

## The Sower, the Seed, and the Soils

Luke 8:4-15

This is one of only a handful of parables that Jesus interprets for us. There's no doubt about the story's meaning because the Master Storyteller gives the explanation to us. The sower is Jesus in the immediate context ("and a great crowd...came to him" vs. 4), but it also represents anyone else who "sows" (teaches) the word of God, which is the seed. The parable itself could be called "The Parable of the Soils" because each type of soil (the hard path, the stony ground, the thorn bed, and the "good soil," are pictures of the four kinds of people who "hear the word of God." First, a word to those who teach...

**(1). Know the soil personally** - the farmer must *prepare* various kinds of soil differently. The hard soil he must spend time breaking; the stony soil he must spend time clearing; the thorny soil he must spend time pulling, and the good soil simply requires an abundance of seed (the word of God).

**(2). Throw the seed intentionally** – you are not responsible to fashion a talk; you are not a creative life coach who needs to look for a fresh word of encouragement; you are responsible to take God's word and sow it. I Peter 1:23 says the Spirit takes "the incorruptible seed (the word) and produces life."

**(3). Grow the fruit gently** – truthfully, you can't "grow" any fruit – but when you begin to see God produce the harvest, do everything in your power to protect the fruit that exists. Too many preachers have forgotten that Jesus alone has the authority and power to curse the barren fig tree.

But I'd like to close by speaking a word of caution to those of us who are recipients of the sown word. There are four kinds of people who listen to God's word, but there is only one kind of person radically and permanently changed by God's word. Let's look at the four kinds of soil and make some remarks.

- I. **There is the person who is terribly hard** (the pathway)  
This is the person who has traveled down the same spiritual road, gone down the same path, time after time, and the routine has caused the heart to harden. It's the person unappreciative of what he or she has. "Then comes the devil" and snatches the seed away.
- II. **There is the person who is temporarily happy** (the rocky soil)  
This is the person who loves to come to church – the one who will attend Bible study and actually enjoy it while he is there, but because the seed falls upon rocky soil where there is no water, the seed can't take root, and soon dies. So too the person who hears the word of God but does not take the time during the week to actually apply what he has heard.
- III. **There is the person who is tragically hindered** (the thornbed)  
This is the person, Jesus says, who actually experiences the choking of this world's cares. The word of God takes root and even produces some fruit, but rather than understanding the preciousness of what is growing in the heart, this person puts his eye on the things of this world and causes his or her despair "to choke the very life out of his soul."

The only person in this parable who has "tasted and seen that the Lord is good" is the one whose heart is tender and healthy. It's the person who comes into the occasion of hearing God's truth and like Samuel says, "Lord, here am I, send me." It's the one who not only pays attention to hearing the Word of God, but carefully does that which He hears, because it's from God, and not from man. So be it.