17:20-21, the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. Those verses say, “Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.’” In these verses, we see that in the present, the kingdom of God is within the hearts of all true believers.

However, there is also a future kingdom of God when the promises about the kingdom will be fully fulfilled. In Luke 22:16-18, Jesus said, “‘For I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, ‘Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’” Six times, in Revelation 20:1-7, we see that those verses talk about the future time when Jesus will rule on the earth for one thousand years. Revelation 20:6 says, “Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” This kingdom is still future.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Christ taught about both a present and a future kingdom of God. The present kingdom of God is in the hearts of all Christians, because we have the Holy Spirit living within us. In the future, Jesus will have a literal rule on the earth for one thousand years. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand both the present and future kingdom of God.