

“The Parable of the Sower – Part 4”  
“The Thorny Soil”  
Mark 4:1-20  
(Preached at Trinity, April 28, 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. We've been examining the Parable of the Sower, sometimes called the Parable of the Soils. As I've pointed out, it is important to understand the nature of parables. One of the chief rules of hermeneutics regarding parables is they teach one central truth. The central truth of this parable is: *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. But we've also seen this parable is unusual in that each of the soils is parabolic in its own right.  
In addition, 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 grace is not in ourselves - the good soil is that which has been carefully plowed and prepared
3. We find in this parable seed being sown in four types of soil. Wayside Soil, Stony Ground Soil, Thorny Soil, and Good Soil.  
There is no problem with the seed – the problem lies in the soil. So far we've seen two of the soil types:
  - A. **Wayside Soil** - describes the hardness of men's hearts. They are unresponsive to the preaching of the Word of God. Under the influence of the wicked one the good seed of the Word of God has no effect.
  - B. **Stony Ground Soil**
    1. The seed comes up quickly because it is shallow
    2. Two causes of withering - too shallow, no root
    3. This marks the impulsive hearer
    4. They are barren - they do not bear fruit. When difficulty, inconvenience, or suffering arises they quickly flee.
    5. The true convert shows evidences of Christian graces. He labors for the Kingdom. The true Christian will persevere
4. This brings us to the other third type of soil, the Thorny Soil.

- I. "Some fell among thorns" - the soil was infested with thick thorny vines  
NAS **Mark 4:7** - "And other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop."  
**Mark 4:18-19** – "And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, <sup>19</sup> and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."
- A. This seed fell among thorns
1. One of the rules of farming is to keep the crop weed free  
Weeds steal nutrients and water from the crop.
  2. Thorns signify the most aggressive and damaging weeds  
They are a constant menace to the farmer. God told Adam that this was a curse due to sin.  
**Genesis 3:17-18** – ". . .Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field;"
  3. Because of the curse to farmers thorns began to take the character of everything evil and offensive  
**Numbers 33:55** – "But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you let remain of them *will become* as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land in which you live."
  4. Paul described his tormenting affliction as his "thorn in the flesh."
  5. Jesus used thorns to describe the professor of religion that allows the things of this world to choke out any true commitment to Christ.
- B. The Nature of Thorns
1. If they are not plowed completely they will return again & again.
    - a. A person cannot both love the world and have Christ  
**James 4:4** – "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."
    - b. We must once and for all decide to which kingdom we belong
  2. Thorns hinder the light of the sun from reaching the soil  
The cares and riches of this world block the light of Christ
  3. Thorns are unsightly and grievous to the farmer  
Likewise it is grievous to Christ and His faithful ministers when they see the hearers of the gospel earthly minded, carnal, worldly
  4. Thorns are unprofitable and in the end are cast into the furnace to be burned.
- C. These hearers appear to be better than the former two
1. Satan did not plucked the word from their hearts
  2. They seem to have much deeper roots - their hearts do not seem so hard.
  3. They remain longer in their profession. These corruptions slowly eat away at the soul.

- II. There are three things Mark records that cause this professor of religion to fall away
- “The worries of the world”
  - “The deceitfulness of riches”
  - “The desires for other things”
- A. These things which choke the Word are our gods whether they be husband, wife, child, gold, silver, house, or our own belly
- Romans 8:5** – “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”
1. These are the curse of the modern church
  2. Multitudes of professing Christians are so distracted by earthly matters they are of little good to the church or our Lord’s Kingdom
- B. What are some of these cares or worries of the world?
1. Our material needs –
    - Matthew 6:31** – “Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?’”
  2. Concern for self - many spend more time on themselves than on the Kingdom -
    - How we look – what we wear
    - How we feel
    - What others think of us
  3. The fear of tomorrow
    - Matthew 6:34** – “Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. *Each* day has enough trouble of its own.”
  4. The care of family - it must not keep us from Christ
    - Luke 14:26** – “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.”
    - THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCE WITH REGARD TO THE FAMILY
  5. How do we know when we are excessive in worldly matters?
    - a. When the mind is so taken up in worldly things that there is no room for thoughts for the soul
    - b. When our thoughts run to earthly things at inappropriate times
      - During worship, during prayer
    - c. When our earthly concerns cause us inward disorder, we become nervous, we cannot sleep
- C. What is the deceitfulness of riches?
1. The continued desire for this world's goods
  2. Attention to this world that will leave us too tired to tend to our soul
  3. A desire for material things that will cause us to rob God
  4. Why are they called deceitful?
    - a. They deceive men out of the riches of Christ
    - b. They cheat men out of their time - time they might have had hearing the Word
    - c. They promise peace, satisfaction, contentment, security but supply none

- d. They cheat men out of eternal life
  - e. Satan is a liar and deceiver  
**Matthew 4:8-10** – “Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; <sup>9</sup> and he said to Him, "All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'”
- C. What is meant by the “desire for other things?”
- 1. A desire to satisfy the longings of our flesh  
The never ending desire for ease of life
  - 2. Demonstrated by Americans  
No nation since the Roman Empire has had such a thirst for leisure... and God destroyed them.
  - 3. They rob God of His Sabbath  
They hate all work and live for leisure
- D. What are the effects of being choked by thorns
- 1. No time to pray or to attend to meditation
  - 2. No time to hear the Word of God
  - 3. No time to study the Word of God
  - 4. No time to labor in the church

#### Conclusion:

- 1. This is a great danger for all who profess to know Christ. There are many who have made professions of faith in Christ but bear no signs of fruit. The cares of this world have choked any passion for Christ as thorns choke the life out of a farmer’s crops.
- 2. We must guard our flesh with great diligence.  
Remember, we’ve been describing lost religious people.  
NAS **1 Corinthians 9:27** – “but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”  
ESV **1 Corinthians 9:27** – “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”