

A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW

MATTHEW 13:3-8 • TV107A

A television broadcast sermon delivered
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 1979

By
HENRY T. MAHAN

Transcribed, edited and published
APRIL 8TH, 2016

HENRY T. MAHAN TAPE LIBRARY
Zebulon Baptist Church
6088 Zebulon Highway
Pikeville, KY 41501

Matthew 13:3-8

“And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And 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 sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”

I invite your attention today to the book of **Matthew chapter 13:3**. I’m going to be speaking to you on this subject: **“BEHOLD, A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW.”**

The people gathered about the Lord Jesus Christ. There were so many of them that He stepped into a small ship and they pushed away from the shore. Our Lord sat in the ship and the people gathered about Him on the shore.

He said in **verse 3 of Matthew 13**: *“That he spake many things unto them in parables and he said, behold, a sower went forth to sow.”* An eastern farmer arose one morning and filled his basket or bucket with seed and he went out into the field to scatter the seed.

A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW

MATTHEW 13:3-8 • HENRY T. MAHAN

The field had been prepared and he went out to sow his seed. As he took the seed from the bucket and scattered it over the field, along the side of the field, there was a pathway, a pathway where people had been walking and the ground was hard and pressed down.

And as the farmer scattered the seed in the field some of the seed fell on the pathway. And the birds in the trees were watching the farmer as he scattered the seed and some of it fell on the pathway.

And when he went on across the field the birds of the air swooped down and picked up the seed that was laying on the pathway on the hard, beaten, pathway where people had been walking, where it was impossible for the seed to grow. And the birds just picked it up, picked up all the precious seed that was laying there on the pathway and bore it away.

But, the farmer continued to sow and the Master said as he sowed; “There was a part of the field that was stony or rocky and the plow had just grazed over the top of the rocks. And as he sowed his seed some of the seed fell on this stony and rocky ground.”

Now, there wasn’t much dirt there; there was just a thin layer of dirt on top of the rock and the seed fell there as the farmer scattered the seed and walked on. And the seed began to grow and the rain fell and the seed sprouted and came up quickly.

He said: *“Immediately it sprang up.”* But having no root because it had no depth it couldn’t reach down into the moisture of the earth and having no root, when the sun came out and beat upon the little, tender plant, it soon turned yellow, turned brown, wilted, and died because it had no root.

It was sown, the seed was sown on the stony and rocky ground, and where there was no depth of earth, there was no moisture. There was no way for the root to get down deep into the moisture of the soil.

Well, the farmer went on and he scattered the seed, and some of it fell in the corner of the field where there were roots, briars, and thorns. The plow hadn’t broken up all of these old thorns, briars, and roots. As he scattered it in the fields some of it fell among these roots, briars, and thorns. And as the seed began to germinate and the little plant began to come up the weeds came up too, and the thorns and the briars came up.

And the Master said: *“That even though the seed sprouted and the little plant came up, that the thorns and briars just choked the life out of it and it yielded no fruit.”*

But, as the farmer sowed, some of the seed that he scattered fell on the hard, fallow, thoroughfare where people had walked and the birds of the air took it away and some of it fell on the soil where there was no depth, nothing but rocks and stones and the sun withered it and killed it.

Some of it fell among the thorns and briars but some of it fell on good ground, ground that had been pulverized by the plow, ground that had been beaten up, ground that had been prepared.

A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW

MATTHEW 13:3-8 • HENRY T. MAHAN

And that seed that fell on the good ground, it bore fruit, some of it bore hundred-fold, some of it bore sixty-fold, and some of it bore, thirty-fold.

And then after the Lord had finished giving this parable and the crowd of people left, the disciples gathered about Him and they said to Him: “*Master, what is the meaning of the parable of the sower; tell us what this parable means.*”

Now, the apostles of our Lord in writing the Holy Scriptures, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; they saw fit under the leadership of the Holy Spirit to record this parable three times in its entirety.

It is written in **Matthew 13**, it is written in **Mark 4**, it is written in **Luke 8**, and you can read the same parable and its definition in all three of those evangelist’s writings. Let’s take just some of the parables from each one.

Now, our Lord, the disciples said; “*Lord, declare unto us the meaning of this parable.*” And so he said to them:

First of all: This is the first thing he said in **Luke 8:11**, he said: “*A sower went forth to sow and the seed is the (Word of God).*” Now remember that, the seed is the (Word of God).

Who is the sower? The sower is the preacher, the true, God-called, God-ordained, God-sent minister of the Gospel. And the seed which he sows is the Word of God.

Now, the preacher does not make the seed which he sows any more than the farmer makes the seed that he sows. This eastern farmer that went out to sow that morning; he didn’t make that seed. If he had made that seed none of it would have come up, none of it would have borne fruit because he couldn’t put life in the seed.

You see, anything that he had made himself, and anything that he had concocted, if he had sowed it in his field it would have just stayed there because there is no life. Only God can make seed that has life in it.

And as you and I go forth to preach; we preach the Word of God because the Word of God is the Word of life. If we preach our opinions, if we preach our traditions, if we preach our customs, and if we preach our ideas, then there is no way possible for life to be given because we have no life in our words, in our doctrines, in our customs, in our opinions, or in our traditions.

The Word of God is the living Word. And this seed which is sown by the minister, if he uses the Bible, the Word of God; and then it is the living seed. The seed is the Word of God. Listen to these Scriptures:

In **1 Peter 1:23**: “*We are born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible seed by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.*” **James 1:18**: “*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.*”

A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW

MATTHEW 13:3-8 • HENRY T. MAHAN

God's Word is living Word. This is the reason Paul said to young Timothy: *"Preach the Word."*

I wish preachers today would preach the Word of God. We have so few preachers today who actually preach the Word of God. A man may take a text and then preach an entire message and never come back to the Word of God, never refer to the Word of God again.

God hasn't promised to bless our words, or our opinions, or our thoughts. He said: *"Your thoughts are not my thoughts. Your ways are not my ways."*

But God has promised to bless His Word. He said: *"My word will not return unto me void. It shall accomplish that whereunto I have sent it."* Why? Because His Word is living Word; it is called "the Word of Life." So, the seed is the Word of God. Now watch this!

The preacher's task is to preach the Word. He's not responsible for the results. He's not responsible for the harvest. The Lord is the Lord of the harvest. What did our Lord say? *"The harvest is plenty, the laborers are few. Pray that the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his field."*

And then Paul said this; he said in **1 Corinthians 3:5**: *"I have planted, Apollos has watered, but God giveth the increase. So then, he that planteth; he's nothing, he that watereth; he's nothing, but God that giveth the increase."*

The preacher is to preach the Word; he's to preach the Word of God, the truth about God. God is sovereign, God is almighty, God is immutable, God is mercy, God is love, and God is just, all of the attributes of our living God, because eternal life is to know God, not know a god, or some god, but the true and living God.

Our Lord said, *"This is eternal life that they might know thee the only true (living) God."* The preacher is to tell the truth, not only about God, but about man, what condition man's in because of the fall.

In the Garden of Eden man fell and spiritually he died; spiritually he was separated from God. Oh the inability of the flesh, oh the exceeding sinfulness of the flesh. *"In thy flesh dwelleth no good thing. In the flesh no man can please God."*

We are helpless creatures in need of God's mercy. The Scripture says: *"We are without hope, we are without Christ, we are without God, and we are without strength in this world."* We are to tell the truth about men.

We are to preach the truth about Christ. Who is Jesus Christ? Why did He come into this world? What did He do? Where is He now? We must proclaim Christ the living Redeemer, the sovereign Redeemer, and the sufficient Redeemer.

A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW

MATTHEW 13:3-8 • HENRY T. MAHAN

We must tell the truth about salvation, that it's not just a decision, that it's not just an adherence to the law and that it's not just acceptance of mental facts. Salvation is a new birth; it's a new creation, and it's a new life.

We must tell the truth about heaven and about hell. We must preach the truth of God's Word and this living Word of God will bring forth life. It will bring forth children to the praise of His glory, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

So, that's the first thing our Lord said to His disciples. They said: "*Declare unto us this parable.*" He said, "*The seed is the word of God.*" Let that challenge me and challenge you when we witness, when we teach, when we preach, when we write, or whatever we do; make much of the Word of God.

The Word is the living seed. The Word is the life. That's where life must come from, the Word of God. "*The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.*"

All right, then our Lord goes on, look at **Luke 8: 12**; then He says, "*Some of the seed fell by the wayside and the birds of the air came and bore it away.*" What's this talking about?

I will tell you what it's talking about, a faithful minister of the Gospel preaches; he preaches the Word of God. He sows the seed of God's Word over a congregation or over an assembly, or what I am doing right now.

And the wayside hearer (we have the wayside hearer, the stony ground hearer, the thorny ground hearer, and the good ground hearer) and the wayside hearer is that man who by, for some reason, and by chance gets in the way of the Gospel.

That's exactly right; he's indifferent, he's careless; he could care less about the Gospel, about God, about His salvation, and about interest in God. He's just not interested at all. He's unconcerned and he's indifferent. But somehow he gets in the way of the Gospel; somehow he's close by when the Gospel is preached.

It's just like this path that was alongside the field and the minister, the sower was sowing the seed on the good ground but some of the seed fell on the pathway, fell on the hard, fallow, ground, unplowed, unprepared, a thoroughfare, trodden down by the feet of men.

This is the man who gets in the way of the Gospel. I will tell you how he gets in the way of the Gospel. Perhaps his mother or father is a believer. He comes to visit them on Christmas and they are listening to Brother Mahan on the television.

The mother and father are believers. They love Christ and they love the Gospel. And the boy or daughter comes to visit them and they say: "Sit down; at 11:00 am we want you to hear our preacher on WOWK, Channel 13."

A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW

MATTHEW 13:3-8 • HENRY T. MAHAN

So, they go over and turn it on and he sits there and he is sitting there right now and he's listening to me preach but he could care less. And when the program is over he won't retain anything he heard but the birds of the air come and take it away.

What are these birds? They are birds of Satan. These birds are pride, arrogance, self-will, self-love, indifference, self-righteousness, or maybe a religious profession that knows not Christ. None of these birds let the seed lay there very long; they come and pick it up and bare it away.

Or perhaps, a young man dates a girl and she goes to church, so he goes to church with her and he sits down in the pew beside her and there is a faithful godly man in the pulpit who's not preaching denominationalism, he's not preaching experience; he's preaching Christ, he's preaching the Gospel.

And that ole boy sits there beside that girl and he hears the Gospel. But he goes out and the seed has fallen on a hard heart, on an indifferent heart, on a careless heart, and on an unconcerned heart and it lays there for a few moments and then after a while it goes away.

Or perhaps, he's a man who works for a person who's a Christian or he associates with a man who's a Christian and this man has invited him to come to church with him. So, just to please the boss, he goes with him to church and he hears the sermon, but not for long.

Or perhaps, this individual attends a funeral; I have had people come to hear me preach funerals and I preach the Gospel; I always preach the Gospel at a funeral. And this man sits there and listens and when it's over he's heard the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. But he goes out and after a while he forgets what he's heard.

You know, Herod listened to John. He feared John and he listened to John. He went out in the desert to hear John preach but Herodias wouldn't let him think about it for very long. He had that hard, unprepared, unconcerned, careless heart, the wayside hearer. And they are in our services and they are listening to this message right now, but they are totally indifferent.

A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW

MATTHEW 13:3-8 • HENRY T. MAHAN

And this precious, life-giving seed, this Word of God that can bring forth for the glory of God a beautiful plant of life. But that seed will lay on that hard, unconcerned, indifferent heart, until Satan and all the fowl, birds of the air, such as lust, indifference, carelessness, unconcerned, hatred, and all of these things come in and just bear that seed away.

Well preacher; the Lord said *“that some of the seed fell on stony ground (where the dirt was just so deep and the seed germinated quickly) and sprang up quickly. But after a while the sun came out and withered and died.”*

What does that mean? Do you know who that is? Our Lord said: *“These are people who hear the word of God and they hear the word with gladness and they receive the word of God; they receive it with gladness.”* But now watch this: *“immediately,”* now there’s the key to the whole thing.

He said: *“The stony ground hearer is the hearer who hears the word of God immediately and with gladness he receives it, but having no root, when the sun of trial and trouble comes, immediately he’s offended.”* Twice the word *“immediately”* is used.

Let me give you a clue:

First of all: This man hears the Word! He hears the Gospel about forgiveness of sin, pardon, eternal life, heaven, healing, and all of these things and there’s no conviction, there’s no conviction of sin. There’s no personal conviction.

There’s no repentance, there’s no Godly sorrow, there’s no conflict or struggle, there’s no question, there’s no seeking, there’s no searching, there’s no asking, there’s no counting the cost, there’s no awareness of what it means to bow to Christ, to receive Christ. There is just a concern over the benefits.

“That preacher said if I believe on Jesus I’d go to heaven and live always in a mansion. That preacher said that if I believe on Jesus I would be healed of all my disease. That preacher said that if I believed on Jesus I’d be rich and tithed that God would prosper me and my business would prosper and I would have health and my family would prosper and all of my problems would be solved, and all my troubles would be over and I would be happy all the time and it’s fun being saved.”

And so, he immediately receives that, and he just grows; he responds so quickly and he makes such rapid progress you know.

One Sunday he’s saved and the next Sunday he’s teaching Sunday school. One Sunday he’s saved and the next Sunday he’s out telling everybody else what a victory he’s won. And if some older Christian comes along and talks about doubts, fears, struggles, and conflicts, he just laughs.

He says: “Why, there are no fears, there’s no doubt, there’s no struggle, happy all the time. There’s nothing to it; just believe on Jesus and everything’s all right.”

A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW

MATTHEW 13:3-8 • HENRY T. MAHAN

But whoa now! Then a trial comes, a trial because of the Word, a trial in life. Perhaps he gets sick, a baby dies, or he loses his job, or some conflict, some persecution, or some oppression comes. And the Scripture says; our Lord said: *“Immediately, just as quickly as he came, he went out.”*

Don't you ever sit in church and watch all these floods of people go down to the front and make their profession and get baptized and join up and they come for a few Sundays? Then, in about a week, month, or a year, you look around and they are not there? Don't you ever wonder where they are?

They came in quickly and they went out just as quickly. John said: *“They went out from us because they were not of us. If they had been of us they would have continued with us.”* What's wrong? They are stony-ground hearers. They have no root.

“You see, the man who built his house on the rock, the Scripture says, he dugged deep.” It took time to dig. It took effort to dig, it took determination to dig, but he dug down deep and found the rock and that's where he laid his foundation.

It took him longer to build his house than the fellow that just built it on top of the ground but when the trial came, his house stood and the other fellow's house crumbled. When the trial, when the rains, and the flood and the winds blew, and whatever trouble came, sickness, sorrow, suffering, death, whatever trouble came; his house stood. He had roots. He built on a rock. He was established on Christ Jesus.

And this stony ground hearer; beware of people who immediately, just as soon as you say something about Christ, heaven, and salvation, they grab it; there's no searching, no conflict, no struggle, no conviction, no true conversion.

It takes time to grow a taproot. I tell you this: *“When one grows down into the ground deep enough it reaches that moisture down there and it doesn't matter what happens up here. It can get dry and like a desert, the wind can blow and the rain can fall and the hail can fall and it will keep on growing because it is getting its strength from somewhere else besides out here.*

All right, our Lord said: *“Some of this fell among the thorns, some of these seeds.”* Now, who's the thorn? Well, there are the fellows; they hear the Word, now watch this carefully, they are not like the wayfaring, the wayside ground; they do grow.

They are not like the stony ground here; they take their time. This seed that fell among the thorns; it went down, it really grew. But the trouble was outside; as it grew up there were thorns, briars, and weeds; it grew up with it.

And these thorns, briars, and weeds crushed the plant and it bore no fruit. Do you know who that is? Well, let me give you; he gives us three things here, three of these thorns, briars, and weeds. He said:

A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW

MATTHEW 13:3-8 • HENRY T. MAHAN

First of all: There's the cares of this world!

I'll give you some examples: First of all there's a beautiful young lady. She's beautiful and she's popular. She's a lovely young lady in college or high school. She hears the Gospel; it's good, she likes it, she studies it, and she thinks about it.

She says: "This is the true way of life, this is the true value; Jesus Christ is the true hope." But wait a minute! The crowd she runs with and the people she's around; she can't be popular, she can't be accepted and follow this kind of faith, this believing in Christ, and this living for Christ. And so, that's the cares of the world that choke the plant.

Then here's a man, he holds an office in a political party or in a lodge or in a country club. And the association, the people he has to associate with, the parties he has to go to, and the things he has to do, they are in conflict with his spiritual life, in conflict with what the Bible says.

But, does he follow Christ? Does he tell these friends goodbye; no you see he can't offend them; he's got to go along with them. He's got to stay.

Perhaps the young man, the young man is a musician, he plays an instrument or he sings. Well now, he's got to play in nightclubs. He's got to sing in nightclubs. You can't walk with Christ in a nightclub. You can't walk with Christ and sing what has to be sung to be popular today.

Do you see what I am saying, the cares of this world? His family is not interested in the Gospel. His friends are not interested in the Gospel and he can't afford to lose them. He can't afford to offend them.

And so, he's heard the Gospel and it sounds good and it blesses his heart but all these cares of the world, the family, friends, job, association, talents, gifts, beauty, popularity, and all of these things just flood in on your soul and he turns his back on Christ. What a tragedy; that's the thorns.

Secondly: He said: "*And the deceitfulness of riches.*"

"I've got to have me a big house. I've got to drive me a big car. I've got to impress people. I've got to wear fine clothes. Preacher; I've got an opportunity to make some big money, some real money."

"Will it help you spiritually? Well no, but you know a fellow has got to live." No, a fellow has got to die. He hasn't got to live, he has got to die. He has got to meet God: "*It's appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment.*"

"Well preacher, if we don't look out for ourselves, who will?" God will. He said: "*Take no anxious thought what you shall eat, drink, or wear. The heathen seeks these things.*"

A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW

MATTHEW 13:3-8 • HENRY T. MAHAN

You look to Christ. If you walk with God He will meet your need: *“Oh the deceitfulness of riches, the deceitfulness of riches, how they turn.”* Do you know what the old timer said? *“Lord, keep me from poverty lest I steal but keep me from riches lest I forget thee.”*

And for every one person I have ever seen depart from Christ because of poverty; I’ve seen 50 depart because of prosperity. If a man gets a promotion or a better job or opens his business; Sunday is his best day.

“I can’t run my customers away; Sunday’s my biggest day. I can’t go to church, I don’t have time to hear the Gospel; I’ve got to make a living.” That’s all right, that’s all right. That’s what our Lord said you would do.

He said: *“The seed was sown and the thorns, the deceitfulness of riches; I will tell you my friend: The fashion of this world passeth away.”* It would be better if you had little with Christ than a whole lot without him.

Thirdly: Then the lust of other things!

There are other things. There was a young lady who had been in church all of her life and heard the Gospel, knows the Gospel, at least in her head. Some young boy comes along and she says: “Well Pastor; I know he’s not a believer but I’m going to marry him anyway. Honey, you are marrying trouble, that’s right; you are marrying trouble.”

Another preacher wants a bigger church so he compromises the Gospel. That’s the lust of other things.

Well, thank God, our Lord said: *“Some fell on good ground (not good by nature, but prepared by the Holy Spirit, prepared to receive the Word) and it brought forth fruit (love, joy, peace, meekness, gentleness, kindness), some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty (degrees of producing the fruit of the Spirit!)*