

The Parable of the Sower

Luke 8:4-15

Good News of the Kingdom of God

- 📖 "...Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women¹..." (8:1-2a, NIV).²
- 📖 "While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable..." (8:4, NIV) – "the parable of the sower" (Matthew 13:18).³

The Parable Presented

- ❑ Read Luke 8:5-8. In this parable, the sower's seed falls on four different kinds of soil.
 - 🔗 Along the path: This soil is a hard-packed path. The seed that falls here is stepped on by people and/or eaten by birds (8:5).
 - 🔗 On rocky soil: This soil is a shallow soil with underlying rock. This soil easily dries out, and root depth is limited by the rock. Thus the plants wither because of lack of water (8:6).
 - 🔗 Among thorns: This soil contains thorny plants that grow up quickly with the good plants. Gradually, the thorny plants choke out the good plants so they do not grow and produce (8:7).
 - 🔗 Into good soil: This soil is good for seed germination and plant growth, resulting in a very good crop ("a hundred times more than was sown"). (8:8)
- 📖 "When [Jesus] said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear" (8:8b, NIV).



The Parable Questioned

- ❑ Read Luke 8:9-10. Jesus' disciples asked Jesus what this parable meant (8:9). Jesus said, "The knowledge of the secrets⁴ of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables" (8:10a). Jesus explained this statement by quoting from Isaiah 6:9 (8:10b).
- ❑ As many rejected Isaiah's message, many rejected Jesus' message. The words of Isaiah 6:9-10 warned of the certainty of God's judgment on people who were not responsive due to hardness of heart, but they also challenged people to repent (turn to God) and respond to the message.⁵
- ❑ Parables challenge the hearers. Those with responsive hearts will seek and understand. Those without responsive hearts will not be able to see and understand. "Where parables find a willing response, further explanation is given. Where there is no response the message is lost."⁶

¹ Luke writes that these women had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. They included Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and many others (8:2-3). These women helped to support Jesus and the Twelve out of their own means.

² This series skips over Luke 6:37-7:50, which includes the remainder of Jesus' 'Sermon on the Plain' (6:37-49); the faith of the centurion, and Jesus' healing of his servant (7:1-10); Jesus' raising of the widow's son (7:11-17); questions about Jesus and John the Baptist (7:18-35); and Jesus being anointed by a sinful woman (7:36-50).

³ The 'parable of the sower' is also presented in Matthew 13:3-23 and Mark 4:3-20. Broadly defined, 'parable' (*parabolē*) refers to any comparative saying intended to stimulate thought. There are various classifications of parable in the Bible. A 'sower' (*speirantos*) is a person who scatters and plants seeds (e.g. a farmer who plants seeds for wheat).

⁴ 'secrets' (*mystēria*, 'mysteries') – truths previously hidden but now revealed in Jesus' coming and teaching. These 'mysteries' are known and understood only by revelation from God.

⁵ Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 160-162.

⁶ Snodgrass, 163.

The Parable Explained

□ Read Luke 8:11-15. Jesus explains the parable. “The seed is the word of God”⁷ (8:11b). The four different conditions represent four different responses to the word of God.

- ☞ Along the path: The ones who hear but do not receive (accept) the word. The truths heard are taken away by the devil,⁸ so that they may not believe and be saved (8:12).
- ☞ On rocky soil: The ones who receive the word with joy, but have a superficial or shallow “faith.” When their faith is tried and tested, they fall away (8:13).⁹
- ☞ Among thorns: The ones who receive the word, but allow the worries, riches and pleasures of this world to choke their responsiveness, so they do not mature and bear fruit (8:14).
- ☞ Into good soil: The ones with a “good heart,” who receive the word, hold tightly to it, and persevere in the faith. Their faith is deeply rooted, and they bear much fruit (8:15).¹⁰



The Parable Applied

1. Why do people *not* receive the word? What kinds of obstacles do people have?¹¹
2. Name some examples of “testing” that might influence some people to fall away. What can we do to have a deeper faith? What can we do to endure times of testing?¹²
3. In what ways do the worries, riches, and pleasures of the world choke a person’s responsiveness to God’s word? What are examples? What can we do to prevent (or stop) these things from choking our spiritual lives?¹³
4. What can we do to cultivate and maintain a “good heart?” How can we bear much fruit?¹⁴



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Reflection/Application

- Which one of the four soil conditions best describes *you*? Are you happy with that? Humbly and carefully hear the word of God. Ask questions, seek answers, pray, talk to mature Christians, spend time in Christian fellowship, reflect on this lesson, including the verses in the footnotes.

⁷ ‘the word of God’ – the message that comes from God; For us, the ‘word of God’ is written in the Bible.

⁸ ‘the devil’ – God’s chief opponent does not want people to believe (2 Cor. 4:4). This spiritual conflict is real. Beware!

⁹ ‘testing’ (*peirasmou*) – testing of one’s faith, which might include temptation, persecution, trials, suffering, or teaching that draws one away from faith. ‘fall away’ (*aphistēmi*) – to fall away from faith

¹⁰ To ‘bear fruit’ (*karpophorousin*) is to grow in Christ-likeness. We are to become like Christ in character (Galatians 5:22-23), and also in mission – that is, being involved in God’s reproductive, multiplying work of salvation, resulting in more ‘new lives.’ Those with ‘good hearts’ bear fruit ‘*en hypomonēi*’ (with perseverance, endurance, patience).

¹¹ Obstacles include intellectual barriers; misunderstandings of Christianity; prior commitment to another belief system, worldview, or group; reluctance to change one’s mind; problem of relevance (‘I do not need this’); negative associations with Christianity; and others. Even if these obstacles are removed, many still do not believe and receive Christ, because the main obstacle is human sin, including an unwillingness to humbly confess our sin, admit our need of salvation, and give our lives to God (Luke 9:24-25). This main obstacle is overcome only by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

¹² Hebrews 10:23-25. If you are discouraged or struggling with doubt, talk to a mature Christian friend, talk to Jay.

¹³ Matthew 6:19-34; Philippians 3:7-8; 1 Peter 5:6-11; Luke 12:16-21; James 4:1-10, 13-17

¹⁴ Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 6:7-12; Philippians 4:8; John 15:1-17; Colossians 3:1-17; James 5:7-8