

- ful life--are the hope of the world.
- B. How does the good soil differ from each of the other three?
1. From the wayside, in that he understands and receives the word.
 2. From the stony ground, in that he becomes firmly rooted and grounded in the word: In the faith that is in Christ Jesus.
 3. From the thorny ground, in that he patiently and courageously endures, and is not overcome by the world.
 4. From all the others, in that he alone is fruitful.

CONCLUSION -

- I. The success of sowing depends upon (1) the work of the sower, (2) the condition of the soil, and (3) the power of the seed.
- II. But the emphasis in this parable is upon the condition of the soil.
- III. Characteristics of an honest and good heart (Luke 8:15).
 - A. It hears the word gladly (Acts 17:11; Luke 18:8).
 - B. It holds it firmly, standing fast in the faith (1 Corinthians 16:13; 15:58).
 - C. It brings forth fruit with patience (John 15:8; Gal. 5:22,23; 2 Peter 1:5-8).
- IV. All that Jesus Christ, God the Father, and Christians can do for you will not save your soul unless you wish to be saved!
 - A. Your heart is "the deciding factor:" Not just the seed but the nature of the soil (mind/heart).
 - B. Each of us falls into one of these categories Jesus mentioned.
 - C. "Take heed how ye hear" (Luke 18:8). Are you listening to "the word" of the Lord?
 - D. Does the word of God have free course in you now?

STUDIES IN MARK--LESSON EIGHT The Parable of the Sower Mark 4:1-20

INTRODUCTION -

- I. A parable is literally the placing of one thing beside another; hence, a comparison. "Parable" is from the Greek parabolē, "I place beside" in order to compare.
 - A. It is a means of illustrating truth by the use of familiar facts.
 - B. A parable differs from fable in that it is based upon things possible vs. things in the realm of the impossible: "literal, historic facts or supposed cases which may occur."

II. REASONS FOR SPEAKING IN PARABLES (Mark 4:11-13; Matthew 13:10-17).

- A. Parables made the truth simple and clear to the truth-seeker, yet hid it from those who could not or would not see with their eyes or hear with their ears.
- B. Jesus designed them to avoid offense to the hostile, or the unprepared, and as a judgment upon the wilfully blind.
- C. To enable the true disciple to better understand the things concerning the kingdom of God.
- D. By parables Jesus made his lessons both portable and permanent.

III. TEACHING IN PARABLES BY THE SEA (Mark 4:1,2).

- A. In a boat-pulpit, slightly separated by the multitude--an ideal setting, for a most practical teacher.
- B. This is a lesson on the importance of good soil--human soil.
- C. What you learn and become depends as much or more upon you than upon anything else! You are "the deciding factor."
- D. The keynote to this parable is "Hearken" (listen)--take heed how you hear (Mark 4:3,9).

DISCUSSION -

- I. THE WAYSIDE SOIL (4:3,4,15).
 - A. Some seed fell on a road, footpath, or ground with hard surface.
 1. Birds came and devoured it straightway.
 2. On these the seed was utterly wasted.

3. The hard-hearted, indifferent type; cold, cynical.
- B. Why did these hearers not respond?
1. Such hear "the word of the kingdom" and understand it not (Matt. 13:19).
 2. Their hearts hardened by sin, "Then cometh the evil one and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart."
 3. The soil was not lacking in fertility--soil was so hard the seed had no chance at all. The result: No life.
 4. Hard hearts lock the door in Christ's face (Revelation 3:20).

- C. Is the soil to blame for being so hard (James 4:8)?
1. If it is the soil of human understanding and response, Yes!
 2. Too many are quick to blame the sower or the seed, and correspondingly slow to blame the soil: Pharaoh; Felix; etc. (Matt. 13:14,15).

II. THE STONY GROUND SOIL (Mark 4:5,6,16,17).

- A. A thin layer of soil, with a solid rock base just underneath.
1. In this, there is a quick reception and joyful response.
 2. The sun quickly caused the seed to spring up, but just as quickly caused it to wither.
 3. The emotional, shallow, impulsive type: Moved more by feeling than by reason or conviction.
- B. Why did these hearers fail to bear fruit?
1. Was it because their response was too quick? No.
 2. Was it too much enthusiasm? No.
 3. Neither was it lack of fertility.
 4. They were as quick to quit as they were to begin: "No root" (4:17). "No deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away" (4:5,6). Not sufficiently grounded, "in love" (Eph. 3:17) or in Christ (Colossians 2:6,7).
- C. Is this soil responsible for its shallow depth?
1. If it is the soil of human understanding and response, yes! (James 4:8).
 2. But someone says, "There were tribulations and persecutions." Yes, but the same sun that brought death to the wheat on thin soil brought

- brought life and harvest to that in good soil.
4. And so it is with tribulation and persecution: "How do you count" (James 1:2-4)? Do you have the conviction, courage and strength to endure? The result was life, but only momentary (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18; Heb. 5:12-14).

III. THE THORNY GROUND SOIL (4:7,18,19).

- A. In this the seed grew up splendidly: Life resulted.
1. But the thorns grew up and choked it: No fruit to perfection was produced.
 2. There was lack of harvest: "It becometh unfruitful" (4:19).
 3. This type is and represents the divided mind or affection with mixed motives.

B. Why did these hearers not yield fruit?

1. Was it lack of fertility? No.
 2. It was lack of attention in soil preparation, weeding, or cultivation.
 3. Like the rest, the trouble was in themselves: "It becometh unfruitful" (4:19).
 4. Jesus mentioned four thorns which choke:
 - a. Cares; worry: "fear-thought" (4:19; Matt. 13:22; Luke 8:14).
 - b. Deceitfulness of riches: trust in wealth; covetousness.
 - c. Love of the "pleasures of this life" (Luke 8:14).
 - d. "Lusts of other things" (Mark 4:19).
- C. Is Christianity a kill-joy?

1. No indeed! It brings the most abundant and lasting joy to life.
2. But the acid test of amusements is this question: Do I let the second best crowd out the best?
3. Do I let anyone or anything crowd Christ out? "No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4).

IV. THE GOOD GROUND (4:8,20).

- A. Some seed "fell into the good ground:" honest and good hearts (Luke 8:15).
1. In this soil life and fruit was produced in abundance.
 2. Some produced 30, 60, and some 100 fold.
 3. These, the honest and good heart, and the fruit-