

## Sower, Seed, and Soil

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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Text: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Purpose: The Parable of the Sower reminds us of three perspectives in life – the sower, the seed, and the soil. We need to prepare the soil of our soul to receive the word of God. The seed is God's word which is sharper than any two-edged sword. The sower is only responsible for sowing, not reaping. A life yielded to God will be fruitful.

A man dies. Of course, St. Peter meets him at the Pearly Gates.



St. Peter says, "Here's how it works. You need 100 points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good things you've done, and I give you a certain number of points for each item, depending on how good it was. When you reach 100 points, you get in."

"Okay," the man says, "I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart."

"That's wonderful," says St. Peter, "that's worth three points!"

"Three points?" he says.

"Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my tithe and service."

"Terrific!" says St. Peter. "That's certainly worth a point."

"One point!?!"

I started a soup kitchen in my city and worked in a shelter for homeless veterans."

"Fantastic, that's good for two more points," he says.

"Two points!?!?" Exasperated, the man cries, "At this rate it'll just be by the grace of God that I ever get into heaven."

"Bingo, 100 points! Come on in!"<sup>1</sup>

One day we will have to give an account for our life and the way we lived. While it is true, we are only saved by the grace of God, ***we must respond*** to the gracious invitation of God and live our lives in such a way that it reflects our love of God. When we come to the end of our life and have not accepted Christ as our Savior, and we stand before God, we will not have any acceptable excuses for our failure to respond and believe on the one and only son of God, Jesus Christ.

**Today's message is for** everyone who is listening this morning. It is a message for the individual that has followed Christ for almost all of their life. It is a word of encouragement to become sowers of God's word.



**This is a message for** the individual that has heard the message of salvation repeatedly, but has failed to respond and say "yes" to Jesus Christ. If you are exposed to the good news of Jesus Christ repeatedly and do not respond,

you become hard hearted and the word seems to never penetrate.

**This message is for** the person that may glibly respond to the invitation of Salvation and then bounce on through life as if what they committed verbally, never penetrated their soul. We need to spend time in God's word and grow in faith in order for it to take root in our life and become fruitful.

**This message is for** the individual that has become so consumed by the greed and cares of this world, that when the word of God is given, it is quickly choked out. If you are sitting here thinking about what you will be doing on Monday, instead of focusing on receiving a word from the Lord, then maybe you need to spend time reprioritizing your life.

**This message is also for** someone that is ready to respond and grow in their relationship with God. They have considered the claims of Christ, and are willing to step forward and, by faith, trust Him for the remainder of their life's journey. It comes down to surrender and trust. Only then can real, eternal life begin.

So, in many ways, today can be a "No Excuse Sunday." One day we all will have to stand before God and give an account of how we have used our time and how we have responded to the invitation of salvation in

Christ. There will be no excuses accepted when we meet God. If you feel that this message is directed to you, then it is God that is working on your heart, not me.



## Our Passage

In our passage today, we see a story of a farmer going out into the field to work. Farmers here in our area do things a little differently than they did during Jesus' day. Today, farmers take great care selecting the right seeds to plant, carefully measuring the proper amount of fertilizer for each field, and then planting the seeds in neatly arranged rows. The seeds are placed in the ground that has been prepared through plowing and they are planted at the right depth of soil. In carefully doing this, the farmer can maximize the intended harvest.



During Jesus' day, the farmer didn't have what our farmers have today. They didn't have genetically engineered seeds to keep out the insects and bugs. They didn't have pesticides to kill the weeds. They didn't have the large tractors to plant carefully planned rows. They would simply reach into the bag and scatter out the seeds by hand. The farmer would begin at one corner of his property and begin to distribute the seeds.



As they were sown, some would fall on the path that is between his land and his neighbors. Some of the seed would fall on patches of land that only had a few inches of soil on top of a rock formation underground. There may have been a few areas of the property where weeds and thorns grew over. Over the winter, the farmer may have cleared out a

A Sower Went Out to Sow



patch of weeds and was hoping that this recently cleaned patch would now bear fruit. I am sure the farmer scattered some of his good seed among the thorns and weeds.

But it was the good soil that the farmer was hoping that would be the most fruitful. The soil was not infested with weeds, not along a walking path, and not on a rock formation. This soil was the one that would bear a good harvest. I have read that during the days of Jesus, an average farmer would expect a yield of 7 ½ times what he scattered.

When Jesus told this parable to the listeners of that day, this was a very familiar scene. Jesus was painting word pictures that the listeners could relate to and identify with. What is unique about parables is that there are many different ways in which you could interpret them.

## Perspective – The Soil

For example, you could study this parable from the perspective of the soil. If we are the soil, then we are responsible for the condition of the soil of our soul. Maybe you hear the word of God and it bounces off you like the seeds bounced off the rocky hard soil. As God's word is preached to you, you reject it over and over again. You hear it, but you never allow the truth of what is being said to penetrate your heart.



If we are the soil, then maybe when we hear the word of God, we readily accept it. We may stand up and say, "I am going to serve God all my life." And then next week you are back at the ABC store stocking up on your favorite poison. A person that hears and responds in this kind of

manner had no soil in their life so that the seed could take root and thrive and be fruitful.

### Three Hindrances that Become Weeds and Thorns

If we are the soil, then it is up to us to respond to the word of God. You may have been a young child or even an adult and said “yes” to God. You heard the message and there was definitely an opportunity to be fruitful. As you get older, your focus in life changes. Jesus identified three things that can be like thorns and choke out the word of God.

#### 1. The Cares of this World –

We become so enamored with the daily newspaper and the current events that we cannot keep our eyes focused on who and what we should be about.

We sit and watch the news and our entire life becomes preoccupied by what the news anchor said. I am not against watching the news and staying informed, but how much of your life do the cares of the world consume you? If we allow those issues and “news reports” to so dominate our life, they can be like weeds growing in our life.



#### 2. The Deceitfulness of Riches -

The second item that can choke out our productiveness is “the deceitfulness of riches.” Again, I don’t think that Jesus is speaking against earning a living. He is not saying that having money, land, and wealth is bad. What he is



warning us about is that our “things” can deceive us into believing that things are fruitful and good in the eyes of God simply because we have a good home or stable income. Riches are simply an illusion. They do not provide fruitfulness. We can allow our pursuit of wealth to so consume us that we totally forget God.

Would you rather take that extra shift at work and earn double pay on Sunday or forgo that and attend church with your family? Should you work seven days a week in order to store up more riches here on this earth? I am convinced when we take time away from worshipping God and substitute the pursuit of our pleasures and wealth making, God takes back what we don’t give him. He may not take it back today, but he will make an accounting for our squandered time.

#### 3. The Desire for Other Things

Jesus mentions a third item that acts as weeds and thorns. Jesus identified “and the desire for other things.” This third item is a catch all. If there is ANYTHING that takes precedent over our love for God, then that THING will become a thorn. God is a jealous God. There is not supposed to be anything that stands between us and God. If we make decisions about our life and put God first then the other responsibilities and needs will be in proper perspective.



Jesus identified the soil that was most productive was one that had good rich deep soil. With the proper temperature, and adequate water, the seed sprouts and

grows to a great harvest. Some 30, some 60, and others even as much as 100. The soil that was ready was fruitful.

The very first Sunday that I preached in this church, I told you that my relationship with God is my number one priority.

As I honor that commitment, then my other commitments and relationships are also in the right priority. The only way I can be a good husband, father, or pastor is to have God as my primary priority.

As you are sitting here this morning, you may be wondering what kind of soil are you. Maybe you have heard the word but it has not taken root. Maybe you once said “Yes” to Jesus but turned away after the brief time. Maybe your life is so filled with worries, cares, and other things that you no longer are concerned about God. The good news is that you can transplant your seed into better soil. You can dedicate yourself to a disciplined life of reading God’s word on a regular basis, (planting new seed and tilling the soil) attending church on a regular basis, (watering that implanted seed) and denying yourself and following Christ (seed denying selfish wants). Your life doesn’t have to remain un-fruitful. You can become productive again.

### Perspective – The Seed

Another perspective that we can use to examine this parable is through a study of the seed. In many ways Jesus made this perspective easy because he clearly identified what the seed was. Jesus said in Mark 4:13 that *“The sower sows the word.”*



The word is the message of God. The message that Jesus is bringing to all of humanity is that we should “Repent” and “Believe” that Jesus is the Son of God. When we repent and turn from our sinful ways, and believe - we receive forgiveness of our sins, we receive a new nature that is from God, and a new mandate.

The seed that is sown is of the same quality. The seed that is sown on the rocky path could produce the same harvest as the one sown in good soil. The quality of God’s word is still effectual to change the heart and minds of men today – almost 2000 years after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This seed is changing the hearts of hardened criminals. This seed is changing the minds of agnostics. This seed is ready to change your life as well.

Our response is simply to open the heart of our door and let it come in. In Revelation 3:20 it says, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”* The seed stands ready to change your life if you only let it in.

### Perspective – The Sower

This parable is not only about the soil and the seed – it is about the sower. It is a gripping call to discipleship. This is also a call to become a sower of the seed. The world out there desperately needs to hear the word of God. ***Without the word of God planted into their lives, they will die separated from God.***



If we keep the good news of Jesus Christ to ourselves, then those that we know without Christ will enter into eternity in hell. Jesus spoke of hell as a place of eternal torment and punishment. Do you want to spend eternity like that? Do you want your friends and neighbors there?



Then we are challenged to sow the seed of God's word into their life.

Have you asked your family, friends, or neighbors when they die, are they prepared to meet God? Those of us that claim to know Christ need to become bolder in proclaiming our faith in Christ. We do not need to stand on the street corner and preach at people. But as we go, we will encounter people that are seeking a way back to God. When we meet them, we need to have the courage to witness and tell them the way of salvation.

There are opportunities for us to share what God has done for us. God will open windows of opportunity to share. We have to be ready and willing to do so.

For the sower, the task is simple. Go out into the field and scatter the seed. The sower is not responsible for the quality of the seed. God has already taken care of his seed. Jesus said that it is sharper than any two-edged sword, able to divide asunder the soul and marrow of a person. As a sower, you can be assured that the seed you are sowing is a good quality.



The sower is not responsible for the quality of the soil. The soil is responsible for itself. The sower is called to be obedient.

### **The Uniqueness of the Sower**

What is unique about a sower is that first they had to have the seed planted within them. The sower once heard about how God loved him. Their sinful past could be forgiven simply by yielding their heart, lives, and will to the master. Jesus calls us to give up OUR lives and let Jesus be Lord and Master. It is a deliberate decision.

The seed that is planted into the ground will not yield any fruit until it dies to self. But once it dies to itself, then the

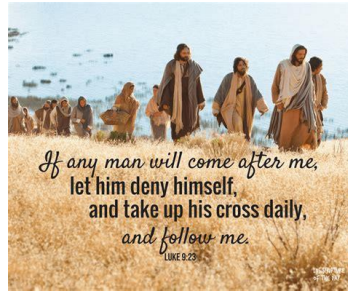


blade will open upward to the sky. Then the ear will appear and begin to show a readiness to bear fruit. Then the full grain head will appear. It is now when the stalk is most fruitful. The original seed that was planted in the ground is now gone. The nutrients in the seed were used to grow a greater harvest. Over time, as that seed was obedient, the stalks will bend under the weight of the harvest.

### **The Invitation**

One day, the Harvester will come and take the sickle blade and cut the stalk from the earth. The purpose of the seed that was yielded has been completed. There is a harvest that remains much more plenteous than imagined.

God is calling us to surrender our wills to His will. Jesus calls us to “*deny ourselves, and take up the cross, and follow Him.*”



The uniqueness of this parable is that we all can identify with one perspective in this story. Our lives are like the soil – we are only fruitful when we have the word planted in our heart. Our lives are only changed when we have the word of God planted there. Our challenge is to become sowers of God’s word. We are to take this fruit that God has planted in us and sow it into the lives of others.

We have no excuse. We need to realize that each of us are called - some to salvation and others to deeper discipleship and obedience. One day, our mortal bodies will be cut from this earth – much like the stalk of grain. The only hope is to pour out our lives into others and thereby plant seeds that will be fruitful in the future. In dying to self, others may be born again. Will you leave behind a bountiful harvest of 30, 60, or 100-fold?

How is your harvest looking so far?

## **LET US PRAY**

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Mikey’s Funnies – July 14, 2017 – A Point “Funny”