

Jesus – The King of the Jews #34

The Parable of the Sower

Matt 13:1-23

Introduction:

1. This is the second time that Jesus preaches to multitudes of people
2. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus pointed out the differences between the OT way of doing things and the NT way
3. In this teaching, Jesus uses parables to teach the people
4. We must be careful in interpreting parables
 - a. What Jesus meant as a broad principle, we might interpret too specifically
 - b. We must take parables as far as Jesus did and no further
5. Were the disciples wondering, “What is going wrong?” “Why are people not accepting the King and His kingdom?”
 - a. Is there a problem with the King or His message?
 - b. In this parable there is nothing wrong with the farmer or the seed
 - c. The problem is with the seed

I. **The Place: The Seashore – vs 1-2**

1 The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. 2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

A. **“The Same Day”**

1. This was the day on which Jesus’ mother and brothers came looking for Him in 12:46-47
2. They probably wanted him to stop the preaching and teaching that would someday cost him his life
3. He had healed the blind and dumb demoniac
4. He had charged unbelieving Pharisees of committing the unpardonable sin
5. Jesus had declared that unbelieving Jews would be condemned by believing Gentiles on the day of judgment
6. He had warned the people about the danger or moral reform without spiritual rebirth

B. **“Sat by the Sea Side”**

1. In His early ministry Jesus spent more time inside homes and synagogues
2. As His ministry progressed, he was more and more rejected by the Jews and spent more time outside – on the seashore, mountainside and countryside

C. **“The Whole Multitude”**

1. Jesus remained immensely popular with the common people
2. Great multitudes still gathered to him to hear him speak and see him heal
3. As the crowd pressed him, Jesus got into a boat and pushed off from the shore a little and sat down to teach
4. Probably the beach sloped up from the water and each person could see and hear the Master

BYZ **Matthew 13:1** Ἐν δὲ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἐξεληθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκίας ἐκάθητο παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν.

BYZ **Matthew 13:2** Καὶ συνήχθησαν πρὸς αὐτὸν ὄχλοι πολλοί, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ πλοῖον ἐμβάντα καθῆσθαι· καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἐπὶ τὸν αἰγιαλὸν εἰστήκει.

And all the multitude stood on the beach (kai pas ho ochlos epi ton aigialon histēkei). Past perfect tense of histēmi with imperfect sense, had taken a stand and so stood. Note accusative also with epi upon the beach where the waves break one after the other (aigialos is from hals, sea, and agnumi, to break, or from aissō, to rush). Jesus had to get into a boat and sit down in that because of the crush of the crowd.

BYZ **Matthew 13:3** Καὶ ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς πολλὰ ἐν παραβολαῖς, λέγων, Ἰδοὺ, ἐξηλθεν ὁ σπείρων τοῦ σπείρειν.

II. The Plan: To Speak in Parables – vs 3a

3 And he spake many things unto them in parables...

A. "Parables"

1. Parable = para – beside and ballo – to throw or cast
 - a) The idea is placing something next to something for comparison purposes
 - b) A spiritual or moral truth could be more easily understood by a physical example
 - c) A common or observable object was used to illustrate a spiritual principle or truth
 - d) The known elucidated the unknown
2. Teaching through parables is effective because it helps make abstract truth more concrete, more interesting, easier to remember, and easier to apply to life.
3. When a truth is externalized in the figures of a parable, the internalizing of moral and spiritual meaning is much easier.

B. Jesus Had Used Graphic Analogies Before

1. He spoke of believers as salt and light in the world – 5:13-16
2. He used lilies and birds to warn believers not to be anxious about the necessities of life – 6:26-30
3. The Master spoke of building one's life on the solid rock of God's Word rather than man's philosophy
4. Here in chapt 13 Jesus uses soil, seeds, thorns, rocks, wheat, tares, mustard seed, leaven, hidden treasure and a pearl

III. The Parable: The Sower – vs 3b-9; 18-23

3b ... saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

- Perhaps the disciples could look around and see a man actually sowing seed as Jesus taught
- This was a common and vivid image
- The kinds of ground would also be familiar

A. The Way-Side Soil – vs 4, 19

4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: 18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. 19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

1. When broadcasting seed by hand it was impossible to control exactly where all the seed fell
2. Some seeds were bound to fall beside the path
3. Farmers used these paths to walk from field to field and travelers used the paths to go between cities
4. The soil on and **beside the road** would, of course, be untilled and packed down hard by the walking, which prevented any **seeds** that happened to fall on it from penetrating and taking root.
5. Those **seeds** were exposed and easily accessible, **the birds came and ate them up** as soon as the farmer got a safe distance down the path.
6. What was not eaten by birds "was trampled under foot" ([Luke 8:5](#)).
7. This was the unresponsive hearer
 - a) He hears the word of the kingdom but does not understand it
 - b) Not due to any problems with the message but because of his own hardheartedness
 - c) He is unconcerned about the things of God and indifferent to anything spiritual
 - d) He leaves himself utterly exposed to Satan's attack

BYZ **Matthew 13:4** Καὶ ἐν τῷ σπεύρειν αὐτόν, ἃ μὲν ἔπεσεν παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν· καὶ ἤλθεν τὰ πετεινὰ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτά.

BYZ **Matthew 13:18** Ὑμεῖς οὖν ἀκούσατε τὴν παραβολὴν τοῦ σπειρόντος.

BYZ **Matthew 13:19** Παντὸς ἀκούοντος τὸν λόγον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ μὴ συνιέντος, ἔρχεται ὁ πονηρὸς, καὶ ἀρπάζει τὸ ἐσπαρμένον ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν σπαρείς.

Cometh the evil one and snatcheth away (erchetai ho ponēros kai harpazei). The birds pick up the seeds while the sower sows. The devil is busy with his job of snatching or seizing like a bandit or rogue the word of the kingdom before it has time even to sprout. How quickly after the sermon the impression is gone.

BYZ **Matthew 13:5** Ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὰ πετρώδη, ὅπου οὐκ εἶχεν γῆν πολλήν· καὶ εὐθέως ἐξανέτειλεν, διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν βάθος γῆς·
ἐξανέτειλεν, verb ind aor act 3ps from **ἐξανατέλλω** - intransitively, of a fast-growing plant *spring up, sprout up*

B. The Stony Soil – vs 5-6, 20-21

5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

1. Some seeds fell on stony soil where the dirt was not deep
2. These were not loose rocks because the farmer removed all loose rocks from the field
3. For a brief period these little plants looked healthy, but the sun quickly rose and the plants withered
4. The rock prevented the roots from getting to the needed water
5. The stony soil hearer is the superficial hearer
 - a) *He hears the Word and receives it eagerly*
 - b) *He is different from the way-side hearer who is unresponsive*
 - c) *He manifests emotional excitement in response to the message*
 - d) *Sometimes shallow acceptance of the gospel is encouraged by shallow evangelism that holds out the blessings of salvation but hides the costs—such as repenting from sin, dying to self, and turning from the old life.*
 - e) *When people are encouraged to walk down the aisle, raise their hand, or sign a card without coming to grips with the full claims of Christ, they are in great danger of becoming further from Christ than they were before they heard the message.*
 - f) *They may become insulated from true salvation by a false profession of faith.*
 - g) *The change is on the surface and not down in the heart*
 - h) *Here is a religious experience but not salvation – no repentance, no recognition of lostness, no brokenness*
 - i) *When trouble or persecution arises, then he is offended*
 - (1) Skandalizo = to stumble or fall
 - (2) The superficial believer is offended and falls away when his faith is put to the test.
6. It is encouraging, however, that the same persecution that makes the false believer wither will make the true believer stronger.

C. The Thorny Soil – vs 7, 22 →

1. The thorns quickly choked out the good plants by taking the moisture, nourishment and sunlight for themselves
2. The thorny soil hearer is the worldly hearer
 - a) *He hears the word but is too worldly for it to take root and grow in his heart*
 - b) *He may make a token profession of faith but his first love is for the things of the world*
 - c) *He loves riches and acts as though they were the answer to all his needs and desires*
 - d) *His worldliness chokes the Word and his attention is on riches, possessions, prestige and position and other things of the world*
 - e) *If his faith is genuine, he will forsake the **world**; if it is not, his sin will **choke** out what knowledge of the **word** he has.*
3. A person who comes to church but never becomes committed to serving, who is continually preoccupied with money, career, fashions, sports, and everything but the Lord's work is a person with a weed-infested heart.
 - a) *A person who claims to love Christ but who cannot remain faithful in marriage has a weedy heart.*
 - b) *The person who refuses to let go of his worldliness is a person in whom the seed of God's saving gospel has not found root and is in danger of being choked out altogether.*

BYZ **Matthew 13:6** ἡλίου δὲ ἀνατείλαντος ἐκαυματίσθη, καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ῥίζαν, ἐξηράνθη.

BYZ **Matthew 13:20** Ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ τὰ πετρῶδη σπαρεῖς, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων, καὶ εὐθὺς μετὰ χαρᾶς λαμβάνων αὐτόν·

BYZ **Matthew 13:21** οὐκ ἔχει δὲ ῥίζαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, ἀλλὰ πρόσκαιρός ἐστιν· γενομένης δὲ θλίψεως ἢ διωγμοῦ διὰ τὸν λόγον, εὐθὺς σκανδαλίζεται.

BYZ **Matthew 13:7** Ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὰς ἀκάνθας, καὶ ἀνέβησαν αἱ ἀκάνθαι καὶ ἀπέπνιξαν αὐτά. ἀπέπνιξαν verb ind aor act 3pp from ἀποπνίγω- transitively choke (out) (MT 13.7); passive be choked; by falling into the sea drown (LU 8.33)

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: 22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

BYZ **Matthew 13:22** Ὁ δὲ εἰς τὰς ἀκάνθας σπαρεῖς, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων, καὶ ἡ μέριμνα τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου καὶ ἡ ἀπάτη τοῦ πλούτου συμπνίγει τὸν λόγον, καὶ ἄκαρπος γίνεται.

D. The Good Soil – vs 8, 23

8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. 23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

1. The good soil was soft and deep and free from weeds
2. Because of the favorable conditions it yielded a crop of 100, 60, 30x
3. In NT times, the average ratio of harvested grain seeds to those that were planted was usually around 8 to one
4. Even a tenfold crop would be above average, much less 30 or 60 fold increase
5. Here is the receptive hearer
 - a) *This soil is good because it has been prepared by Spirit to be receptive to God's Word*
 - b) *Despite the hardness, shallowness, and worldliness of most human hearts, there are always those who are **good soil**, in which the gospel can take root and flourish.*
 - c) *There will always be people whom the Spirit has prepared to receive **the word** with sincere, surrendered hearts.*
6. The ultimate mark of the genuine believer, **the good soil**, is fruitbearing.
 - a) *He not only **hears** and **understands** but also **indeed bears fruit**.*
 - b) *Spiritual **fruit** is the inevitable product of spiritual life.*
7. He is also saying to His witnesses that they should not lose heart.
 - a) *God alone can plow up the heart that is hard and resistant.*
 - b) *In His sovereign will He gives the shallow heart depth, and the cluttered heart cleansing.*
 - c) *The Lord guarantees that His faithful witnesses will produce fruit and will do so abundantly.*
 - d) *It is impossible for a faithful sower of the Word to fail, because the Lord of the harvest will not permit it.*
 - e) *So we anticipate the wrong and right responses.*
 - f) *What marvelously helpful insight for those who sow!*

IV. The Purpose: To Reveal and Conceal – vs 10-17

9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. 10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. 12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

- Jesus used parables to reveal the mysteries of the Bible
- A mystery was something previously hidden and unknown

A. To Conceal – vs 13-15

13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. 14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

1. The verses from Isa 6:9-10 perfectly describe the unbelieving Jews of Jesus' day
2. The people kept on hearing but they did not understand, they kept on seeing, but they did not perceive
3. Jesus' parables were a similar form of judgment on unbelief.
4. Those who would not accept His clear and simple teachings—such as those in the Sermon on the Mount—not only would not be able to understand His deeper teachings but would lose the benefit of the teaching and miraculous witness they had been given.

8 Ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν καλὴν, καὶ ἐδίδου καρπὸν, ὃ μὲν ἑκατὸν, ὃ δὲ ἑξήκοντα, ὃ δὲ τριάκοντα. 23 Ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν καλὴν σπαρείς, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων καὶ συνιών· ὃς δὴ καρποφορεῖ, καὶ ποιεῖ ὃ μὲν ἑκατὸν, ὃ δὲ ἑξήκοντα, ὃ δὲ τριάκοντα.

9 Ὁ ἔχων ὅσα ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω. 10 Καὶ προσελθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ εἶπον αὐτῷ, Διὰ τί ἐν παραβολαῖς λαλεῖς αὐτοῖς; 11 Ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὅτι Ὑμῖν δέδοται γινῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἐκείνοις δὲ οὐ δέδοται. 12 Ὅστις γὰρ ἔχει, δοθήσεται αὐτῷ καὶ περισσευθήσεται· ὅστις δὲ οὐκ ἔχει, καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. 13 Διὰ τοῦτο ἐν παραβολαῖς αὐτοῖς λαλῶ, ὅτι βλέποντες οὐ βλέπουσιν, καὶ ἀκούοντες οὐκ ἀκούουσιν, οὐδὲ συνιοῦσιν. 14 Καὶ ἀναπληροῦται αὐτοῖς ἡ προφητεία Ἡσαΐου, ἡ λέγουσα, Ἀκοῆ ἀκούσετε, καὶ οὐ μὴ συνῆτε· καὶ βλέποντες βλέψετε, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδητε. 15 Ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου, καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν, καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν· μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν ἀκούσωσιν, καὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ συνῶσιν, καὶ ἐπιστρέψωσιν, καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς. Is waxed gross (epachunthē). Aorist passive tense. From pachus, thick, fat, stout. Made callous or dull—even fatty degeneration of the heart.

B. To Reveal – vs 16-17

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

1. Those who believe God's Word and trust in His grace receive His salvation and more truth by which to live
2. The scribes and Pharisees were highly educated and studied the Scriptures diligently but their eyes were blinded to the truth of Jesus' teaching because of their unbelief
3. Not even the most faithful and enlightened saints of the OT were given the insights that the apostles and every believer since have been given the privilege of having

BYZ **Matthew 13:16** Ἰμῶν δὲ μακάριοι οἱ ὀφθαλμοί, ὅτι βλέπουσιν· καὶ τὰ ὦτα ὑμῶν, ὅτι ἀκούει.

BYZ **Matthew 13:17** Ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πολλοὶ προφῆται καὶ δίκαιοι ἐπεθύμησαν ἰδεῖν ἃ βλέπετε, καὶ οὐκ εἶδον· καὶ ἀκοῦσαι ἃ ἀκούετε, καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσαν.