

## THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Mark 4:1-20

Key Verse: 4:20

"Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop-thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."

In the last passage we learned that Jesus was teaching the word wholeheartedly. Many crowds of people were bustling around him and asked Jesus' help. The Pharisees, who decorated themselves very beautifully like Russian Tsars and made many beautiful finger motions, were jealous of Jesus. They said Jesus was casting out demons with the power of Beelzebub. How could Jesus drive out demons with the power of the chief demon? Demons also love their cub demons. The Pharisees' criticism was self-contradictory. Jesus was persecuted when he taught the word of God. Jesus was persecuted not only by the Pharisees; Jesus was also persecuted by his family members. Jesus' mother and brothers came. It was because for the last 30 years, Jesus was a junior [carpenter](#) who supported his family with his strong arms and hard work. But suddenly he left home and became a good shepherd for the people of the world. Jesus' human family was in trouble because of financial deficiency due to Jesus' leaving home. So they came and wanted to rebuke Jesus to come back home and continue to be a junior carpenter. Look at 3:34-35. "Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'" In chapter four, there are four parables and one event. Today, we are going to study about the parable of the sower.

### I. The parable of the sower (1-12)

Look at verse 1. "Again Jesus began to teach by the lake." It is as if we are teaching the Bible by Lake Michigan to those following us to study the Bible. "The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge." What beautiful scenery! Jesus was standing on a boat and people were standing on the shore looking at Jesus. They were eager to hear Jesus' teaching. However, Jesus learned that because of their attitude of heart, some could grasp his teaching and be great men and members of the [kingdom of God](#), but some were crooked-hearted. They would never accept the word and make it take root and grow themselves together with the word of God. Here Jesus categorized four kinds of people. Let's see what kind of people we are in light of the parable of the sower.

First, people whose hearts are like a path (3,4). Let's read verses 3-4. "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up." Jesus really wanted to plant the word of life in the hearts of crowding people. But there were so many people whose hearts were like a path. If one's heart is like a path, it is very hard to accept the word of life. As we know well, in modern language "path" is the word for a highway or toll way. Suppose you scatter seeds of wheat on a path. Could you expect that the seed will grow and bear many fruits? No. It is impossible to bear fruit on a path. Who are the path-like people? They are men and women of common sense. They know everything through TV or

the Internet and their evil imaginations and cartoons. When someone is going to teach them [the Bible](#) they say, "I know. I know. I don't have to learn the Bible from you." They live with their common sense. They live with the social consensus. They read newspapers and magazines and find a way to live in this world smartly and richly. They want to be wealthy men with great honor. They are mostly at the grade school level. But they are proud of themselves, thinking that they are better than those who majored in a specific field devoting themselves—their hearts and lives—for a long time. Those who live with common sense are very pathetic people. They are like elementary school children, even though they are pretty much aged. They think that they are smart and clever because they read many magazines and newspapers. Jesus was very sorry that their coming to him was so intensive, but their hearts were not prepared. They had hearts like a path. There was no possibility the word of God could penetrate into their hearts which were like a path.

Second, people whose hearts are like rock (5-6). Let's read verses 5-6. "Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root." When we read these verses very carefully, we learn that Jesus was very sorry that their hearts were like rock. The word of God was sown everywhere, even on the rock. But the rock didn't have enough soil. The seeds sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Who are those whose hearts are like rock? They are those whose ideas are fixed without any ground on the truth. The most miserable people were the Pharisees. They had a fixed idea and traditions and their own regulations and rules and habits. They knew only what they knew and they were hardened in their hearts with their fixed idea. There was a high-ranking banker. He persecuted a servant of God severely that the servant of God taught his daughter the word of God. So he persecuted the servant of God in every way. In the course of time, his daughter and a very fine young dentist were supposed to marry. Finally the wedding day came. During the wedding ceremony, he hardened his heart and darkened his face color and was very unhappy. After the wedding ceremony he should have celebrated his new son-in-law and blessed his daughter. He also should have thanked the servant of God for his ordination at the wedding ceremony. But he approached the servant of God and said angrily, "You know, believing in Jesus may be good. But we must have money." At the time of happiness, because of his fixed idea about money, he could not enjoy the happiness of his daughter's wedding, which should be a joy to him. After two years, he retired at the age of 53 from a high ranking banker's position. He tried to do something with his retirement money. But he had no idea about business. So all his money was taken away by business experts. Soon he got a stroke and used up all the money he saved all his life, and died at the age of 55. Through his story we learn that a fixed idea is not the truth. Rather, those who have a fixed idea do not know about happiness. Those who have a fixed idea can become Pharisees at best, or those who die young. We must endlessly grow and we must bear much fruit. But those whose hearts are like rock carry in their hearts very heavy rocks and cannot make a plastic smile even one time. Here, those whose hearts are like rock can hear the word of God, but their life foundation is too shallow and they cannot let the word of God grow in their soul. They live in a real world which is like hell only. Jesus was very sorry to see those whose hearts are like rock.

Third, people whose hearts are like a thornbush (7). Let's read verse 7. "Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain." These people are those who are too wealthy. When they were making money and becoming multi-millionaires they were happy. But when they pile up money like a mountain, the money begins to control them. First of all, they lose their appetite when they have much money. When they were hungry, eating was a joy of life. Whenever they ate, they ate very deliciously, making sounds noisily. But when they have money, strangely they lose their appetite. It is because they use their money for food and they enjoy all kinds of gourmet food. Later, there is no more food they can enjoy. They are very bored when they come to the eating table. They think about money which is like a mountain. Worry comes into their hearts and becomes like a thornbush. They should be happy because they have much money. But in those cases where people have too much money, money has the element of a thornbush to them. In America, around 25% of the people have all the money. The leftover people are suffering from poverty. Both husband and wife have to make money in order to maintain monthly expenses. But they are happy. After a hard day of work they eat deliciously and sleep well. But those who have a thornbush in their hearts cannot sleep, and they cannot eat because of their stomach ulcer due to worries and chest pain. Finally they become the incarnation of a thornbush. Money is good. But nobody can buy happiness with money. Money is good for feeding our children and educating them. But one who is obsessed by money later suffers much because of worries about money, and their worries are like a thornbush in their stomachs. Mostly, these kinds of people suffer from heart attacks and high blood pressure and die young without enjoying what they have.

Fourth, people like good soil (8). Let's read verse 8. "Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty or even a hundred times." What a marvelous verse this is! Let's read it one time. "Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." This verse tells us that there are people who are like good soil. Those who are like good soil are God-fearing people. They are open-hearted people to the word of God. They are like young UBF students such as Adam Kramarczyk. He had a tail bone treatment. It was very painful for him. Anyway, he wrote a testimony and shared it very gracefully at our Friday Leaders' Meeting. He is great, not because he is so cute and handsome. He is great because he is God-fearing and open-minded to the word of God. Those whose hearts are like good soil can grow and produce crops, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.

Let's read verse 9. "Then Jesus said, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'" In Chicago, there are so many people and so many cars. Twenty years ago, Western Avenue had only a few cars passing by. But these days Western Avenue is jammed up when the rush hour comes. There are so many people in the world. But there are not many people whose hearts are like good soil. Jesus said that those who have the fear of God and are open-hearted to the word of God can hear his teaching. But others cannot hear his word.

When Jesus was alone, the twelve disciples and others around him asked him about the parables. They heard the parable of the sower a few minutes ago, but they wanted to hear it one more time. Maybe they

could not understand the parable of the sower because of their boyfriend problems, girlfriend problems, or future security problems. Maybe some old people thought about the fluctuation of the stock market, so they lost the chance to digest the parable of the sower, even if they listened intensely and with their whole heads. Especially the twelve disciples didn't understand. Here we learn that they had a long way to go to be people with good soil.

Jesus was very sorry about their lack of understanding. Jesus had just taught them the parable of the sower a few minutes ago. But they were asking him one more time to talk about the parable. Jesus did not dump them because they were all earthbound with their noses in the dirt. They had no idea what was in the word of God. They had no idea that men are physical and spiritual. So Jesus explained to them very plainly. Look at verses 11-12. "He told them, 'The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'" This is a quotation from Isaiah 6:9,10. This parable was primarily for the people of Israel. But in essence, this parable is for all people. People must know that they are physical and spiritual. They must know that their physical body is nothing but the dust of the ground and their spirit is everything. But they are only concerned about their physical body, their eldest son's leg problem and the alignment of their teeth. They have no idea at all that the secret of the kingdom of God has been given to them. Jesus told us the parable of the sower so that we may know that there are four kinds of people in the world. Jesus told the parable of the sower so that we may accept the word of God and come to know that the secret of the kingdom of God is given to us. You know, we have a mysterious secret of God in our hearts. This mysterious secret of God makes one strong and makes one a man of vision and a man of God. We must have a mysterious secret of God. What is the mysterious secret of God? It is the kingdom of God. If you have no kingdom of God in your heart, you have the kingdom of the devil. Jesus mourned for the crowding people, that they were in the kingdom of the devil and were groaning day and night. So Jesus lamented, "They may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding."

II. Jesus told them the parable of the sower once again (13-20).

Here we see that Jesus is the best educator. He just told the parable of the sower wholeheartedly. But they didn't have any idea about the parable. When Jesus was alone, the Twelve and others asked him about the parable. Jesus did not tell them, "You are stupid. You are hopeless. I told you a very simple parable, but you did not understand. You better be truck drivers or miners." He did not do so. He began to explain the parable of the sower once more. Let's read verse 13. "Then Jesus said to them, 'Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?'" It was a kind of mild rebuke. Let's read verse 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." In this verse, we find a difference. In verse 4, Jesus said, "the birds," but in verse 15, birds are compared to Satan. We learn that Jesus more directly tells them the parable of the sower. There was a girl whose forehead was like a pumpkin. After receiving the word of God and getting a best boy as her husband, she was very happy and hugged her

shepherd so many times, saying, "Thank you, thank you. By God's grace I got a best husband in the world." She was a person who was like the seed along the path. By fortune, on the highway, she picked up a nice boy and thanked God one time and ran away, not saying goodbye. This kind of person is a very base woman. I don't mean that she lives in a basement. But her mentality is very low and she learned many bad habits from her family members. She is like a woman traveling around the states by hitchhiking. This kind of person has no ground in her life. So Jesus said, "As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them."

Let's read verses 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." Here people who are like a rock are well-explained. They like to hear the word of God with joy. But they have no root. What they heard lasts only a short time. They only enjoy with their ears. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly run away. Their speed is like a 100-meter track runner. The best privilege for a man is the privilege to suffer because of the word of God. The world is dark. And we also are groping around in the darkness from time to time. There is no future. But if we receive the word and keep it in spite of persecution and isolation, there is hope for America. At our Friday meeting, several young and handsome-and some cute-persons' testimony sharing is indeed the picture of paradise. Where can we find such pure and poor and humble young people? Moreover, where can we find those who receive the word in their hearts and want to love Jesus only? They are an absolute minority. Biblically speaking, they are remnants of God. Because of them, America will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We should not be a coward. A coward is number one on the list among those who are going to hell. Revelation 21:8 says, "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." We must rejoice to participate in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus in this dark generation.

Let's read verses 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." They are those who live in the world with much money. I don't have to explain this verse. Let's read verses 18-19 to see what kind of people they are.

Let's read verse 20. "Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop-thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown." These people have good soil. In other words, they fear God and accept God's word as God's word and bear much fruit. It is common sense that if one person or one family just survives peacefully, that's enough. But verse 20 says we must accept the word of God and then our spiritual eyes are opened. We can produce a crop-thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.

When God made man, God made man as a steward of God's world. He made the first person Adam and asked him to take care of the whole world all by himself. Adam named all the fish in the sea and all the

animals in the mountains and all the insects on the surface and under the surface of the earth. He worked hard. Here we learn that God made man the steward of God's world. We can produce one hundred times more than we are. Here is the problem. One kernel of wheat wants to remain as it is instead of falling down on the earth and dying. It doesn't produce any fruit. Likewise, if we have no stewardship of God, and we are self-centered or family-centered, we do not give any fruit. Some people give God no fruit at all. Instead, they have abundant sins to be punished by ignoring the stewardship of God's world.

We must pay attention to what Jesus said in verse 20. "Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown." It is indeed an amazing truth! These days people think that if they study hard, have a good job, buy a good house with a two-car garage, marry a foxy woman and have 2.5 kids, they are very successful and happy men. But from God's point of view, they are great sinners because of their selfishness. Their grade is -2% instead of being 300%. They are blind to the spiritual world. They are born to be stewards of God's world. But they don't care about the stewardship of God's world. They are only selfish and egoistic and live like blind men groping here and there.

God wants us to bear thirty times when we accept God's word and do something good. Some people can bear sixty times when they accept God's word and do something good. Some people can bear one hundred times when they accept God's word and do something good.

What a different concept! The people of the world think that if they just take care of themselves, that's more than enough. So they say, "Take care." It means, "You take care of yourself and I will take care of myself. Don't bother me and I will not bother you." But Jesus says you have to receive the word of God and multiply thirty times with your one life. Jesus again says you have to accept the word of God and do the great work of God sixty times with your one life. Jesus says you must accept the word of God and do something one hundred times as much with your one life. What a spectacular word of Jesus! It's beyond imagination that we do something one hundred times with one's one life.

But it is God's truth. It is God's truth to those who received God's word and deserve to enter the kingdom of God. God made us pilgrims in this real world. Because the world is difficult and the situation is not so good, many Americans say, "My car is not better than his car." An African said, "He eats two meals a day, when I eat one meal a day." That's not the way of God's truth for us. We must accept the word of God and we must see the spiritual world and we must see God's world. We must participate in the remaining suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ and do something good. As a man, if one can do thirty times as much with his one life, our Lord Jesus Christ is pleased. If he can do sixty times as much with his one life, our Lord Jesus Christ is pleased. That's not enough. Our Lord Jesus Christ expects each of us to have one hundred times as much with each one's life. That's the purpose God made us pilgrims in this hard world.

Here we must decide not to be like a path or a rock or thorny persons. In this passage we must learn through the parable of the sower we must perceive that Jesus wants us to grow our inner persons thirty

times and sixty times and one hundred times. Therefore, we should not remain as diaper children. Most of all, in this parable we learn that we must grow as the children of the kingdom of God. When we do so, God will give us peace and bless us and our nation. True happiness comes when the kingdom of God grows in our hearts.

