

Theme: The parable of the sower, the seed, and the soils teaches the secret of the Kingdom of God - that it has broken into the world in the Person, teaching, and work of Jesus, that is rejected by many, but that the Word of Jesus will bear great fruit in the lives of those who hear and embrace it.

I. Intro - Brown Thrasher

- A. Growing crops in our garden; lots of obstacles!
- B. Rocks, weeds, drought - and a brown thrasher!
- C. Jesus uses this to teach us about His Kingdom

II. The Priority of This Parable

- A. This parable is given priority among Jesus' parables
 - 1. It is listed first in the parable sections of Matthew, Mark, and Luke
 - 2. It is the only parable where Jesus' interpretation is given in Mark 4
 - 3. The parable, questions, and explanation are 50% of the chapter
 - 4. It is the parable that Jesus introduces and ends with the command to "HEAR"
Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed...⁹ Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."
Mark 4:3, 9
 - 5. Jesus indicates understanding this parable will help us understand the other parables
Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?" Mark 4:13
 - a. This one seems more straightforward than others
 - b. This one is the foundation on which the other parables will expand
 - 6. We need to HEAR this parable!

- B. The parable of the sower, seed, and soils is critical for our understanding of Jesus, His ministry, His Kingdom, and our own faithfulness as His disciples.

III. The Parable, Its Interpretation, and Application

- A. The parable itself
"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, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times."⁹ Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Mark 4:3-9
 - 1. A farmer sows seed, looking for a crop
 - 2. Three out of four descriptions of the outcome of the sowing are negative - no crop from the effort (After Hours will unpack these a bit more)
 - 3. The fourth outcome described produces a great crop - multiplied thirty, sixty, or one hundred times!
- B. The interpretation - the secret/mystery of the Kingdom
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 parables¹² so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" Mark 4:10-12

1. Another 'sandwich' formed by Mark to help us understand (the question and answer came later)
2. This is about the 'secret/mystery' of the Kingdom
 - a. This is the only use of μυστήριον in Mark
 - b. This word does not mean mysterious or unknown but rather something that was not expected and is surprising and that therefore many miss.
 - c. It is used 8 times in Daniel 2 (the only place it is used in the OT) - which is about the dream of Nebuchadnezzar about the coming of God's Kingdom
 - d. In both Daniel 2 and here one can not force understanding of the mystery/secret of the Kingdom - it must be given by God's revelation
3. The secret of the Kingdom begins with the fact that it has arrived in the Person, teaching, and work of Jesus, the Messianic King - One Who was so unexpected and lowly!
4. The secret of the Kingdom is further the fact that it is not recognized and is rejected by many - the point of the quote from Isaiah 6 in v12!
 - a. Many thought when the Messianic King and Kingdom arrived all would immediately submit or be destroyed.
 - b. But many in Israel had rejected God's Word through Isaiah - and many rejected the Word through the King that Isaiah had prophesied would come!
 - c. As we will see in future parables, the secret of the Kingdom is that it does not come all at once but rather grows in stages - which should have been known from Daniel 2, but was missed by most then and now!
- d. The Kingdom has arrived as the Word is sown, but there is a long season before the final harvest arrives.
5. The secret of the Kingdom is given to those on the 'inside' but those on the 'outside' do not understand.
 - a. This is a reference back to Mark 3 where Jesus' family and others are 'outside' and opposing Jesus, but the true disciples are 'inside' and gathered around to hear, receive, and obey His Word.
 - b. The secret of the Kingdom is revealed in the fact that the religious authorities and Jesus' biological family - who we would think would embrace Him - reject Him, while the tax collectors and sinners - who we would think will be uninterested or hostile - welcome Him joyfully.
6. All of this explains why Jesus is facing so much opposition and so much of His preaching and ministry seems 'unfruitful'. The problem lies not with the Word but with the hardness of those who refuse to hear it.

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. Mark 4:14-19

 - a. This is why 3 out of 4 descriptions have the seed hit bad soil and be stolen, choked, and unfruitful.

- b. The secret of the Kingdom is revealed in the fact that the religious authorities and Jesus' biological family - who we would think would embrace Him - reject Him, while the tax collectors and sinners - who we would think will be uninterested or hostile - welcome Him joyfully.
7. This also explains why the disciples and others have recognized and responded to Jesus and the Kingdom
- Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop — thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.” Mark 4:20
- a. The final description of the seed - those who truly hear the Word of the Kingdom
 - b. Despite all the obstacles, the Word goes forth and bears fruit in those who truly hear, receive, and embrace it.
8. The parable of the sower, the seed, and the soils teaches the secret of the Kingdom of God - that it has broken into the world in the Person, teaching, and work of Jesus, that is rejected by many, but that the Word of Jesus will bear great fruit in the lives of those who hear and embrace it.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I see the mystery of the Kingdom?

1. God's Kingdom is not what we expect!
2. Most in Jesus' day were looking for a Messiah to crush the Romans and a Kingdom that would come all at once and immediately destroy all opposition.
3. Many Christians have also wanted that type of Kingdom - where we have power, where God's Word is honored, where righteousness is embraced and evil punished, etc.

4. This false expectation can leave me disoriented and confused when my experience does not line up with my expectation!
5. But our King was rejected, called demon-possessed, and ultimately crucified!
6. Much of the seed seems to fall on bad soil - Satan deceives, the world opposes, people are lured away by their own desires.
7. This false expectation has led to God's people turning to other things to attempt to bring about what they expected - revolts, Crusades, and political machinations.
8. Many American Christians today are disillusioned as it seems that things are going against what we expected - and we are being tempted to put our trust in politicians, cultural influencers, and the latest fad.
9. Jesus has told us what to expect in the parables!
10. Jesus has told us what we should expect based on His own life experience!
A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!
Matthew 10:24–25
11. Do my expectations line up with the experience and teaching of Jesus?
12. But don't be discouraged - the parable ends with a great crop, and Jesus' life ends with resurrection!

B. Do I see the power of the Word?

1. Don't miss that the seed of the Word faces many obstacles - but it is powerfully fruitful!
2. Our hope is in the Word of God - not our wisdom or power, or the weapons and ways of this world!
3. This should lead to 2 responses from us:
 - a. We must personally hear and receive the Word constantly
 1. v20 all the verbs shift to present tense!
 2. To be fruitful we must keep on hearing, keep on receiving/accepting - and then it will keep on producing fruit in and through us!
 3. Like the manna in the wilderness, God feeds us with His Word for each day - and we must come back tomorrow!
 - b. We must spread the Word prodigally, wastefully!
 1. The sower spreads seed EVERYWHERE
 2. he does not try to determine which soil will be good - He just spreads the seed!
 3. The kingdoms of man call this wasteful and foolish, but the Kingdom of God calls this faithful and wise!
 4. Politics, cultural influencers, and the latest fad are impotent to open the eyes of those blind to Jesus but the Word of God can do this!
 5. Share the Word - and leave the results to God!!
4. Take heart - the Word is powerful to make us fruitful and to accomplish God's Work and make the Kingdom spread and grow!

C. The Table

1. 1 Peter 1:22-2:3 - born again through the Word
2. Come taste and see that the Lord is good!

The Sower, the Seed, and the Soils

Mark 4:1-20
March 26, 2023
Communion
Psalm 67

Teaching keywords: Kingdom of God; evangelism and missions; Word of God

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, ² that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. ³ May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. ⁵ May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁶ Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. ⁷ God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him. Psalm 67

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, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." ⁹ Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him 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?"

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