

Where The Seed Falls

Harmony M.B.C., July 27, 2008 (Morning)

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Mark 4:14-20

The parable of the sower and the seed may be one of the most widely know parables of Christ in the bible. Almost every Sunday School student has heard about it. Some folks can almost quote it by heart. Most everybody can state the object lesson of it. Most everybody knows that the seed in the parable is the Word of God, and the different habitats or areas into which the seed falls are conditions of men's hearts and lives. The areas are both the condition within people and the circumstances in which they are when and where the Word comes to them. But for all the knowledge about it, there continues to be a steady stream of human beings who are found to be in the classes of those identified as not getting any lasting benefit from the Word of God.

We live in a time when it is easy to be nonchalant about the Word of God. Everybody is exposed to it. Bibles are everywhere. Preachers are preaching everywhere. Even in the midst of enemies of God making every effort to shut everybody up who is speaking the Word, and to ban every presentation of the Word from human society, it still proliferates. The earth is full of His knowledge and glory, as waters cover the sea. Yet for all that, multitudes of people still go untouched by the power of the Word.

This morning we want to look at this anomaly and make some remarks about it as we look into the parable of the sower. May the Holy Spirit use this time today to deal with some poor wandering soul who is in proximity to the seed of the Word which is sown.

I. The First Case V.15

Wayside: route or journey (in life) -

- Just going along in the life that they are living.
- Self-determined path laid out for themselves
- No consideration for spiritual things
- Living life as it now is in time.
- This gospel thing is just another unusual subject that falls their way.
 - interesting enough, and maybe they examine it (like a visitor to a flea market) along with all the other artifacts on the table of life.
- But they are living in the wayside.
 - There in the wayside, things are always showing up that really don't have any significance to them as it might relate to the route of life they are taking.
 - They have other plans.
 - Their mind is set on other things ;a diverse array of things to occupy them in their life in the wayside
 - devil only needs to step up and tease their eyes, or ears, or heart with any one of those distractions and away they go.
 - devils voice seems to echo in their excuses; they have no time for this kind of thing

right now.

might think about it later, they say. But there will be no later, because the devil will lift it right out of their hearts by enabling them to bring something else in.

- And so, the word of God that was sown in this wayside site where they live their lives is quickly removed from their presence.
 - Lesson: The devil has power to take the word of God out of the seat of conscience of men.

II. The Second Case: vv.16-17

- Stony ground: there is here the suggestion of a soil that has a modicum of receptiveness to it. It is stony, but it is ground.
 - May not be the best soil;
 - Not a soil likely to be prepared for growing a crop,
 - but a soil capable of some kind of growth.
- But, in stony ground fashion, when this hearer receives the word, it creates a reaction.
 - Unlike the hearer by the wayside, this hearer has something happen from this sowing.
 - Some kind of growth springs up.
 - Appears to be a good start of a crop which at first promises that in due time it will bring forth some fruit.
 - Shows up as a green shoot of what looks like spiritual growth.
 - Shoot of joy or gladness.
 - Hearer glad about what he has heard from the word of God.
 - People can get a level of gladness on hearing about the fact that there is a way to eliminate the enmity between them and God. People can get joy out of being told that they can have all the wrongness in their lives made right. People can get joy out of being told that they can spend eternity in a perfect place where they will never sorrow and never die. This is good stuff!! This is stuff that can produce a rush of great gladness. And so, some hearers get glad when they hear about the gospel truth.
- But then, life goes on.
 - And in that life, there are trials. Especially if they begin to talk to other people about this joy they are feeling and the source of that joy.
 - The gospel is controversial.
 - When you talk to people about it there is always somebody who sees it differently than you.
 - It might be a Muslim, or a Hindu, or an atheist, or an agnostic, or another person who professes Christianity.
 - There is always somebody who doesn't see it the way the bible teaches it.
 - And they will oppose you.
 - They may call you crazy or blind or fanatical.
 - So, you will experience trouble about your belief.
 - You may even experience persecution.
- This is what those in the land of stony ground face. And when they face these things, they

begin to ask whether all this joy and gladness is really very important or is just a momentary high. This trouble in their lives will be measured as not worth the effort of continuing to experience and live this joy, this gladness, so they will dump the whole thing.

- Notice why it is that these stony ground people can't keep on keeping on. "They have no root in themselves..."
 - Humans don't have any foundation which anchors them down into spiritual things.
 - You give a human a handful of spiritual treasures and he won't know whether to adore them, spend them or eat them.
 - In fact, they would be wasted on him because he cannot use them for anything.
 - Humans can get all overjoyed about having a handful of treasures, because they can appear beautiful when looked upon, but they cannot find a use for them because they don't have the spiritual understanding to use them.
 - The spiritual soil of the kingdom of God is of a sort that the natural man cannot put roots down in it. It takes a spiritual organism to grow and put down deeper and deeper roots into the soil of God's kingdom.
 - But natural humans have no spiritual roots, and so, the things of the spiritual kingdom will not benefit them.
 - They will wither in the best of spiritual conditions because they are not suited to it. This is the case of the stony ground person.
- All that flurry of joy and gladness perishes because he has no root and cannot gain spiritual sustenance regardless of how much spiritual help there is around.

III. The Third Case: vv.18-19

"sown among thorns..."

- We see that those who have their existence in this place have a terrible problem with priorities. There is always too much stuff to do and think about that is all about living in this world and all about the comfort and concerns of this world.
 - At the top of their lists are always things that make life comfortable and enjoyable and free of stress in this world.
 - But, while they strive after these things, the claws of the monster of care and commitment dig deeper and deeper into their souls.
 - It is here, among the thorns that people get so caught up in living that they forget to live.
 - Their lives become all about looking for something else to make life easier, or more enjoyable, more fulfilling, more exciting.
- This environment of thorns is where the great bear trap of money is set for those who live and work here.
 - Life becomes a cycle of getting money and spending it to advance the cause of improving worldly comfort, seeking worldly enjoyment, obtaining worldly goals.
 - The deceitfulness of riches closes its arms around them and they become lost in a jungle of branches growing from the money tree.

Within this subtle trap, people have visions of all the things that it is possible to have and to enjoy.

The human frame, being the carnal instrument that it is, can soon conjure up a

- thousand sweet delights to be had in this land of thorns.
 - Things that humans can get great pleasure from.
 - Thing that delight body and mind and satisfy the deep cravings of the nature they possess.
- At some point, or by degrees, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things form a league in the heart of those in the land of thorns.
- At some point, making choices about lust and pleasure have to do more with selecting and pursuing them than whether or not it can be done.
 - They have the means to pursue so many of these things.
 - They have the will to pursue so many of these things.
 - And, so, they step off into the deep jungle of riches' deceit and lust's fulfillment and the thorn trees are suddenly a mile high, choking out all other forms of life...
 - only the thorns of worldly things grow here all else dies beneath this dominant species...
 - the human who goes here is in a place in which he can have a million seeds of the word of God strewn about him, yet not one of them will ever spring forth and bear any fruit...because he is in the land of thorns.

IV. The final habitat spoken of in this parable is “good ground.”

Good ground has unique features.

- We usually simply think of some rich ground where things can grow.
 - But that is not the full picture.
 - We ought to remember first of all that good ground has been prepared by somebody to receive and nurture seed.
 - You can go out here in a field somewhere and run a shovel in the ground and bring up some dirt and look at it and say, “that is good ground.” Now, as far as that soil having nutrients which would grow things, that might be true. But if you have picked a field at random, and it is not a plowed and disked field, you can look around you and see all kinds of weeds, maybe even some young saplings, some briars, etc. that are already growing there.
 - Try dropping some seed into that ground amongst those other wild plants and see if it will ever make anything. It won't. Ground which is considered good ground by an intelligent farmer is ground that not only has the necessary consistency and nutrients to help seeds grown, but it also has to be prepared.
 - Farmers in the know will plow and disk, maybe add some lime and fertilizer before they put any seed in.
 - Or in the case of “no-till” planting, they will plant right after removing another crop, adding necessary nutrients, and the ground is right to receive and nurture those seeds.
- That is the imagery we want to have when we think of “good ground.”
- Now, the Lord said some seed fell on good ground.
- That ground was ready to receive the word of God.
- How was it made ready?
 - It was the work of the Lord which made it ready. When God intends to contradict what

would be the normal fate of the word of God being sown about among men, He knows He must prepare the hearts of men so that the Word will do more than just fall on their hearts, either to be taken away by the devil, or to lie dormant there, or to be choked by depraved growth.

- God made man in His own image and there is a fundamental receiving ground in the heart of men for the Word of God. But that ground is fallow ground. It has weeds, and briars, and all kinds of native growth there. This growth springs up naturally in the hearts of men and it will prevent the Word of God from bearing fruit if left to the natural case of things.
 - It also lacks the spiritual vitality to nurture and develop the fruit to be borne from the planting of the seed of God's Word.
 - So, God breaks up that fallow ground and makes it ready to do something with the Word. Then when that Word is sown, it will produce God's fruit.
- So, some seed in our parable fell on good ground.
 - Notice a distinctive about this sowing.
 - Those described here are said to "hear it (the Word)." A number of times, the Lord Jesus said in His sermons, "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear."
We may wonder what He meant by that.
Everybody has ears.
But not everybody has "ears to hear." Some people are stone deaf to the sound of the Word of God. My wife has trouble making me hear sometimes because I am functionally deaf in my right ear and I have to doubt my ability to hear out of my left ear.
Humans are like that, and worse, without the help of God's hearing aid. That hearing aid is the work of the Holy Spirit. He creates new ears.
He does that when He creates a new creature in Christ Jesus within our beings. If the Spirit comes to a person and regenerates his soul, that new creation of God has the ability to hear God.
 - Suddenly there are sounds from heaven that no mortal ear can hear. Suddenly there are messages being heard about Jesus Christ, Savior of men. Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners. Jesus Christ who paid the sin debt of every person who will believe the message God sent them about His Son. Like the bells of a church tower on Sunday morning, these messages ring forth, toll after toll into the newly regenerated soul. And each tone, each sound, each nuance of the music they bring is heard by that soul.
 - This is what is happening when seed is sown on good ground. They who are represented by this imagery hear the Word of God.
 - Notice also, according to our text there is another distinctive about the good ground people; they receive the word of God.
 - There is something about that good ground...that prepared ground that is used as a symbol here.

It seems like the ground that the farmer labors over becomes custom made to receive seed. Which it does.

Did you know that when ground is well broken well disked, prepared with the proper nutrients that it takes on a characteristic it doesn't have otherwise. What happens is that all the elements of that good ground become somewhat diffuse in that prepared soil so that the newly planted seed comes into contact with so much more that is sure to produce growth. All the tiny particles of prepared soil, all the tiny particles of added lime and fertilizer provide a thousand points of contact for each seed to touch. The ground is ready, and the seed is ready to act in concert to produce fruit. And so it does.

- So, when the seed of the Word is sown in the good ground of the hearts of people newly re-created by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, no newly created person can resist coming to the Christ of their hope!
- They are drawn like iron filings to a magnet, like electrons to protons, like bees to nectar.
 - This is when the good stuff really starts to happen.

By that I mean this is when the stuff that ultimately glorifies the Lord begins to happen. This is the time when heavenly plants begin to spring forth in the hearts of saved folks. These spiritual plants are small at first and you almost can't tell the difference between them and any other growth. But they are products of God's sowing and the Lord is looking at them and enjoying them and recognizing that these are the fruits of divine effort. People will notice the difference, too.

There is a world of difference between carnal production that springs out of a human's life as a result of the seed of depravity, and the spiritual growth that comes forth from the seed that has been sown by the Lord.
- And the last distinctive of people found in the area of good ground is that the Word of God sown there brought forth fruit. The fruit was variable in quantity, but all that ground brought forth fruit.