

The Stories Of Jesus Part 1

Seeds & Weeds

Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20

Memory Verses: Matthew 13:16

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Who doesn't love a great story? As children we'd come to love stories as our mom or dad would read to us at bedtime. Princes fighting dragons to save the princesses, Pugs named Pig, Very Hungry Caterpillars, Cats in Hats, Good Night Moon, and Where The Wild Things Are.

Later as teens we couldn't wait to sit around the lunch table with our friends to hear some tall tale which would make us laugh. We would immediately take liberties expanding upon them with wild embellishments until the story reached legendary status.

Even now as adults, we love good stories. That's why we love movies about rebellions against galactic empires, hobbits on their way to destroy the ring of power in the fires of mount doom, superheroes uniting to destroy the infinity stones, Maximus rising from the ashes to get his revenge, and Marty going back in time to make sure his parents still get married.

Did you know that Jesus loved a great story too? He loved to tell stories all the time; stories with meaning. Today we know them as parables. Look at [Matthew 13:34-35](#) and [Mark 4:33-34](#). A parable is a simple story to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. A parable can help someone understand a concept that they otherwise wouldn't understand if said at face value. If I were to tell you that when you tell lies enough people will stop trusting you, you may shrug it off. "Hey pal, i've gotten on long enough without your help, I don't need your advice." But if I were to tell you the story of the boy who cried wolf you might come to the conclusion yourself that it might not be a good idea to be known as an untrustworthy person.

But, that's not the main reason Jesus started using parables midway through his ministry. Look with me at a couple of passages that show us exactly why Jesus chose to speak in parables. Look with me at [Mark 4:10-12](#), and [Luke 8:9-10](#). At some point in Jesus' ministry he decided to stop speaking openly to the people as he did at the sermon on the mount but to start speaking to them in a code that they couldn't necessarily understand. The text tells us that he did so specifically so that they could "hear and not understand."

Why? Why would Jesus not want people to know what he was teaching them? It makes no sense to us as casual observers. Doesn't

Jesus want all people to be saved; for all people to know him? Then why is he being so difficult? We get a clue in a previous statement of Jesus in [Matthew 7:6](#) where he tells his disciples who have been rejected to not give to dogs what is holy nor throw pearls before pigs. Why? Because dogs and pigs have not use for pearls and valuable things, they will not see your kindness in the gesture but instead will turn and attack you. And the same goes with people who have rejected the words of Christ. If you keep speaking the Gospel plainly to them they will have no use for it and instead it will antagonize them.

Look at the best passage we have at understanding this; [Matthew 13:10-17](#). Let me interpret that for you. Those who hunger for more of Jesus will get more of Jesus and those who have no more use for Jesus, He will not be forced upon them. [As S. Michael Houdmann says on his website](#), "From this point on in Jesus' ministry, when He spoke in parables, He explained them only to His disciples. But those who had continually rejected His message were left in their spiritual blindness to wonder as to His meaning. Our Lord Jesus understood that truth is not sweet music to all ears. Simply put, there are those who have neither interest in nor regard for the deep things of God. So why, then, did He speak in parables? To those with a genuine hunger for God, the parable is both an effective and memorable vehicle for the conveyance of divine truths. Our Lord's parables contain great volumes of truth in very few words, and His parables, rich in imagery, are not easily forgotten. So, then, the parable is a blessing to those with willing ears. But to those with dull hearts and ears that are slow to hear, the parable is also an instrument of both judgment and mercy."

So, I know it may not be answer you want, but it is the answer that Jesus gives us. [The parables serve as a spiritual barometer to determine those who have accepted Christ and want more of Him and those who have already rejected Him.](#) If you hear and want to understand it more you will ask and seek and thus prove yourself to be a follower of Christ. If you hear and don't care to understand it more then you will simply dismiss it as irrelevant.

And so that brings us to the first story of Jesus, and quite possibly his most important one; the parable of the sower and the seeds. Let's read it together in [Matthew 13:1-9](#). It's a very simple parable but it speaks volumes if you let it. And again, only those with ears to hear will hear it.

I have some [seeds](#) here. How many of you have a garden? How many of you have ever sown seeds in the ground before? Does every seed that you plant grow up? No. Some get eaten by the birds don't they? Some seeds sprout up and then immediately die. Some seeds sprout up but get entangled with weeds and don't ever mature. But some seeds do what they are supposed to do; grow up and provide food or shade or beauty.

And what Jesus is trying to convey is this... we, humans are just like those seeds. When we hear the Gospel we are susceptible to the enemy

coming and snatching away our faith, or the troubles of the world snuffing it out, or the riches of the world choking it out. So what we must have is a good soil for our faith.

Which seed are you this morning? Which soil are you sown into? If you get nothing else this morning, get this... **In This Life, Though It May Be Filled With Weeds, God Always Provides Good Soil For The Gospel Seed To Grow.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we see here is that... **The Gospel Seed Will Not Grow In A Hard Heart.** So we've heard the parable of the sower and the seeds, but we have yet to read Christ's explanation to the disciples. Let's look at that in **Matthew 13:18-23**. There are a couple things to notice here. First, there are three variables in this story, two of which are constant, and one that changes. The sower always sows, and the seed is always planted, but it's the soil that makes the difference.

Secondly, each variable represents a different aspect of the salvation process. The sower is Jesus, or by extension anyone who shares the Gospel message. The seed is the Gospel message itself; the good news of salvation by faith in Christ. And, the soil represents the condition of the hearer's heart. The question this morning is; "what is the condition of your heart as it relates to receiving the Gospel."

So let's begin with the first seed; the one which fell among the path. Paths are compact; they are solid. Whether a concrete path or a dirt path, the seed cannot fall into the soil. Rather, it will remain on the surface and the birds will come and eat it immediately. The path soil represents those who hear the Gospel but immediately reject it. They are blinded to it's meaning and cannot comprehend it's foolishness. Their hearts are hardened to the words of Christ and so what little thought of it that may linger, Satan immediately comes and snatches it away.

This is not Satan's fault. Yes, he is a deceiver, liar, and enemy of the kingdom, but **it's the hardness of one's heart that allows satan to deceive in the first place.** They don't hear what they don't want to hear. They only hear what they want to hear. In the end it is clear that those who have hardened their hearts to the Gospel will not be saved. The person represented by the seed that fell along the path is not a Christian and unless their heart changes they will not inherit the kingdom of God. **In This Life, Though It May Be Filled With Weeds, God Always Provides Good Soil For The Gospel Seed To Grow.**

The second thing we see here is that... **The Gospel Seed Appears To Grow In A Superficial Heart.** Appearances can be deceiving. So that the story remains fresh in our mind let us read of this account again, but this time from **Mark 4:1-9**. The second seed falls on

the rocky soil. There is enough soil there to allow for growth, but not enough for the roots to grow deep. When the rains are few and far between and sun beats down upon this fledgling little plant, it withers and dies. **Mark 4:13-20**, again, clarifies what is meant here. The rocky soil represents those who hear the Gospel message and at first, gladly accept it, but when the troubles of the world and the persecution of the worldly come against them, they abandon their faith. These are the people who make a profession of faith in Christ, usually at a young age, because they are promised no hell, no problems, and no worries. They are sold a bill of goods that they can have their best life now. It's great. But then when things don't go their way or they find that following Christ isn't easy they resent Christ and go back to their old way of living. They are the by-product of easy-belivism preaching. One where all that is required from hearers is to walk an isle, pray a prayer, and sign a card. In the end there is no real root keeping them tethered to Christ and so when things get real they bail.

Here's the thing, God has promised us that in this life we will have troubles. A hard life is no excuse to give up on the kingdom of God. In the end it is clear that though they once had a zeal for the Gospel and made a profession of faith, and probably think they are saved, those with superficial hearts are not true believers and will not inherit the kingdom of God. **In This Life, Though It May Be Filled With Weeds, God Always Provides Good Soil For The Gospel Seed To Grow.**

The third thing we need to see here is... **The Gospel Seed Is Ineffective As It Grows In A Divided Heart.** Again let us look at this parable from another perspective. This time from the book of Luke in **Luke 8:4-8**. Some seed fell among thorns. There is good soil where the thorns grow but not enough to support both the thorns and the plant. When the thorns and the plant grow up together eventually the thorns win out choking the plant so that it could no longer grow. And again Jesus explains this in **Luke 8:11-15**. The soil with thorns represents those who hear the Gospel, accept the Gospel with gladness, mature in the Gospel, but at some point become divided in their heart. Their allegiance to Christ becomes a half measure as they run after the pleasures of this world. The distractions of greener fields all but draws the shade on the mission and glory of Christ. They have lost their first love.

Jesus warns us many times throughout the Gospels of the lure of this world. In **Matthew 6:24** he tells us that no one can serve two masters. You will love one and despise the other. You can't serve both God and money. **The lure of this world does not come and snatch you at once, rather it is seductive luring you slowly away from the cause of Christ.** Because of this, many don't even know the switch has occurred. But, I dare say, this is where most Christians exist. They may be able to eek out a Sunday service every now and then, but complete devotion to Christ is out the door. The

love of Jesus has all but been choked out of them and they are utterly ineffective. In the end it is very plausible that this person is a Christian, but they will enter into heaven as one escaping through the flames. Only but by the grace of God will they inherit the kingdom. **In This Life, Though It May Be Filled With Weeds, God Always Provides Good Soil For The Gospel Seed To Grow.**

Lastly we see here that... **The Gospel Seed Is Fruitful As It Grows In A Faithful Heart**. Finally we get to the good soil. The soil is perfect for it goes deep and holds lots of nourishment. Here the plant grows and produces up to a hundred times what was planted. The good soil represents those who hear the Gospel and are radically saved. Their lives are changed and transformed and for the rest of their lives they are steady as they faithfully live for Christ. These are those who can actually hear this parable because they long to learn more about the one they love! Their eyes have been opened to the mysterious truths of who Jesus is.

So, what is the difference between this soil and the other soils where the other seeds fell? What does it mean for you to be planted in good soil? Two things... It means loving Jesus. I know that sounds a little cliché and overly simple, but I assure it is not. We aren't talking about a love like I love Pizza or I love this weather or I love this commercial. We are talking about a love that is similar to the love you have for your spouse or your children. But it goes to the next level. It is a love that says nothing else is as important to me as you are. It's the love Paul had so that when he was eventually confronted with the prospect of death for his faith, he gladly gave his life. He proudly said, for me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. You see, when your love for Jesus is strong and secure, there is no way Satan can snatch your faith away, there is no way that the troubles and persecutions of this world will cause you to turn your back on your faith, and there is no way that the distractions of this life can draw your attention away. You are already looking at the most beautiful thing this life has to offer. All other riches are garbage by comparison. The good soil is a faithful heart who recklessly and radically loves Jesus.

But, I think it is also means something else too. I think it means loving the Church. **Picture this; a growing believer surrounded by true friends who deeply care about their spiritual maturity. When that believer struggles, the whole group surrounds them in prayer begging God to work in grace and mercy. When they are in sin, the group prays for and leads them into restoration. When they are sick, the group prays for them and takes care of their needs. When things aren't at their best, the group draws upon the power of Christ to lift them up out of the miry clay. When they begin to wander, the group goes after them.**

The point is this... it is extremely hard to fall away from your faith when you have a strong group of believers who are there for you at all times! But you have to have a commitment to being there. If you don't love the Church your faith will suffer for it. You can't do this Christian thing very well by yourself. **In This Life, Though It May Be Filled With Weeds, God Always Provides Good Soil For The Gospel Seed To Grow**

Application

And look what will happen when you are in the good soil of faithfully loving Jesus and the Church... you will produce fruit. The impact you will make will ripple through eternity. The seed of the Gospel in you will be reproduced through you as you tell those around you about the Gospel and how it has changed your life. This is how we build the kingdom of God. Each of us takes the seed of the Gospel and as it blooms in our life we share it with those who have not yet had it bloom in their lives.

We must keep throwing those seeds on the paths till eventually satan cannot take it away because the path has become good soil. We keep throwing those seeds on rocky soil until at some point the troubles of this world and persecutions of the worldly aren't enough to sway them because that soil has become good soil. We keep throwing those seeds on thorny soil as we disciple believers who are divided in their hearts to put aside this world and live solely for Jesus. And in the end Jesus will bring a harvest 30 times greater, or 60 times greater, or even 100 times greater. Get this... when you share the Gospel seed... it will not return void. **We are promised a harvest. People will be saved! Just keep planting those seeds!**

Conclusion

My heart yearns to see the lost saved. My heart yearns to see the Gospel seed grow in good soil. But the reality is that the sowing process is more like a war than it is a day walking in the garden. Why? Because the enemy isn't just out there... they are in here also.

Listen to a very similar parable also here in Matthew 13; **Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**. It would be a very comforting idea to think that everyone who claims to be a Christian is a Christian, but as we've already seen today, that's not the case. As Billy Graham once stated, it is possible that up to 90 percent of those attending a church service are not really saved. They think they are because of a faith they once had, but that faith has long been snatched away, withered, or choked out. In the end they will be thrown into fire.

Sp, where does this all end? In the kingdom of God! Hear again **vs.43**; the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father! Will you be there? Evaluate your heart this morning. Is your heart hard soil, rocky soil, thorny soil... or is your heart good faithful soil who loves Jesus and His Church? **In This Life, Though It May Be Filled With Weeds, God Always Provides Good Soil For The Gospel Seed To Grow**