

Slide 1

Are You Sowing The Seed Of The Kingdom?

MARK 4:1-20; CF. MATTHEW 13:1-15; LUKE 8:4-10

Introduction

1. I don't know how many of you grew up working on a farm.
2. Neither do I know how many of you have planted and tended a garden.
3. But, if you have done either of these, then you know the work that is involved.
4. In the passage read for us a moment ago, Jesus tells of a sower who went out to sow seed.
5. In the relating of this parable, He compares the various types of soil in which the seed is sown to the hearts of different individuals.
6. His point in this parable is that the quality of each heart determines the outcome of the seed sown within — the seed being the Word of God.
7. I would like for us to review what Jesus has to say about this at the beginning of our lesson this morning.
8. After this I would like for us to consider two other things which play a part in the outcome of the harvest:
 - a. The quality of the seed.
 - b. The dedication of the sower.
9. Then I would like for each of us to ask ourselves, "What part do I play in the final outcome?"
10. I say this because it is vitally important that each of us do all that we can to insure an abundant harvest in our Lord's kingdom.

Slide 2

I. The Nature of the Soil

A. THE SOIL BESIDE THE ROAD (VV. 4, 15)

1. This soil had been compacted by human feet, animal hooves and the wheels of various carts which had traveled over these paths.
2. The seed sown here was immediately eaten by the birds.
3. This soil, Jesus said, represented the hardened hearts of those who hear God's Word.
4. Because the seed of God's Word is not allowed to penetrate the human heart, Satan simply sweeps it away.

2a**B. THE ROCKY GROUND (vv. 5-6, 16-17)**

1. The thin layer of soil in this area caused the seed to be quickly warmed by the sun, take root and begin to grow.
2. However, as summer advances and the temperatures increase, the sun heats the shallow soil to the point that the young plants wither and die.
3. Jesus said that this soil represents those who "hear the word" and "immediately receive it with joy" (v. 16).
4. But, He said, such individuals "have no firm root in themselves" — they "are only temporary," so when "affliction and persecution arises because of the word," they "immediately . . . fall away" (v. 17).

2b**C. THE SOIL AMONG THE THORNS (vv. 7, 18-19)**

1. When the seed was being sown here, it may not have been evident to the sower that thorns lay dormant beneath the soil.
2. Though the seed initially took root and began to grow, when the late spring rains came the thorns began to grow and choke out the seed.
3. According to Jesus, the thorns represent "the worries (cares) of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things" (Mark 4:19).
4. Such a person is distracted by what he sees around him — his heart struggles with divided loyalties.
5. He may start out showing some interest in Christ, but in time he is pulled in other directions, leaving no room for spiritual matters.

2c**D. THE GOOD SOIL (VV. 8, 20)**

1. Finally, there is the good soil.
2. Unlike the other soils which proved to be un-productive and incapable of growing a crop, the good soil brings forth a harvest.
3. This soil represents an open and honest heart in which the seed of God's Word can take root and grow.
4. It will bring forth a harvest of character — what Paul called the “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23).
5. It will allow all that is good and right and true (Philippians 1:11) to grow within that person.

Slide 3**II. The Quality Of The Seed****A. IT IS PURE**

1. You and I have been given the best strain of seed known to man — the Word of God.
2. It is pure, without any defect.
3. In 1 Peter 2:2, the apostle Peter said that we, “like newborn babies” are to “long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it [we] may grow in respect to salvation.”
4. There is no other seed which may compare to it.
5. No other seed can cause a person to “grow in respect to salvation.”

3a**B. IT IS POWERFUL**

1. Long ago, God spoke through His prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 23:29, and said, “Is not My word like fire?” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?”

2. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that “the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
3. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:23 that you and I “have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable” — “the living and enduring word of God.”
4. James said that when this word is “implanted” into good and honest hearts, it is “able to save [our] souls” (James 1:21).
5. Paul said that it is the very “sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17).
6. Nothing is more powerful when it comes to changing lives.

3b**C. IT IS PERSONAL**

1. In Jesus’ parable, the sower sowed the seed by hand.
2. There was a commitment and dedication to doing it correctly.
3. Each of us have access to fields which no one else does, hearts and minds which can be reached only through our sowing.
4. We must each be involved in sharing the Word to our friends and acquaintances.
5. After hearing John the Baptist declare Jesus to be “the Lamb of God” (John 1:36), Andrew went to tell his brother Peter, “We have found the Messiah” (John 1:41).
6. After Jesus called Phillip to follow Him, Phillip found Nathanael, told him about Jesus, and invited him to “Come and see” (John 1:46).
7. Is there someone with whom you can share the good news of Jesus? Will you do it?

3c**D. IT IS PROVEN**

1. There is no need to look for other seed or to try and improve this Seed.

2. It is timeless and without equal.
3. On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 souls received the word which Peter had proclaimed, were baptized and added to the body of believers (Acts 1:41).
4. The same happened in Samaria with the preaching of Phillip (Acts 8:12), and in Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia with the preaching of Paul.
5. For over 2,000 years this Seed has been changing hearts and lives.
6. It simply needs to be sown.

Slide 4

III. The Dedication of the Sower

A. HE IS RELIABLE

1. It is not a one time thing for him.
2. Every day, without fail he can be depended upon.
3. He is out before sunup and continues after sundown.
4. Once he has started, he knows he must finish.
5. He is there in the thick and the thin.
6. In my youth, I grew up next to a dairy farm:
 - a. Twice a day those cows were milked — in the morning and in the evening.
 - b. Seven days a week they were milked, holidays included.
 - c. Every day, that farm family could be relied upon to milk those cows.
7. When you and I became Christians, we suddenly became a part of God's work.
8. The question for each of us is this, "Can God rely upon us to keep pressing forward toward our ultimate goal?"

4a

B. HE IS DILIGENT

1. As soon as this year's harvest is in, he is already thinking about next year's crop.

2. The sower of Jesus' day would have been busy sharpening his tools, replacing handles and doing whatever else needed to be done ahead of next year's sowing and reaping.
3. As soon as possible, he will begin . . .
 - a. Preparing the soil
 - b. Planting the seed
 - c. Removing the weeds and harmful insects.
4. He will do everything within his power to insure an abundant harvest, but trust God to provide.
5. When it comes to our sowing the seed of God's Word, are we each doing all within our power to insure an abundant harvest?
6. We only reap a harvest, if we sow the seed.
7. The farmer doesn't bring the field to the seed, but takes the seed to the field.
8. The idea, "if we build it they will come," doesn't work when it comes to the gospel.

4b**C. HE IS NO STRANGER TO ADVERSITY**

1. No doubt, the farmer of Jesus' day was familiar with floods and soil erosion, disease and drought.
2. They knew the devastation which each could cause to their potential harvest.
3. Our farmers today are not only familiar with these, but equipment failure as well.
4. About two years ago, a friend of mine was bailing his hay when his round bailer caught on fire.
5. He had just enough time to disconnect his tractor from the bailer and get away from the fire.
6. However, he still had hay to finish bailing, so he searched around, and by the end of the day had another bailer with which to finish.
7. When it comes to the sowing of God's Word, you and I will have adversity — mental, emotional and sometimes physical and financial adversity.

- a. The apostle Paul wrote of the various difficulties he faced — imprisonment, beatings, shipwrecks, a stoning, just to mention a few (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).
 - b. Added to this was the daily pressure of his concern for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28).
8. Satan will make sure that we have our share of adversity if we choose to follow Christ and share the gospel.
 9. But we must not shrink back from the responsibility placed upon us.

Conclusion

Slide 5

1. There is a hymn which we sing which asks a simple question, “**Are you sowing the seed of the kingdom?**”

5a

2. The reason our answer to this question is so important is given in the chorus:
**For the harvest time is coming on,
And the reapers' work will soon be done;
Will your sheaves be many? Will you garner any
For the gathering at the harvest home?**
3. You and I are engaged in a work that is more important than any this world has ever known or ever will know.
4. We are “sowing the seed of the kingdom” the good news of salvation to those who are lost in sin.
5. We are all called to be a part of this important work in some form or fashion.
6. If you haven't joined us in the work, why not do so today?