

The Priority of Fruit

Mark 4:1-20

Pastor Jeremy Peters

Mark 4:1-20 NLT

Once again Jesus began teaching by the lakeshore. A very large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat in the boat while all the people remained on the shore. He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:

"Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn't have deep roots, it died. Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain. Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!" Then he said, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

Later, when Jesus was alone with the twelve disciples and with the others who were gathered around, they asked him what the parables meant.

He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders, so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled:

"When they see what I do, they will learn nothing.
When they hear what I say, they will not understand.
Otherwise, they will turn to me and be forgiven."

Then Jesus said to them, "If you can't understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables? The farmer plants seed by taking God's word to others. The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away. The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

THE KINGDOM IN ACTION

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SEED

The seed represents the _____ of God.

Mark 4:14 The farmer sows the **word**.

- The word of God is likened to a seed, because its _____ is its power.
- Within a single seed, there exists the _____ and _____ to radically impact the whole world.

SOIL

Four Kinds of Soil:

1. _____ Soil

Mark 4:15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. **As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.** (NIV)

- One common characteristic of hard ground is a _____ to do what we already know to do.

2. _____ Soil

Mark 4:16-17 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and **at once receive it with joy.** But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. (NIV)

- One common characteristic of rocky ground is _____ engagement.

3. _____ Soil

Mark 4:18-19 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; **but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.** (NIV)

- One common characteristic of crowded soil is _____.

4. _____ Soil

Mark 4:20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, **accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.**" (NIV)

- The primary characteristic of good soil is the ability to bear _____ far greater than what was sown.

FRUIT

The real issue is not how hard, rocky and crowded soils are _____; the real issue is how they are _____.
And the common characteristic of all three is that none of them bear any fruit.

Three Kinds of Fruit:

1. The fruit of _____ and _____.
Hebrews 13:15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. (NIV)
2. The fruit of _____.
Matthew 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. (NIV)
Matthew 3:8 Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. (NLT)
3. The fruit of the _____.
Galatians 5:22-23 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! (NLT)

What is the “secret” to bearing fruit?

_____ in Jesus.

*Remain in me, as I also remain in you.
No branch can bear fruit by itself;
it must remain in the vine.
Neither can you bear fruit
unless you remain in me.*

John 15:4 NIV

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Priority of Fruit

Mark 4:1-20 NLT

- 1) What from this passage and Sunday’s teaching stood out to you?
- 2) Why do you think Jesus chose the image of a ‘seed’ (as opposed to something like a hammer or fire)? If the Word of God is likened to a seed in that its weakness is its power, how might the potential transforming power of the Word of God be released or rendered ineffective? Do you truly believe the Word has the kind of power to radically transform the entire world? If so, what is your ‘plan’ to expose yourself to the Seed?
- 3) While we all want to cultivate good soil, which of the three ‘fruitless’ soils do you most need to be wary of in your own life? What factors contribute to the soil of your heart becoming hard, rocky or crowded? What might cultivation of good soil look like (be specific)?
- 4) The most primary point of the Parable of the Sower is the priority placed on bearing fruit. Pastor Jeremy talked about three ways the word ‘fruit’ is used in the Bible. Discuss as a group what the fruit of worship and thanksgiving, the fruit of repentance, and the fruit of the Spirit look like in your life. What is your normal pattern of thankfulness like? How might we go about ruthlessly uprooting sin? Which fruit of the Spirit is currently ‘in season’ in your life (that is, where can you thank God for growth in your life)?
- 5) Pastor Jeremy talked about how fruit is only available in season (and that sometimes we get discouraged when the fruit we want to see is not yet evidenced). When fruit is not evidenced in our life the way we would like (in particular, the fruit of the Spirit), how might we discern whether we are diligently cultivating the soil of our hearts (and ‘harvest’ is still coming) and when the issue of fruitlessness is a matter of the soil of our hearts needing to be cultivated? In other words, only God can grow the Seed within us (and we need to trust Him in this), but at the same time we have a responsibility to cultivate good soil – how do we discern what is God’s role and what is our role?
- 6) Take some time to share with one another things you are thankful for and then as you pray with one another, be sure to praise God for His faithfulness. Pray too, that the soil of our hearts would be good, and that we would receive the ‘Seed’ with humility and eagerness to apply it to our lives in obedience.