

# 1. The Parable of The Sower

(Matt 13:1 -23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:5-15)

Our first parable is The Sower, and it's an interesting one because Jesus told the story, and this time he also explained the parable and what he means by it. He doesn't always do that; He usually leaves us to sort out the meaning ourselves, but with the Sower He is very clear.

A lot of people had gathered to hear Jesus teach -- so many that He had to get on a little boat and push away from the shore a bit, so that the huge crowd on shore could see Him.

That day, He would tell a lot of parables, beginning with this one:

“Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air devoured it. Some seeds fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Then His disciples asked Him, saying, “What does this parable mean?”

And He said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that ‘Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.’

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The sower sows the word.

Those by the roadside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, so that they will not believe and be saved.

But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.

Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience -- some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred!”

What a neat story. Just like a sower, or a farmer, would go out and spread seeds, Jesus and those who preach about God are sowing the word of God! Let’s think for a moment. What grows from seeds? Plants do! So if the seeds are like the word of God, then they get planted, what would grow from them? Well, FAITH grows from them! When the sower or the planter tells people about God and His Kingdom, he invites the people to follow God. He’s like a person planting seeds that might grow into great faith.

We could say that Jesus is sowing seeds as he teaches, right? And also a priest is sowing seeds in his sermons, or maybe you are sowing seeds, if you tell people about Jesus and how he loves them. We can all be the sower in this story!

Jesus was explaining the parable to his apostles, and of course they are becoming sowers. They are going to be sent out into the world to teach the holy gospel! They will be planting seeds, and Jesus is letting them know that when the seeds don’t grow, it’s not necessarily the sower’s fault! The seeds are good and the sower is doing a good job, but the soil has to be good for a wonderful plant to grow! When the apostles go out and preach (and even when Jesus is walking around teaching) lots of people will hear the word of God, but only some of them will decide to follow Jesus and to live as Christians. Some others will not want to follow Jesus. The apostles should be ready for this, and not be discouraged.

We can all be the sower, but sometimes we are also the soil, the dirt! When someone teaches you about God, you have had some seeds planted in you! Who teaches you? Who has taught you about Jesus? Those people have planted seeds of faith in you! The seeds are little pieces of knowledge and love that can grow and grow in your heart.

But not all of the seeds grow very well, so let’s look at what Jesus says about the four different kinds of soil and how the seeds grow -- or do not grow -- in each kind! The soil is us, the soil is our hearts.

1. The first way Jesus lists is when the Sower drops the seeds along the roadway. The road is pounded flat and hard by people traveling on it, and when the seeds land on the hard ground, they never take root. They’re just sitting there in plain sight, so the birds come and eat them! So if the soil is our hearts, that means that sometimes the seeds of God’s word will fall into a heart that is hard and they won’t ever grow or take root. The person will hear the word of God and nothing will grow from them. The seeds just sit there, so after a while, the devil and his helpers come and take away the seeds, so that the person will not grow faith in God.

2. Some seeds get planted in very rocky places, where there is a bit of dirt, so they start to grow! But the rocks get in the way and the roots are not very deep, so on a hot day when those rocks heat up, the little plants will just shrivel up and die. When the seed of the word of God is planted in a rocky heart, Jesus tells us that the person is very joyful and happy to hear about Jesus, but when life gets difficult, they stop believing. They don't stick around, and their faith just shrivels up and dies. An interesting thing about that is that some people will say that if you believe in Jesus even for just a few minutes, you are completely saved and you live forever in heaven - but here, Jesus tells us about people who do believe in him for a little while, but then wander off and choose not to follow him to the Kingdom.
3. Next, there are the seeds that fall into the thorns! Those are the people who believe the word of God and their faith begins to grow -- but then thorns choke the plant out. What kinds of thorns might stop someone's faith? Well, it's the passions, our sins and weaknesses. For example, maybe we are very greedy, and our love of money and stuff begins to overtake our love for Jesus. If we let our weaknesses overcome our faith, then we don't bear much fruit.
4. Finally, Jesus tells us about the seeds planted in really good soil -- those just grow and grow! If our hearts can be like good soil, without rocks or thorns, then the seeds planted in us can become faith that grows and grows!

What kind of fruit can a heart grow?

Of course it's not apples or oranges; it's a spiritual kind of fruit. In his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul actually gives us a list of what the Fruits of the Spirit are! If you keep your heart soft and good, and God's seeds grow and grow into faith, you will have these fruits: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control! Our growing faith will produce these things, and we will be transformed into people who are more like Jesus: more gentle, more loving, more merciful.

Jesus tells this parable about growing plants, because we can all understand it. Most of us have seen how seeds grow into plants. Have you ever grown a fruit (or a vegetable, or even a flower)? If you have, you know something about growing: it takes time, doesn't it? It takes a long time for a seed to turn into a fruit or a vegetable or a beautiful flower. And it doesn't just take time: it also takes good soil, water, and the right amount of light.

If we are trying to grow God's seeds into faith in our hearts, we need to be patient. Just like we can't plant a watermelon seed one day and eat its fruit the next, God's seeds take a long time to grow love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and

self-control in our hearts. While these seeds are growing, we need to patiently wait. While we wait, we must keep our hearts soft and good, watering them with the Sacraments and Scriptures, and staying in the light of God so that God's seeds can grow strong and fruitful in our life.

It makes a lot of sense that we are like the soil in the parable. Our hearts can be hard or soft, and we can either be a good place for God's seeds to grow, or we can focus on other things and let them choke out the seeds so that God's good things cannot grow in our life.

But how can we be like the sower? We talked about how when we tell people about Jesus and how He loves them, we are spreading God's seeds into their hearts and helping them learn about Him and His love for them. We don't really know if the soil of their hearts is soft and ready to grow God's seeds or not. When we are the sower, it is our job to love the people and tell them about Jesus and His love. It is not our job to force the seeds to grow: each person needs to prepare their own heart so that they can grow. This means that sometimes when we are sowing God's seeds, our friends will grow love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in their hearts. Sometimes we will sow God's seeds and nothing will happen. Or maybe our friends will start to grow the good fruits of God's seeds and something will keep them from growing. Or maybe we will sow the seeds and they'll begin to grow the good fruits, and then something will happen that chokes out those good fruits and keeps them from growing the best fruit. But no matter what the results, it is our job to sow God's seeds by telling others about Jesus and how much He loves them.

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## QUESTIONS:

Why does Jesus teach with parables?

*Jesus knows how much we love stories, so he uses stories to teach us. The parables show us more about God's Kingdom in a way that we can really understand.*

In the parable that Christ told, when the sower planted seeds, they landed on four different types of soil. Can you think of one of those four types? Can you think of more? How many of them can you remember?

*The seeds in the parable fell on hard soil, on rocky soil, on soil with weeds, and on good soil.*

Which kind of soil do you want in your heart? Why?

*Each of us may have a different answer for this question. Hopefully someday we will all want our heart to be full of the good, soft soil where God's seeds of faith can grow and produce good fruit!*

**FOR DISCUSSION:** God is always sowing seeds -- sowing His word -- in our hearts! But how does He do that? Talk together about ways that God is sowing His word in your heart. Does He send people to help you learn about Him and His love? Who does He send? Does He send experiences? How does He sow His word in your heart through the Church? Now think about this: how is your heart receiving the “seeds” that God is sowing in your heart? Talk about ways to help your heart become even softer, better “soil” for God to sow His word into.