

“The Parable of the Sower – Part 2”  
“The Wayside”  
Mark 4:1-20  
(Preached at Trinity, March 31, 2010)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we entered Chapter 4 we found Jesus again teaching by the seashore. Mark doesn't give us details as to when this took place. He only uses the word “again” which implies that He was doing as He had done before.
2. And again a huge multitude had gathered to hear Him speak.  
In **Verse 2** Mark tells us that Jesus deliberately spoke in parables.  
Why did Christ speak in parables? The simple answer: to conceal and to reveal
  - A. On one hand you might think the parables were stories told in a manner that would be easily understood. They seem simple and interesting. They deal with realities of daily life that we can identify with.  
But while it may seem that the parables were used for clarification they were actually used to veil the truth – **see verses 10-12**
  - B. For the lost the parables were given to conceal – To veil the truth from those not willing to see it.  
**Mark 4:11-12** – “. . . unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables: <sup>12</sup> That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them.”
  - C. For the elect God used them to reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom  
**Mark 4:11** – “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God”
    1. The parables were used for illustration sake to explain to the elect the hidden mysteries of the Kingdom
    2. They cause us to dig deep into His storehouse of treasure
3. This well known parable is called the Parable of the Sower.  
This parable is actually several parables. It is sometimes called the parable of the soils – Each type of soil teaches a separate truth. Yet, there is a primary scope to the parable: To show the excellence of the Word of God as it is received into the heart of a sinner prepared by the Spirit of God.
4. We find in this parable seed being sown in four types of soil. Wayside Soil, Stony Ground Soil, Thorny Soil, and Good Soil.  
There is not problem with the seed – the problem lies in the soil.
5. Jesus had several other designs in telling this parable
  1. To convince the multitudes that it isn't enough to hear the Word preached. Many hear and are not effectually saved
  2. To show that few actually prove to be right hearers of the Word.  
There are three types of ground which are bad - only one which is good.
  3. To show that some people go very far in professing the Gospel without ever being changed. Those stony place hearers receive the Word with joy and then fall away

4. To show that grace is not in ourselves - the good soil is that which has been carefully plowed and prepared
6. The seed is the Word of God that must be carefully sown.  
The soil is the various conditions of men's hearts as we shall see.  
The wayside soil is the unresponsive heart  
The stony ground soil is the impulsive heart  
The thorny soil is the preoccupied heart  
The good soil is the thoroughly prepared heart

### The Parable:

- I. It begins with the Wayside Soil  
**Mark 4:4** – “And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.”  
**Mark 4:14-15** – “The sower soweth the word. <sup>15</sup> And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.”
  - A. The condition of the ground - the wayside
    1. The foot path created as he walked through the field  
It was unplowed - seed inevitably fell upon it - not into it
    2. The human heart is hard by nature - nothing proceeds forth but corruption and sin
  - B. The "fowls came" - they would have come quickly
    1. Satan continually tempts, entices, and draws men unto wickedness
    2. Satan works endlessly to hinder sinners from believing  
He also works to keep believers from properly receiving the Word  
Satan hates the preaching of the Word
  - C. How does Satan work to keep the Word from entering into the heart of man
    1. Satan turns the hearer against the minister
      - a. He gives the hearer resentment for the hard sayings
      - b. Many find it easy to dismiss the words of the preacher. After all, he is only a man.
    2. He brings pride and self-righteousness into the heart
      - a. Causes the hearer to believe the word applies to others  
"this isn't for me... I'm already saved"
      - b. It is a terrible thing to listen to the Word of God and only be critical of others.
    3. Satan turns their thoughts toward earthly things
      - a. The cares of the coming week
      - b. The material things which he loves
      - c. Perhaps he has been injured and ponders ways to get even
    4. Satan causes drowsiness - why do you think people are more prone to fall asleep under the Word than at other times  
Do people fall asleep in theaters, ball games?

5. Forgetfulness – to temporarily hear and then immediately forget  
James spoke of such a man:  
**James 1:23-24** – “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: <sup>24</sup>  
For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”

- D. The end result is the good Word has no effect.  
There is no response, no stirring of the conscience.

## II. The Stony Ground

**Mark 4:5-6** – “And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: <sup>6</sup> But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.”

**Mark 4:16-17** – “And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; <sup>17</sup> And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.”

- A. Much of Israel has tillable soil upon layers of rock –
1. The seed comes up quickly because it is planted shallow
  2. Two causes of withering - too shallow, little root
  3. Jesus said this marks the impulsive hearer
- B. The problem of coming up too quickly  
These people enter into religion before their hearts are broken
1. The danger of emotional decisions of our day  
Advertisers know that emotion sells a product quicker than intellect
  2. We are sometimes guilty of pronouncing a sinner saved before the HS has completed His work.
  3. Notice they received the Word with joy - quick decision  
They did not count the cost  
**Luke 14:28-29** – “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him,”
- C. There are many things which may draw them
1. They may love and follow a particular minister – common  
Paul speaks of this problem in the church of Corinth
  2. Out of the motivation of ego – they desire to be well thought of
  3. Out of a desire to be saved from hell – they fear God
  4. The appeal of religion
- D. The problem of having no root - they do not endure  
They do not endure for two reasons - Internal & External
1. Internal - they have no root
    - a. They lack genuine saving faith  
There is no saving knowledge of Christ - they do not know Him  
They do not love Him. They have no desire to obey Him
    - b. They exhibit only an outward profession - they have not been changed on the inside - they are still unregenerate
    - c. They are void of the Holy Spirit - No ability to persevere
  2. External - destroyed by trials & persecution - joy destroyed

- a. They cannot bear the reproach that comes from being united with Christ
  - b. They cannot bear the loss of goods – their true god  
For most of history, becoming a Christian was a costly affair
- E. They may go far in religion
- 1. They may hear the Word with diligence - Satan did not steal it away upon hearing
  - 2. They receive it with joy - moved more by their emotions than by understanding
  - 3. They may pray, perform Christian duties, study the Word but they are unable to deny themselves and take up the Cross
- F. Effects of a stony heart
- 1. They are barren - they do not bear fruit. The true convert shows evidences of Christian graces. He labors for the Kingdom
  - 2. They are still worldly minded - they cannot bring forth the fruit of the Spirit - only the fruit of the flesh  
This love of the world eventually causes them to run back to their first love
  - 3. Inconsistency - they are not rooted in truth, carried about by every wind of doctrine
  - 4. Decay of love towards the brethren - they sow discord, full of envy, void of patience - they tear at the harmony in a church - they backbite and gossip concerning others
  - 5. Decay of love towards God - they will begin to neglect their religious duties - attendance, prayer, study
  - 6. Finally Apostasy - they grow more and more carnal - finally fall away
- G. Grave warnings unto us
- 1. We must always take seriously the work of self-examination
  - 2. We must beware lest our hearts deceive us - many believe that since they have reformed their lives they are saved
  - 3. Know for certain that God will try every Christian at one time or another - The true Christian will persevere
- H. Some signs of withering
- 1. An increasing preoccupation with self. Pride
  - 2. Self-Confidence - when a person rests upon his own success
  - 3. He cannot bare a searching or difficult doctrine - "he is offended by the Word" He tries to flee as it reveals secret sin
  - 3. His conscience is not as tender as it once was - he can now talk vainly, he allows himself unwholesome liberty to do things his conscience once would not allow. Strictness of life is a good sign of growing in grace
  - 4. His prayers are short or he seldom prays
  - 5. He is plagued by a deadness of spirit - he is cold towards the things of God

#### Conclusion:

- 1. These things stand as warnings to us. In this parable there are three types of soil. Three types of people who hear the good Word of God.
- 2. Only one of the four types hears the Word unto salvation. The difference between the four types has to do with the fruit that it bears.  
Which type are you?