

THE SOWER AND THE SEED: MAT 13:1-23, MK 4:1-20, LK 8:4-15

VOCAB WORDS:

1. **Sow:** To scatter seed over the land. The Sower would grab a handful of seed, and scatter it all over the ground as he walked along.
2. **Sower:** One who sows. This is a common job for common people.
3. **Wayside:** The side of the road.

THE CONTEXT: MAT 13:1-2

What was Jesus doing? Who came to Him? What did Jesus do?

Jesus went out by the sea to sit by Himself. A large crowd came to Him. Jesus' reputation is so big that He can attract large crowds without doing anything. This crowd would be a variety of believers, skeptics, and people wanting to see miracles. Either way, they have all seen or heard about Jesus. We need to see that this crowd comes to Jesus looking for something. What does Jesus offer them? He teaches to them. Jesus gets into a boat so He can speak to the crowd better, and teaches.

THE PARABLE: MAT 13:3-9

Who is the main character in this parable? What is he doing? Why is he doing it?

The main character is a sower. He is walking through the land scattering seed. He is scattering seed to grow crops.

What are the other two main figures?

The other two main figures are the seed, and the soil. The soil is broken down into categories of soil by the wayside, rocky soil, thorny soil, and good soil.

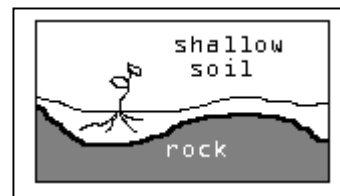
What is the pattern in this parable? What are the consistencies? What are the variables?

The pattern in this parable is the sower casting seed over the soil, and then the result is stated. The seed is consistent throughout the parable. Every soil receives the same seed. Is the soil consistent? This is a little tricky. At first glance, we see four types of soil, but I think we need to see that it is all still soil. Soil is soil. The soil may be in different surroundings or circumstance, but it is still soil. The variables in this parable are the surroundings and circumstance of the soil, and the how the soil reacts to the seed.

What was each section of soil like? How does each soil react to the seed?

First, Jesus tells us about the soil by the wayside. The wayside refers to the side of the road. The soil by the road is going to be packed very hard because of all the traffic. How does this soil react to the seed? Since the wayside is so hard, the seed just bounces off and remains on top. The birds then quickly snatch it away.

Second, Jesus tells us about the rocky soil. This isn't referring to soil with rocks in it. This is more accurately referring to a shallow amount of soil over a rocky surface of land. The important image is shallow soil that doesn't leave the roots much room for growth. How does this soil react to the seed? Initially it springs up quickly, due to the shallow soil, but when the sun comes out, the roots don't have enough soil to gather sufficient water or nutrients. The plant withers and dies.



Third, Jesus teaches about the thorny soil. This is easy for us to imagine. This is soil that can support vegetation, but is already overrun by weeds that will hog all of the water and nutrients. How does this soil react to the seed? The seed is choked by the

thorns. The important image is soil that could support the seed, but there are already thorns taking all the needed water and nutrients.

Last, we learn about the good soil. This is soil perfect for growth. This soil is not packed too hard. Nor is it too shallow. This soil is not thick with thorns and weeds. How does this soil react to the seed? The seed sprouts and produces crops of 100 fold, 60 fold, and 30 fold.

THE MORAL: "HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR." (VS. 9)

Evidently this parable is about hearing. Are you confused? If you are, don't worry. So are the disciples (vs. 10). Fortunately for us, Jesus explains this parable.

THE EXPLANATION: MAT 13:18-23

The sower is Jesus and/or any person that is teaching God's word. The seed is God's word. The soil is people. People are all the same, just like soil is always the same, but the circumstance is different. All people have the same opportunity to receive the truth, but people react to the truth differently. The parable talks about how the different soils react to the seed, and that represents how people of different mindsets react differently to God's word.

The Wayside (vs. 19)

Did these people hear? Did they understand? What happens to the teaching sown in their heart?

The hard packed soil by the road represents people that hear the word, but it doesn't sink in. They don't understand. They may not understand for several reasons. They might not care enough to figure out, or they might think they already know everything. People in Jesus' day thought they knew everything about God, but when Jesus showed up, they didn't believe Him to be the son of God. They refused to put away what they thought they knew about God, and accept this new teaching from God. Sometimes people hold on to what tradition or their parents and family teach them about God, and don't accept the truth about God when they are taught. The teaching doesn't sink in, and the Devil comes and takes it away before that person can produce a crop.

The Rocky Soil (vs. 20-21)

Did these people hear? Do they receive it? What happens in the end? What is the reason?

The shallow rocky soil represents someone who hears and accepts the truth with joy, but they are very shallow. Someone who becomes a Christian because their family tells them to, or because they hear it will help them have a rich life is shallow. Many people may start as Christians in this manner, but if they don't become deeper, are they going to be equipped to deal with persecution or trials? Because these people don't have a deep root in the Lord, they will quickly lose their faith when things get difficult. This teaches us that we need to be mature Christians, and not remain shallow.

The Thorny Soil (vs. 22)

Do these people hear the word? What happens to the word they hear? What is the reason?

The thorny soil represents someone who hears the word, but lets all the concerns and worries of the world choke out any ability to grow spiritually. Thorns today can be money, work, rent, entertainment, stress, family life, and a million other things. When we hear the truth, we need to put that as a priority, and not give this world a chance to take away our potential growth.

The Good Soil (vs. 23)

Do these people hear the word? Do they understand? What do they do?

The good soil represents people that hear the word, understand it, and then produce crop (grow spiritually). To grow spiritually, we need to hear the word with a desire to understand the truth. We must accept the truth in a mature way. We need to accept the truth because we love Jesus, and not just because we want to personally benefit. We can't let the troubles of the world take us away from the truth. We must hear, understand, and then grow.

THE APPLICATION:

Jesus was talking to Scribes and Pharisees. They can be seen as the wayside soil because they refused to believe Him. The Pharisees were so confident in themselves; they had no room for the Jesus' teaching. Jesus' teaching bounced right off of them. He also talked to people that followed Him just because of His wonders and miracles. This can be seen as the rocky soil. Their fascination with Jesus' spectacular miracles would not be sufficient for them to undergo persecution or trials. Jesus also taught to people that were too concerned with the things of the world rather than spiritual things. They are the thorny soil. All of their concerns choked out their interest in Jesus. Jesus was also teaching to His disciples. They were the good soil. They had ears, and they heard. After hearing the truth, they were ready to produce crops.

The point of this parable is the need for us to hear, understand, and accept the word. Jesus spoke in a parable to eliminate the unbelievers from the crowd. Jesus says that, "whoever has, more shall be given" (vs. 12). This is true because the disciples had faith, and Jesus gave them more teaching. Jesus taught them eight more parables that day. Others that didn't understand (and didn't care to) were gone. They didn't receive the wonderful teaching from Christ. We must be willing to understand and believe the truth at all times if we want to grow spiritually, other wise all that we have "shall be taken away" (vs. 12).