

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

TEXT: MARK 4:1-20

Introduction:

1. Many of us wonder how is it that certain people can come to church week after week and not get genuinely converted. Notice I said, genuinely converted.” Some make professions of faith in Christ but their behaviour indicates that they were never genuinely saved.
2. On the other hand, some people make professions, and we see evidence in their lives that they are truly born again. But there are others who show little or no evidence.
3. I believe our Lord’s parables in Mark 4 (also in Matthew 13 and Luke 8) help us to understand the difference between those who are truly saved and those who are not.
4. Tonight we will look at the parable of the sower.
5. Matthew 13:37 tells us the sower is the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark 4:14 says, The sower soweth the Word. Luke 8:11 says, “The seed is the Word of God” (cf. Luke 8:4-15).
6. Why does the Bible liken the Word of God to seed? For the Word of God is quick (alive) and powerful (Heb. 4:12).
7. Unlike the words of men, the Word of God has life in it; and that life can be imparted to those who will believe.
8. During our Lord’s absence we are to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. This is God’s program for this age. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:18-20).
9. The soil represents four types of hearers:
 - (1) The Way Side (Mark 4:4).
 - (2) The Stony Ground (Mark 4:5, 6).
 - (3) The Thorns (Mark 4:7).
 - (4) The Good Ground (Mark 4:8).

I. TO GET TRULY SAVED YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL

1. Matthew has certain information not found in Mark and Luke. Our Lord says in Matt. 13:19, “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not.”..”
2. The fault lies not with the seed, nor with the sower. The problem is man’s hard heart (Matt. 13:19). If a man’s heart is tender towards God, the devil will not snatch away that which was sown (Matt. 13:19).
3. The problem for many people is that they do not understand the Gospel. The Barna organization polled 6,038 adults with random telephone interviews nationwide, and found out that only 41 percent of all adults surveyed believed in the total accuracy of the Bible.
4. Only 40 percent of those surveyed believed Christ was sinless. If you do not believe Christ was sinless, you do not understand the Gospel because only a sinless Saviour could die as our perfect Substitute.
5. Works-salvation has been drilled into people’s minds to the point that most people cannot even understand the simplicity of the Gospel.
6. Some people think the Gospel is keeping the ten commandments, or doing good works, or getting baptized, or joining the church, or being nice to people. But this is not the Gospel (I Cor. 15:1-4).
7. Many people are confused over weird teachings that they have picked up over the years. Only the Word of God can flush out all of these errors and deceptions.
8. America used to be a God-fearing country with a strong, Bible foundation. But not any more. What is happening today in America is very similar to brainwashing and I use this word cautiously.
9. I can think of no other term to describe what is going on through the media, the public schools, and yes even most churches. The true Gospel is not being preached. The devil is deceiving the multitudes into thinking everything is all right when things are not all right.
10. Probably the most famous preacher in America today is Rick Warren. But he has dummed down the true Gospel, and in fact preaches a false gospel ; i.e., the so-called social gospel.
11. He has dummed down the true Gospel by promoting inaccurate Bible translations. In his popular *The Purpose Driven Life* book, Warren jumps from one crummy Bible version to another, picking whichever paraphrase or translation seems to support his false gospel.
12. In appendix three of *PDL*, Warren lists 15 Bible versions he used. They are: The Amplified Bible, Contemporary English Version, God’s Word Translation, King James Version, Living Bible, The Message, New

American Bible, New American Standard Bible, New Century Version, New International Version, New Jerusalem Bible, New Living Translation, New Revised Standard Version, New Testament In Modern English, and Today's English Version.

13. The only reliable version he mentions in his list is the KJV, which he seldom quotes. Take for example, this terrible paraphrase called, The Message, which he uses very often.
14. Consider the Lord's Prayer (the Model Prayer) from the Message (not the message from God!):

*Our Father in heaven,
Reveal who you are.*

Set the world right;

Do what's best

As above, so below (an occult phrase)

Keep us alive with three square meals.

*Keep us forgiven with you
and forgiving others.*

Keep us safe

from ourselves and the Devil.

You're in charge!

Our Father which art in heaven

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

In earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and
the glory, for ever. Amen.

15. The devil is behind all these bogus translations. The devil does not want people to get saved, and he will do everything he can to hinder God's work (4:4, 15; cf. II Cor. 4:3, 4).

II. THOSE THAT ARE GENUINELY SAVED GET GROUNDED IN GOD'S WORD (MARK 4:17).

1. Our Lord said in Mark 4:17, "And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time."..."
2. Matthew 13:21 says, "Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.""
3. In these parables, the Word of God is represented by seed. Like seed, the Word of God must take root in the heart; it must be cultivated; and it must be permitted to bear fruit.
4. Many people have a shallow, superficial understanding of the things of God. Many profess to be Christians, but were never genuinely born again. There is not much earth, no depth of earth (4:5) and so they eventually withered away (4:6).

5. I am not saying that a person has to understand all the deep things of God in order to be saved. But he must understand and accept the basic principles of the Bible repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; the deity of Christ; His substitutionary death on the cross; and resurrection from the dead, etc.
6. Many churches ignore all of this. Children grow up in church, receive certain sacraments, go through certain rituals, take certain classes, and automatically they assume they are on their way to heaven. But unfortunately, many of them are on their way to hell.
7. Much of what takes place in church services today is designed to please the flesh (e.g., Rick Warren's *PDL*).
8. Some people attend a church service, get caught up in all the excitement; they make their way down to the altar and people lay hands on them and tell them they're saved. Meanwhile they have no idea what the Gospel is.
9. In many church services, the emotions have been moved, but the conscience has not been touched. David said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting", (Psalm 139:23, 24).
10. There must be deep conviction; there must be genuine repentance. Otherwise, it is not real Bible salvation. There are multitudes of professing Christians who hope to get to heaven some day, but they are in a fantasy world
11. There are church members who are carnal, bitter, selfish, proud, dishonest, and as crooked as a dog's leg.
12. Our Lord said unconverted church people wither away because they lacked moisture (Luke 8:6). What an apt description of many churches today dry as a bone! They lack moisture. I remember Sister Beryl. She was saved in a Methodist church in St. Vincent many years ago. She moved to Queens and started attending a Methodist church close to home. She left it and started attending services with us. I asked her about the Methodist church and she said: "It was so dry I nearly choked! It lacked moisture" (Luke 8:6).
13. John Wesley and the original Methodists did not lack moisture. They were not dry as dust preachers. But the devil got into Methodism just like he gets into all of the churches Baptist churches too.
14. Our Lord said, "And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it

- with gladness” (Mark 4:16). But after a while, these folks fall away (4:17).
15. Why? Perhaps it is because of affliction or persecution from unsaved friends and relatives (4:17). They cannot take the pressure from unsaved friends and family and so they give in.
 16. Our Lord said, “But when the sun was up, it was scorched” (Mark 4:6). The hot sun represents troubles and tribulations (4:17). When things get too hot for some people, they bail out.
 17. Some people fall away because of temptation. Our Lord said in Luke 8:13, “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.””

III. TO BE GENUINELY SAVED, YOU MUST MAKE A CLEAN BREAK WITH THE WORLD (4:18, 19)

1. Let us consider now the thorny ground (4:18, 19). The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word.”
2. Luke 8:14 says, “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.””
3. There comes a time in a person’s life when he must make a choice: the pleasures of this world or the things of God. Some say they want to have it both ways, but the Bible says, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8).
4. They say they love Jesus but they love their worldly friends more. Second Timothy 3:2 says, “For men shall be lovers of their own selves.”
5. Second Timothy 3:4 says, “men will be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.””
6. One of my favorite hymns goes like this:
*Worldly pleasures all forsaken
Take me, Jesus, take me now.
I surrender all, I surrender all.
All to Thee, my blessed Saviour, I surrender all.*
7. But many are not willing to forsake their worldly pleasures. They do not really want to surrender all. If they were honest they would sing, I Surrender Some.”
8. People prefer their parties, their sports, their TV, their worldly friends, their money and possessions the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches (Mark 4:19).
9. Thank God some seed does fall on good ground (Mark 4:20).

CONCLUSION:

1. The writer John Updike died recently. Before he died he wrote a poem about his death.
For life's a shabby subterfuge,
And death is real, and dark, and huge.
The shock of it will register
Nowhere but where it will occur.”
2. Mr. Updike was correct in saying, ”death is real, and dark, and huge.””
3. However, he was sadly mistaken in saying, “For life’s a shabby subterfuge”, (cf. Mark 4:20; 8:36, 37).
4. In his obituary, Mr. Updike was described as a prolific Pulitzer Prize-winning author.”
5. What good is being rich and famous, and selling millions of books, and receiving awards and prizes, if you feel your life is nothing but a shabby subterfuge?
6. Satan employs subterfuge, not God (cf. Mark 4:15).
7. First John 3:8 says, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.””