

## 25. Jesus Taught the Parable of the Sower

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to clearly explain to others how they can receive forgiveness of sin and receive eternal life. Jesus continued to share that message as He traveled to various areas. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus traveled to many cities preaching the kingdom of God. We will also learn about one of the parables that Jesus taught as He spoke to a large crowd one day.

In Luke 8:1-3, we read, “Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve *were* with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities--Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.” We saw in an earlier topic that Jesus chose the twelve to be with Him that He might send them forth to preach. Here, we see that Jesus took the twelve along with Him as He went throughout the area preaching in the various cities and villages. Jesus was showing the twelve what to share and how to share it as he shared the good news about the kingdom of God in the various cities.

We see that the kingdom of God is mentioned seventy-one times in the New Testament. The kingdom of God is used to speak of all those who repent of sin and come to God through Jesus today. The kingdom of God is also used to speak of the time when Jesus will rule on the earth for one thousand years as mentioned in Revelation 20:4-6. Many references talk about that future kingdom. However, Luke 17:20-21 says, “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 this verse, we see that the kingdom of God is within the hearts of those who truly repent of their sin of unbelief and place their faith in Jesus.

When Jesus was brought to Pilate before He was crucified, Pilate asked Him the question, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered that question in John 18:36-37, “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’ Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’” Here, we see that the kingdom of God includes all those who hear the voice of Jesus and place their faith in Him. That was the message that Jesus taught as He traveled to various cities along with the twelve.

We read that several women that had been possessed by evil spirits had been healed. Some had also been healed of various physical problems. Three women in particular are mentioned. Jesus set Mary Magdalene free by casting seven demons out of her. Joanna was the wife of the man who managed the business affairs of Herod. Susanna is also mentioned by name. In addition, we see that there were many other women whose names are not mentioned. These women had also become disciples of Jesus and they helped Jesus in His ministry by providing the money Jesus

needed for His expenses and the expenses of the twelve as they traveled from place to place.

One day, a large crowd gathered to hear Jesus teach. Luke 8:4-8 says, “And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: ‘A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.’ When He had said these things He cried, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’” The people had come from many different cities. Jesus often taught by a lake or on a mountain when a large crowd came to hear Him so that everyone could hear.

Jesus used a parable as He spoke to this large group of people. The word translated “parable” was used by Jesus to speak about something in daily life that everyone understood to teach something about spiritual life and often to teach an important lesson about the kingdom of God. Since they were probably on a hillside, it may be possible that they could see a person sowing his seed in a nearby field. If so, Jesus used something that they could see happening nearby at that very moment to teach an important spiritual truth. In this parable, Jesus may have been pointing to a person sowing seed on a field by throwing the seed one handful at a time. In the parable, the seed fell on four kinds of ground. We will see that those four kinds of ground provided the lesson that Jesus wanted to teach His disciples.

We see that some of the seed fell on the wayside. The word translated “wayside” means *the path through the field or the road that was beside the field*. That seed just lay on the top of the ground so the birds quickly came and ate that seed. Some of the seed fell on rocks. The rocks hold the heat of the day so that seed was the first to start to grow. However, those plants were also the first to die because they could not get water or any other form of moisture since they were on rocks. Another part of the seed fell in the places where there were also a lot of thorns or thistles. Those thorns grew much more quickly and took both the moisture in the soil and also prevented the sun from getting through to the plants that were just starting to grow. As a result, those plants also died because they could not get the things that they needed to grow.

However, when any sower sows seed, much of the seed falls on good ground where it can grow and produce a good crop for the sower. Jesus said that the seed that landed in the good ground grew and produced a crop that gave the sower a hundred heads of grain for each seed that was planted. Then, Jesus said that those who were really listening would be able to hear and understand the meaning of the parable. The crowds enjoyed hearing the story of Jesus and then they left and went their way.

Luke 8:9-15 says, “Then His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘What does this parable mean?’ And He said, ‘To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that “Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.” Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience.” To the crowds, that was just an entertaining story; to the disciples, it was a very important spiritual lesson.

The disciples came to Jesus after the crowds left and asked Him what this parable meant. Before answering that question, Jesus explained why He spoke to them in parables. Jesus said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’” As the crowds heard Christ teach, they gained knowledge but they did not gain understanding. They knew the parable but they did not know what it taught. Those who are not Christians cannot understand what the Word of God teaches. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “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.”

Then, Christ explained to the disciples that the seed is the Word of God. The various kinds of soils are the hearts of the people who hear the Word of God. Those whose hearts are like the road or the side of the road are those who hear the Word of God, but the devil immediately removes the Word from their hearts and those people do not give the Word any further thought. Those whose hearts are like the seed on a rock get all excited when they hear the Word of God, but the Word does not take root in their lives. Such people profess to believe the Word for a little while, but when temptation comes they turn away from the Word of God. Those whose hearts are like the seed that fell in the thorns are those who hear the Word, but their focus is on their problems, their riches or their pleasures. Such people hear the Word of God, but it never takes root in their hearts because their problems, riches or pleasures choke out the Word.

In contrast, the hearts of those who are like the good ground hear the Word of God with a heart that is open and prepared to receive the Word of God. John 8:47 says, “‘He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.’” Those who are like good ground have hearts that really hear the Word of God, place their faith in Christ and obey the Word of God. Because their hearts develop endurance, they begin to bear spiritual fruit. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that as they share the Word of God, He works in the hearts and lives of people. Those who respond in their hearts will bear spiritual fruit. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to bear spiritual fruit.