

A Journey with Christ the Messiah

The Parable of the Sower

Luke 8:5-8

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing a series that I have entitled *A Journey with Christ the Messiah*. In the last several weeks we have embarked on a journey through both the Old and the New Testaments with the purpose of discovering **Christ the Messiah** that is written there. We have looked at Old Testament prophecies and saw Jesus fulfilling all of the Messianic prophecies concerning Him. We have looked at His birth, His miracles, and His seven "I AM" proclamations. We have examined His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead and the significance of those events.

In the next few weeks, I would like to look at Jesus' teachings through the parables that He taught during His ministry and try to apply them to our lives. This morning we are going to look at the **Parable of the Sower**. This parable is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. By looking at Jesus' explanations in each Gospel account, we can get a good grasp of the meaning of the parable.

ILLUSTRATION:

In 1886, after the state of Georgia passed prohibition laws, a young man name John Pemberton invented a carbonated non-alcoholic beverage which he thought would appeal to Americans given the prohibition against alcohol. It was marketed as a "soft drink" as opposed to hard liquor and contained a mixture made from coca leaves and kola nuts, which inspired the name Coca-Cola. John first started selling the soft drink in pharmacies in his home town of Atlanta Georgia. The first servings of Coca Cola were sold for 5 cents per glass. During the first year, sales averaged a modest nine servings per day in Atlanta, but he had a much grander vision for his invention. He had a dream that within 100 years every person on the face of the earth would have tasted the soft drink he created. He didn't quite reach his goal, but I'd still say he was pretty successful, wouldn't you? Today it is estimated that...

- An estimated 1.9 billion daily servings of Coca Cola beverages are consumed globally.
- 51% of the all the people living in the world today have actually tasted Coca-Cola.
- 72 % have at least seen a can or bottle of Coke.
- 97%, if they haven't seen or tasted it, have at least heard of Coca-Cola.

I wonder how different things might be if Christians were as passionate about sharing their faith as John Pemberton and his descendants were about sharing his soft drink—if we tried as hard as they did to put Bibles instead of bottles in the hands of people all over the world?

It's not easy to share your faith though, is it? Maybe you're just not an extroverted person. Neither am I. Maybe you don't know what you're supposed to say or how to broach the subject. And, of course, there is always the fear of rejection. What if they're offended? What if it turns into an argument? What if I ruin an otherwise perfectly good friendship?

I wonder if Jesus' followers had the same questions running through their minds. They lived under a very strict religious order and to deviate from the accepted norm was, well, unacceptable. They must have worried at times about what to say, if they were qualified to say it, and how people might react to them when they did say something. So one day, Jesus left the synagogue to go teach outdoors. He climbed into rough, rickety little boat, tied it to a stake and let it drift just a few feet from the shoreline. Soon, swarms of people gathered on the beach and sat in the sand to listen to Jesus teach. Among those listening were his closest followers and I believe Jesus wanted to give them a bit of comfort and assurance about sharing their faith in him. So he told them the same parable that I'm about to read to you:

All Stand and Read Scripture

Luke 8:5-8 (NASB)

⁵ "The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶ Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷ Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. ⁸ Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

As we prepare to continue this journey, let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

Let's continue the journey!

Later, when they were alone, Jesus would explain the meaning of the seed and the soils to his disciples, but before we talk about those parts of the parable, we have to talk about the sower.

In this little parable, Jesus uses three powerful images that are worth considering.

BODY:

I. THE SOWER.

Jesus began his story by saying, "*The sower went out to sow his seed;*" (Verse 5a NASB). Without the sower there wouldn't be a story. In fact, even though teachers and preachers always tend to focus on the four types of soil, Jesus actually calls this "*the parable of the Sower*" (Matthew 13:18), because it all begins with him. So who is the Sower?

It is the person who spreads the word of the Gospel.

After Jesus told the parable He explained the parable to the twelve disciples and others who were following Him.

Mark 4:9-14 (NASB)

⁹ And He was saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

¹⁰ As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, *began asking Him about the parables.* ¹¹ And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, ¹² so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.”

¹³ And He *said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴ The sower sows the word.

This story is actually about Christ coming into our world and sharing God’s message of love and forgiveness and redemption. It’s about Jesus reaching into the hearts of human beings and planting a seed that has the potential to grow into something wonderful.

That’s the first thing we need to understand when it comes to outreach or witnessing. It’s about him! We don’t share a religion or an ideology or a philosophy. We share a person. We share Jesus! And even though Jesus is the Sower in the story, each one of us who accepts Jesus as our Savior also accepts the responsibility of becoming sowers in his field. We have to be willing to follow in his footsteps and carry on his work.

ILLUSTRATION:

When an unknown author named John Grisham wrote a book titled *A Time To Kill*, it only sold about five thousand copies. It wasn’t advertised, never made a best-seller list and it was never even reviewed by anybody. It was sort of a flop. Then he wrote *The Firm*, and it wasn’t advertised either. It was hardly reviewed, and the reviews it got weren’t very good. But people read it and liked it and told other people about it, and *The Firm* ended up selling seven million copies. Today John Grisham has written dozens of other books, and has had multiple number one best-sellers, and it’s not because of advertising or because of the publisher’s clever marketing plan; rather, it was because a handful of people liked the book and they told other people, until millions of his books had been sold.

Christians are people who like Jesus. They’ve read His book, so they tell somebody else. It doesn’t take a newspaper ad, or a billboard, or a clever commercial. Evangelism is just people who love Jesus, telling other people, until it has spread to thousands and millions and tens of millions and more.

Okay, so maybe you’re willing to follow in Jesus footsteps and sow the seeds of faith in the people around you, but you just don’t know what to say. Lucky for us, Jesus tells us when he explains the meaning of the seed.

II. THE SEED.

When Jesus later pulls his disciples aside and explains the meaning of this story to them, he says,

Luke 8:11 (NASB)

¹¹ “Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.

The seed in the story is the Bible, the gospel of Jesus Christ!

When God's message of love and grace penetrates a fertile heart, time and eternity are forever changed for that person. Remember what the Apostle Paul said about the Gospel?

Romans 1:16 (NASB)

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The Gospel is powerful. By putting the gospel in people's hands, we plant a seed that will hopefully take root in their hearts.

It's important that we be able to articulate the message of God's word both through our actions and words. There are multiple ways to plant the seed of God's word in a person's heart.

1. First, there's the **testimony of your life**. Francis of Assisi once said, "Share the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words." In other words, when you live your life according to God's Word, people see that. You become a living example of God's word. Jesus said,

Matthew 5:16 (NASB)

16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Someone once said, "Christians are to **BE** good news before they **SHARE** the good news."

2. Furthermore, there's the **testimony of your love**. The old adage "people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care" is still true. That's why Jesus tells us to love one another, love your neighbor, and even to love your enemy. Every act of love prepares the soil, making it more receptive to God's Word.
3. Finally, there's the **testimony of your lips**.

Paul tells us how the seed sprouts and begins to grow faith.

Romans 10:17 (NASB)

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

So faith comes to someone when they hear the Gospel. It is our responsibility to make sure they hear.

Romans 10:13-14 (NASB)

14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

Words are necessary! We have to do more than hope our friends notice the difference in our lives and figure it out on their own. We need to do more than just care for someone in love. We need to verbally share the Gospel. Some of you may never have done this and may not even know where to begin, so I want to give you one simple method of explaining the Gospel. It uses five simple verses of Scripture, all from the book of Romans.

1. **Romans 3:23 (NASB)**

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

2. Romans 6:23 (NASB)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. Romans 5:8 (NASB)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

4. Romans 6:3-4 (NASB)

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

5. Romans 10:9-10 (NASB)

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

This is just one method of explaining the Gospel, but it a good one. Remember though, you may not actually lead someone to salvation, just because you share the gospel with them. Your job is to plant seeds. God will give the growth. There is one last piece to this parable, too. And that is the soil.

III. THE SOIL.

Rather than explain the meaning of the soil myself, I'll just let Jesus do it Himself. Once Jesus and his disciples escape the crowds, he explains:

Matthew 13:18-23 (NASB)

¹⁸“Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. ²⁰The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²²And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

There are a whole lot of reasons not be a follower of Jesus.

Some people are like the seed that **fell beside the road**, they reject the message of Christ altogether. They think it's nonsense.

Some are like the seed that **fell on rocky soil**. They think having a relationship with God is a great idea, but they're too shallow to really let God into their hearts.

Others are like the seed that **fell among the thorns**. They accept the Gospel and embrace Jesus, but the pressures of life and the pursuit of money or entertainment or football games or fishing trips or family are always just a bit more important to them and they never give Jesus any room in their hearts.

But notice that the sower in the parable indiscriminately scatters the seed over every kind of soil.

Just like that sower, God allows his words and his love to fall on many who will not receive it. He wants everyone to have the opportunity to hear the Gospel and accept Jesus. Christians sometimes tend to pull back from those who are uninterested or indifferent—but God doesn't.

Even though God's message to humanity will meet rejection more often than not, there are still "honest, good-hearted people" who will listen. These are like the seed that **fell on good soil**. These people are eager to hear about God's love and willing to put their faith in Jesus.

According to a study by Barna Research 25% of unchurched Americans say that they would be very likely to attend church if a friend would make the effort to invite them! Think about that... that's 1 in 4 of your friends who would be willing to come to church and hear the Gospel if you, not some stranger, invited them to go with you.

When you have a friendship or acquaintance with someone then you are the person God is calling to make a difference in their life.

Wait a minute! Isn't that why we have a minister? No, as Christians, we are **all** called to proclaim the "good news". If you have a friendship with that person, you will have credibility with that person that I may not have. It doesn't have to be a big theological discussion. Just briefly "talk church". Let them know that:

- I missed you at church.
- Has anything happened that has prevented you from going?
- Are there any questions or concerns that we can answer for you?

CONCLUSION:

Now is a great time to plant some seeds and encourage some people to come to church and hear the Gospel proclaimed. We are currently spending a half hour following Wednesday night Bible study to develop a strategy that we can use to reach out to the community around us. I would encourage you to join us and let us hear your feedback. When we become as committed to sowing the seeds of God's Word as John Pemberton was to selling soft drinks, we'll begin to see a huge harvest. So what seeds have you been planting? Who do you know that you've never shared God's message with? There's good soil out there. We just have to keep spreading those seeds in order to find it.

If you haven't acted upon the Gospel message and received Jesus into your life already, I want to invite you to do it today. Walk down that "Road to Salvation" found in Romans and receive eternal life and peace with God through Jesus Christ. Apart from him we are spiritually dead. With him we live. Choose life. Choose Jesus!

He is Lord!