

The Soils (Part 1)

Mark 4:1-20

January 27, 2013

Introduction

One of the most fascinating studies in the gospels are the parables of Jesus. We know some of the parables—the Lost Son, the Good Samaritan, the Soils (which we will study today and next week), etc

Mark 4:1-12 *Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around Him was so large that He got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. ² He taught them many things by parables, and in His teaching said: ³"Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times."*

⁹*Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

¹⁰*When He was alone, the Twelve and the others around Him asked Him about the parables. ¹¹He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹²so that, " 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'"*

I. Jesus Speaks in Parables (1-2, 10-12)

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around Him was so large that He got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge.

- Crowd around Jesus
 - Once more, they are pushing Jesus to the lake
 - He has to get on the boat to be away from them
 - The crowd is a hindrance, they do not really want to hear Him
 - They tolerate His teaching just to see miracles

He taught them many things by parables,

- Then Jesus taught them many things by parables
 - Parables
 - *Parabole*—Gk; means to compare something along side something else
 - Parables are comparisons
 - Can be in stories or in simple statements that are true (axioms)
 - To understand spiritual truths—use something to compare to it
 - Found in OT (Nathan's parable to David in **2 Samuel 12**)
 - Gospels record over 60 parable (quoted mostly in Matthew / Luke; none in John)
 - Purpose of parables

Mark 4:10-12 When He was alone, the Twelve and the others around Him asked Him about the parables. ¹¹He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹²so that, " 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'"

Note: Jesus quotes from **Isaiah 6:9-10**:

- To reveal—work of grace to make clear to believers spiritual truth
- To conceal—work of judgment to obscure the truth from unbelievers
- Why would Jesus conceal from the people

Isaiah 6:9-10 He said, "Go and tell this people: 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' ¹⁰Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

Genesis 6:3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever."

- Judgment against unbelievers
- Jesus said that He speaks in parables to prevent them from repenting and be saved
- Why?

Mark 3:22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons He is driving out demons."

- They have gone too far in their unbelief that they are past the point of forgiveness.
- This is the turning point of Jesus' ministry

Mark 1:14-15 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵"The time has come," He said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

- He began by preaching the good news to everyone...clearly calling people to repentance and believe in Him
- But people were not interested in His message—only His healing power
- Some were offended by His contempt to their traditions

Matthew 13:34-35 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; He did not say anything to them without using a parable. ³⁵So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."

Note: Jesus quotes from **Psalms 78:2**. In the OT, all parables are judgment parables. See **2 Samuel 12:1-4** (Nathan's parable to David concerning his sin with Bathsheba); **Judges 9:7-15** (Jotham, youngest son of Gideon, rebuking people of Shechem for allowing Abimelech, oldest son of Gideon, to be king after killing his 70 brothers).

From this point on—Jesus talks in parables to the crowds, and He does not explain what He means. He has hidden the meaning from them. He no longer speaks plainly and clearly, but is now hiding His meaning so that they will not repent of their evil deeds and unbelief.

II. The Parable of the Soils (3-9, 13)

Mark 4:3-9 *"Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." ⁹Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

Note: This parable is found in Matthew and Luke. This is an important parable.

- Behold—look
 - Jesus is calling attention to something people can see
 - Very common sight around the lake, farming
- Sower went out to sow
 - Had bags and scattered seeds
 - This done after they had plowed the land so that it is ready
- As he was sowing, some fell beside the road
 - Israel back then did not have fences
 - Roads were basically paths through fields (usually 3 feet wide)
 - Not cultivated, so they were packed and hard as concrete
 - Seeds fell to the ground—no chance to grow
 - Birds ate them
 - Luke adds: whatever birds did not eat, then seeds got crushed by people, animals and wagons
- Rocky ground
 - Rocky soil—not talking about rocks / pebbles mixed in
 - In Israel there is a very hard limestone bedrock—sometimes soil is thin and lays on top of that bedrock
 - Seeds grow in soil but not very deep roots
 - Because shallow roots, plants forced to grow up
 - When sun rises, it dries out the plant because there is no moisture in shallow soil for plant to survive (spring rains have ended at this point)
 - Plants die
- Thorny / weedy soil
 - Looks good, no rocks, looks to be clean
 - When seeds come up, weeds come up at the same time
 - Weeds grow faster and taller than grains
 - Weeds steals moisture and shades seeds from sunlight—preventing growth—seed dies
 - Ground cursed from Adam (toil the ground in sweat)
- Good soils
 - Increased
 - 30 xs
 - 60 xs
 - 100 xs

- Shocking numbers because the yield (amount of food gathered) at the time of Israel is about 7.5 to 10 percent of total crop
- Here Jesus is saying that the yield is 3000 percent, 6000 percent, and 10,000 percent!
- He who has an ear let him hear
 - When people heard this—they got the items of the story but not the point
 - Again judgment against the people
 - The only people that ask Jesus what He meant—disciples...His people
 - He reveals the truth to them

III. Parable Explained

Next week