

2 April 2023

The Parable of the Sower

Dear Sisters and Elders,

In my studies this week I came across an additional way of looking at the parable of the Sower, taught in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. This is an insight offered by a former BYU religious educator, Wayne Dimick. I hope this parable is familiar to you. Today I want to give you another way to think about it. I have tried to capture the essence of this new perspective in the graphic included with this email. My hope is that you will desire to study and internalize this message for yourself.

In the parable, a Sower (someone who plants seeds) went out to plant seeds. These seeds land in 4 distinct areas.

- 1) The wayside (this has reference to the side of, or on the road or walking path where the soil would be firmly packed and more like cement than dirt).
- 2) Stony places (ground with many stones, covered over with a thin layer of dirt).
- 3) Among thorns (soil where there are competing seeds of thorns and thistles awaiting for Winter to pass and Spring to arrive so they can germinate and begin to grow).
- 4) Good ground (fertile soil where life-sustaining crops are grown).

As we learn from the parable, the exact same seed is planted in all four places, but it is only in the “good ground” that fruit comes forth. While the seed is the same, the soil has wide variations in quality. The Savior explains this parable in Matthew 13:18-23. You have all undoubtedly experienced people in your missionary labors that represent these four soil types.

- 1) The wayside. Those who hear the word of God but do not understand it. The message is taught to them and “then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart”
- 2) Stony places. “... he that heareth the word, and anon (soon or shortly) with joy receiveth it” but “when tribulation or persecution ariseth ... he is offended”
- 3) Among thorns. “... he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”
- 4) Good ground. “... he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

The new perspective is to think about these four types of soil as symbolic of the four destinations in the Great Plan of Happiness.

- 1) The wayside = Outer Darkness, the destination of those who have denied the truth and His power and denied the Holy Spirit after having received it. This group also denies Jesus and puts him to open shame.
- 2) Stony places = Telestial Kingdom, the destination of those who are liars, adulterers, whoremongers and whosoever loves and makes a lie.
- 3) Among thorns – Terrestrial Kingdom, the destination of those who are honorable, but blinded by the craftiness of men. The thorns represent the cares of the world, e.g., social media, money, fashion, sports, phones, inappropriate movies and music, etc.

- 4) Good ground = Celestial Kingdom, the destination of those who keep the commandments, enter into ordinances and keep their covenants, repent, receive the Holy Ghost and overcome the world through faith in Jesus Christ.

While it is easy for us to reflect on the people we meet and teach and place them into one of these four categories, as disciples of Jesus Christ we must ask ourselves, which soil is ours?

- 1) Do we hear counsel from leaders, but because it doesn't fit what we want, we don't take the time to study, pray, ponder and understand it, we allow it to be "devoured by the fowls of the air?"
- 2) Is our soil filled with stones of hard-heartedness? Do we love the message of the Restoration, up until the point when someone makes fun of us for trying to do the right thing and then because our roots are so shallow, we are scorched by the adversity and mocking of others and our roots die?
- 3) Perhaps we have allowed too many thorns in our lives. Too many distractions that simply choke the seed which has been planted and did start to grow, but now the things of the world consume the time we should be sanctifying ourselves and serving the children of God so in need of our message of hope and deliverance.
- 4) Is our life bringing forth fruit? Are we repenting each day? Do we have powerful personal study each day? Are we unified with our companion and working hard to fulfill our missionary purpose? Do we "always remember him"? Are we endeavoring to be led by the Spirit of the Lord in our lives and holding firm to the iron rod as we approach the Tree of Life? Are we bearing fruit?

This parable can be a powerful self-assessment tool in our lives. The soil that we cultivate will be the kingdom we inherit. May our soil be a fertile mix of faith, repentance, spirit, knowledge, power, obedience, diligence, and godly desires - so that the seed, which is the Word of God, "will become a tree, springing up in [us] unto everlasting life" (Alma 33:23), bearing the fruit of the pure love of Christ.

All my love,

President Kunz