

## The Parable of the Soils

Luke 8:1~15, part 1

The scripture says, that “...it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.”

I am convinced, that here in this parable, (often referred to as the “*Parable of the Sower*,”) that we have the revelation, of the four ways that men will respond to the message of Christ. That is to say, that every man or woman who hears the message of Christ and His kingdom, will respond in one of these four ways. The truth that is revealed here is heartbreaking, in that it reveals, that three out of the four hearers, ultimately rejected the gospel of Christ for one reason or another. Only one of the four hearers embraced the message of Christ, yielding their lives to him as Lord. Now I don’t want to try and form some statistical equation out of this, such as saying one out of four will believe, for that’s not what He’s saying at all. The point is, all men who hear, will respond in one of these four ways. Some will hear, and outright reject it, others will hear, and for a while, appear to believe, but when their faith is tested, they leave. Others will hear, and appear to believe as well, but in time, their love for the world proves to be too much, and they forsake Christ for the world. Regardless of the reason, all three of those hearers ultimately responded the same way, by not yielding their life to Jesus Christ as Lord. The last one, what Jesus referred to as the good ground, was the only one that received Christ message of the kingdom. They were the only ones who repented, and humbled themselves and received Jesus Christ as Lord of their life...

Listen, it’s important that we don’t miss the point of the “*parable*,” as not to miss the truth Jesus is trying to teach. That being, the overall emphasis here, is on the “*Sowing of the Seed*,” and the “*Harvest of the grain*.” Now don’t miss this, it is the “*Harvest, produced by the Seed*” that is in view here. Now don’t miss that, for it’s vital in correctly understanding what He’s teaching here. Just as a seed is sown, to produce a harvest, the word of God is preached in hopes of a harvest of the souls of men.

This passage is all about the “*preaching of the kingdom of God*,” and how men and women responded to that message. Here Luke tells us, that Jesus began to go about from city to city, village to village, proclaiming the “*Kingdom of God*.” Speaking of the “*Kingdom*” that the nation Israel had long awaited for. Now listen, to fully understand this passage, you must understand that according to the Holy Scriptures, when the “*Christ*” came into the world, he would establish the Kingdom of God... The only problem was, it would not be *the kind of kingdom* that Israel had in mind. It would not be an earthly, worldly kingdom. Jesus had not come to take the throne of David, cast out Rome and restore Israel to its glory as they anticipated. The Kingdom Jesus came to establish was that of the “***Rule and reign of God in the hearts of men***.”

In Luke 17, when asked when the “*Kingdom of God*” should come, *Jesus answered that it would not come with observation...but rather the Kingdom of God is within you*. That is to say, that rather than a “*Physical Kingdom*” which they could “*See*,” Jesus reveals that the “*kingdom*” He’s come to establish, is a “*Spiritual*” one. By saying, “*the Kingdom of God is within you*,” He was referring to ***rule and reign of God in the hearts of men***! Far from what they were expecting, which was for the Messiah to come in and overthrow Rome, and reestablish Israel as a nation, restoring her to her former glory, Jesus declares that He had come to rule and reign in the hearts of men.

Let me say that again, the ***Kingdom of God*** is a reference to ***the rule and reign of Jesus Christ in the hearts of men***! It’s important to understand that, because that helps you better understand this Parable, given that *the soils* are a reference to *the hearts* of men. The scene here is that of Jesus preaching the “*Kingdom of God*” to lost and dying sinners, with the emphasis being how it will be received!

This morning, I want us to look at the first two soils, the first two kinds of hearts of men, and how they will respond to the message of the kingdom of God. There are *three main elements* that make up this parable... The **Sower**... The **Seed**... The **Soils**...

1) The Sower here is *Jesus*...

2) The Seed represents the “*Word of God*.”

3) The Soils represent the *hearts of the people* who had gathered to hear him...

We will begin with the first group, those represented by the “*Wayside*”...

<sup>5</sup>*A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.*

In order to understand what this means, we must first understand what he means by “*way side*.” The term is made up of two parts, one referring to a “*road*,” and the other speaks of “*near by*.” Thus some seed fell on a road that was nearby, referring to the *path* that separated the fields. The fact that some fell by the wayside is inevitable, given that in scattering the seed, he is throwing it and some will naturally go beyond the worked up ground. But because the ground is so hard, the seed cannot penetrate, thus it becomes food for the birds...

So what’s the point, what is He saying? Well, Jesus clearly explains what he means by that, in verse 11...

<sup>12</sup>*Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*

Jesus says, there are some, who will *hear the word of the kingdom*, and as a result of not embracing the word, like the seed sown on the path, the enemy swoops down and steals it away.

To better understand the point, we need to look at Matthew’s account...

<sup>19</sup>*When any one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*

Notice the reason Matthew gives for not receiving the word... “they don’t *understand*...” You might say, though they “*hear*” the message of the kingdom, they “*don’t get it*.”

Now doubt in my mind, He’s referring to the Scribes and Pharisees here... Given the fact that He’s speaking of a “*Spiritual Kingdom*,” and the fact, that they are “*Spiritually Blind, spiritually dead*,” they just “*don’t get it*.” This is who He is referring to in verse 10...

<sup>10</sup>*And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.*

Even though they “*hear*” the message of the kingdom, they “*don’t get it*.” In Matthew’s, he explains why that is, ... <sup>15</sup>*For this people’s heart is waxed gross... Waxed gross refers to the *thickening of the skin*. The best definition is *calloused*... A callous is the “*thickening of the skin*.” Someone who works hard with their hands will develop calloused hands. The reason they don’t understand, is due to the “*hardness of their heart*.”*

Thus, in this first ground, we understand that many will reject the message of the kingdom, due to the *hardness of their heart*. I think it’s extremely important for the reason to be crystal clear, just to make sure that no one thinks that Jesus rejected these men. They too received the offer of the kingdom, but they outright rejected it because of the hardness of their heart...they simply want nothing to do with Him...

According to Luke here, just to make absolutely sure, they don't even "*think*" about receiving it, Satan immediately swoops down takes away the seed lying on top of the heart, just to ensure no possibility of salvation! <sup>12</sup>*Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.* Listen, as long as a seed lays on the ground, there is potential for a harvest. If it ever sinks into the ground, it would start growing. Listen, the enemy knows the power of God's word; he knows that God has chosen to save men by the preaching of his word.

(Vs 6) Next, he says that some fell upon "*a rock*"...<sup>6</sup>*And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.*

Now as to not misunderstand the point here, we need to understand that this is NOT referring to worked up soil that contains some rocks in it. While preparing the ground, the farmer would remove all the visible rocks. The reference here is to an underlying layer of rock, hidden just below the surface.

Given that, he says, that the seed which fell in these places, *sprung up* very quickly, due to the shallowness of the soil. Normally, a seed will gradually sink deeper and deeper into the soil, establishing its root system, before coming to the surface. As you well know, the roots of a plant are the most important part, given they provide the plants the much needed vitamins and minerals it needs to survive.

Well, given the ground Jesus is referring to here, only has a very thin layer of soil, and underneath it, there lies a layer of bedrock. Thus the seed which landed here, *sprung up* very quickly, because of the lack of soil. When the seed tried to spread out it's roots into the earth, it immediately hit the rock, and couldn't go any further down, thus it proceeds to go up. Thus very quickly, you see the blades begin to pop up above ground. Which at first, gives the appearance of the possibility of the beginnings of a very good crop. But as Jesus explains, those hopes are soon diminished, when the heat of the sun scorches the plant, and due to the lack of roots, and the plant withers away.

So what's the point, what is He saying? Well, once again, Jesus explains what he means...(Vs 13)

<sup>13</sup>*They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*

Jesus points to the soil with the rock underneath and declares that there will be some who hear "*the message of the kingdom of God*", and immediately receive it with open arms. Now, that is a stark contrast to the first soil. Unlike the "*wayside hearers*," of whom the seed never even started to enter, this group embraces the seed (word) and does so with great "*joy*." This "*hearer*" expresses excitement, and seems eager to get started with his new life. At least at first, this one shows "*great promise*." **But**...it is short lived, for in the process of time, something happens, and this hearer *falls away*.

It's important to understand what happened. Matthew's account might help us here.

<sup>5</sup>*Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: <sup>6</sup>And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*

The analogy says, "*When the sun was up, they were scorched*." On the surface, it may appear the problem was the "*scorching heat of the sun*." True the sun did cause it to wither, but the problem was not caused by the sun, the real problem, was with the depth of the soil and the lack of roots. **The sun simply revealed that.**

Here Jesus used the scorching sun to describe the "*tribulation, persecution and the temptations*" **associated with following Christ**. What we really see here is "*this man's faith being put to the test*." According to Christ, there will be some who will hear the message of the kingdom, and by all accounts, quickly embrace it with open arms! And do so with great joy, seemingly excited about this new way of

life. But, over time, as they begin to experience some of the things *that go along with following Christ*, the excitement begins to wither. Over time, as they learn the “costs” that are involved, the sacrifices, the sufferings...they decide this is not for them. Ultimately resulting in them kind of just *withering away*.

*In short...* The truth Jesus is teaching here is that there will be some who hear the message of Christ, and for a while, give the appearance that they “Believe.” But when their faith is tried and put to the test...*it fails*. Reason being, it was a “*superficial belief*,” one with “*no depth*.” ...*the way of Christ is not an easy way...* To follow Christ is to “*go against the grain*” of this world. It is the way of “*self-denial, self-sacrifice...*” Denying the lust of the flesh, the will of the flesh, in order to yield our lives to the will of God! Even though the soil apparently received the seed, even though it initially gave the appearance of being “*good ground*,” it was not.

True, the “*stony ground*” is a “*little bit better*” than the *first ground*, in that it’s not as hard, ...but even so, it’s still not “*good ground*.”

Unlike the hard, trodden down ground of the way side, the word is able to penetrate a little. But even so, it’s not enough to amount to anything. Considering the end result, (*which is the whole emphasis of this passage*) there is no difference between the two, neither one brought forth any fruit. One is no better off than the other, for neither man received the message of the kingdom...manifested by a humble submission to Jesus Christ as Lord.

The spiritual truth that Jesus proclaiming here, the “*fruit*” He is referring to here, speaks to the “*eternal life*” produced in a man’s heart, through the hearing of the gospel of Christ! Men are saved, lives are changed through the “*Preaching of the Cross!*”

Given that, it becomes extremely important to understand, what he means by “*good ground*.” Given the truth declared in this parable, whether or not a man receives eternal life depends on him being characterized as *good ground*.

The “*Good ground*” that he is referring to here was not of any “*better quality*” (example: *more rich in nutrients*) making it *better ground* than the others. Matter of fact, I want to suggest to you, that *the dirt* he’s referring to here, is absolutely “*no different*” than *the dirt* of the other three mentioned in this parable.

What sets this ground apart as “*good*,” is not what it “*contains*,” but what it “*does not contain*.” What makes this *good soil*, is not what it “*has in it*”...but what it “*does not have in it!*” It seems to be a contrast to the other soils. It is good ground considering the fact that it is not “*hard*,” that fact that it is not “*stony*,” the fact that it does not have “*thorns*” in it. It’s the “*lack of these things*” that make it “*good soil*.”

The “*Good ground*” is that which is simply...“*Broken and Empty*”

This ground portrays a humble, repentant heart... Jesus is teaching here, that it is only *this kind of heart*, it is only *this kind of spirit* that is able to receive the kingdom of God.