

“The Parable of the Sower – Part 3”  
“The Rocky Ground”  
Mark 4:1-20  
(Preached at Trinity, April 14, 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've seen, this parable is actually several parables, each teaching a separate truth about the nature of the Kingdom but each following the central truth of the parable as a whole.  
*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.*
2. We find in this parable seed being sown in four types of soil. Wayside Soil, Rocky Ground, Thorny Soil, and Good Soil.  
There is no problem with the seed – the problem lies in the soil.
3. As I've pointed out, 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 we don't naturally have a disposition to receive the Word of God.  
The good soil is that which had been carefully plowed and prepared
4. Again, by way of definition:  
The seed is the Word of God that must be carefully sown.  
The soil is the various conditions of men's hearts - four types  
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
5. Last time we examined the Wayside or Roadside Soil  
<sup>NAU</sup> **Mark 4:4** – “as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up.”  
**Mark 4:14-15** "The sower sows the word. <sup>15</sup> "These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.”
  - A. As the Word of God is sown forth Satan continually tempts, entices, and draws men unto wickedness. He 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
    1. Satan turns the hearer against the minister
    2. He brings pride and self-righteousness into the heart
    3. Satan turns their thoughts toward earthly things
    4. Satan causes drowsiness

5. Forgetfulness – to temporarily hear and then immediately forget
- B The end result is the good Word has no effect.  
There is no response, no stirring of the conscience.
- I. The second type of soil is the Rocky Ground  
**Mark 4:5-6** – “Other *seed* fell on the rocky *ground* where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup> "And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.”  
**Mark 4:16-17** – “In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; <sup>17</sup> and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.”
- A. Much of Israel has tillable soil upon layers of rock –
1. In some areas the topsoil is very thin.  
The seed comes up quickly because it is planted shallow but it quickly withers.
  2. Two causes of withering - too shallow, little root
  3. Jesus said this marks the impulsive hearer
- B. The is a danger in coming up too quickly
1. These people enter into religion before their hearts are broken, before any sorrow for sin, before any sense of God’s condemnation
  2. Often they are given a false presentation of Christianity – of its demands, of its dangers. Many see Christianity only as a tool to satisfy their carnal desires.
  3. Pastors are sometimes guilty of pronouncing a sinner saved before the HS has completed His work.
    - a. The convicting Word may cut long and hard before God grants peace for the soul.
    - b. In Hebrews 1 we read that the Word of God is living and effectual  
<sup>NAS</sup> **Hebrews 4:12** – “For the word of God is living and active (lit. effectual) and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
    - c. The Apostle Paul describes the convicting as the goad used to drive oxen  
<sup>KJV</sup> **Acts 26:14** – “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*”  
<sup>NAS</sup> **Acts 26:14** – “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”
  4. Notice they received the Word with joy - quick decision  
They did not count the cost  
**Luke 14:28-30** - "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup> "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

5. There is nothing about the life of a disciple that suggests ease or comfort  
**Luke 9:57-58** – “As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, “I will follow You wherever You go.”<sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”  
**John 15:20** - “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” **Luke 21:16-17** – “But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put *some* of you to death,<sup>17</sup> and you will be hated by all because of My name.”
- C. There are many things which may draw them – what was the source of their joy?
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
  5. The promise of having their desires met  
**John 6:26** – “Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”
- 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
    - b. There is no change of heart – no regeneration. They do not love Christ. They don’t love His Law. They have no desire to obey Him
    - c. They do not have the power of the indwelling Spirit  
**Romans 8:11** – “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.”
    - d. They exhibit only an outward profession - they have not been changed on the inside - they are still unregenerate.  
They have no power to persevere
  2. The other problem of having no root is External – they are 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 – Unlike the Wayside soil, Satan did not steal it away upon hearing
  2. They receive it with joy – but they are 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  
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
  2. Inconsistency –  
Inconsistent in sound theology - they are not rooted in truth, carried about by every wind of doctrine  
Inconsistent in holiness  
Inconsistent in faithfulness  
Inconsistent in labors
  3. 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
  4. Decay of love towards God - they will begin to neglect their religious duties - attendance, prayer, study
  5. Finally Apostasy - they grow more and more carnal - finally fall away
- G. They begin with joy but their joy fades to final apostasy  
What are some signs of withering
1. An increasing preoccupation with self. Pride  
Self-Confidence - when a person rests upon his own success
  2. 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 prayer life becomes deficient. He gives little attention to the Bible
  5. He is plagued by a deadness of spirit - he is cold towards the things of God
- H. 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 made changes in 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
  4. We must all see the importance of watching over one another  
**Hebrews 10:24** – “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:”  
NAS – “stimulate”

#### Conclusion:

1. These things stand as warnings to us. In this parable there are three types of soil. Thee 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?