

God is Busy Sowing Seed

The parable of the sower and the seed

- Today a parable: story about earthly activity we can relate to, teaches deeper heavenly truth. Today, story of farmer who sows seed. Earthly activity we can relate to. Hands: ever lived or worked on farm where crops grown; planted any kind of seed. Picture we can relate to: farmer sowing seed. In story, four different types of soil seed lands on: footpath, stepped on, birds; rocky, thin dirt, nowhere for roots to sink; thorns/thistles/weeds that choke it; good fertile soil, rich black dirt where plants grow. You can relate: if you're going to grow plants, need good soil; if soil bad, won't grow.
- But there's a deeper heavenly truth, because God's not growing grass, vegetables, flowers. Growing faith. That's crop wants to grow with seed. So with this parable Jesus is teaching us how kingdom of heaven grows, how faith grows, and how (like farmer in field) God is busy sowing seed.



Four soil types

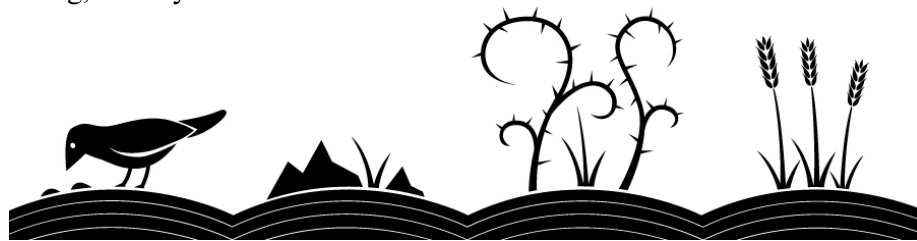
- Mt 13. Also Mk & Lk. From all three, we know: Sower is God; seed is Word, gospel; crop is faith; four soil types are ways God's gospel is received by people. Luther: four different kinds of disciples.
- Start with last: **vs. 23a**. Soil God wants, where seed will grow. This is Christian heart that hears and believes gospel and clings to Jesus in faith. If we were to stop there and say, "Good. I'm Christian, I come to church; I've got faith; I'm pretty good soil; God got lucky when threw seed on me;" then we'd miss point. **Vs. 9**. Includes us. So listen to this; pay attention! In this parable, Jesus issues strong warning to you and me not to receive seed of gospel like other three soil types.
- First, **vs. 19**. These are people who hear Word, but never apply to themselves. One ear out other. Never sinks in. Seed sitting on top of ground; never does anything, never grows. People hear but never understand because not really listening. Warning for you! When you come to church, come to listen? Don't mean just hear what young preachers have to say. Listen with undisrupted attention to Savior, who speaks through Word, so that you can understand his will and plan for your salvation? I don't think we always do! Mind wanders, preacher rambles, organ plays, we read announcements in bulletin, check watch; don't listen. Satan's birds are hovering every day, looking for opportunity to swoop down, snatch away gospel seed God has sown on us, but we leave sitting on surface, without listening and applying.
- Second, **vs. 20-21**. These are people who love Jesus, who know joy of forgiveness, Christian, until faith is challenged. Ever sat in philosophy class at secular university? Some have. The Christian faith mocked; our college kids made to feel like idiots for believing crucified Jew is Son of God. That will test faith. Not just at college but everywhere in postmodern culture where true Christianity is ridiculed and belittled as religion for uneducated. Warning for you: this world will challenge your beliefs, test your faith. Unless your roots are sunk deep into the ground beneath this rocky soil, your faith will be in danger of drying up.
- Third, **vs. 22**. Strongest warning in parable may be right here, because this is all of us! We may think we have strong faith; but we're all surrounded by weeds and thorns. Think of all things in world competing for your attention; that take up your time. Not all are bad! Not bad to work lots of overtime, to spend some weekends up north, to go to out of town baseball tourneys or weekend club league volleyball camps, to stay busy doing all kinds of activities that in/of themselves aren't wrong. But you've got to evaluate priorities, because whenever any of these things that receive your attention rise to a level above God and become more important to you than faith in Jesus, then they become thorny weeds that slowly, surely asphyxiate faith.
- So, clear warning for Christians: birds, rocks, thorns all over. Unless we clear them out of life, our faith will be in danger of drying up and dying.

Powerful seed!

- Here's good news, one of most important points of parable: despite fact birds, rocks, thorns are all over, God is still busy sowing seed! **Vs. 3b**, what God has been doing all along, to this very day. Determined to plant his gospel seed all over. No ordinary seed; powerful seed – message of death & res of Christ for redemption of entire world! So powerful, can actually change person's soil type! That doesn't happen with earthly seed; if you plant flower garden, seed won't change dry clay into fertile soil. God's gospel is such powerful seed that it can actually turn bad soil good.
- Think: what happened to you! By nature, your heart was scorched soil, dry clay, lifeless dust; nothing could grow. But when God sowed seed on you, your soil changed; your heart became fertile ground where faith could germinate, blossom into beautiful flower. God converted you; turned you into good soil with his amazing seed. That's the power of the gospel! Changes hearts, lives; bears abundant fruit! **Vs. 23b "[It] produces..."** Gospel shows you love of God, calls you child of God, takes away guilt, gives strength to get through tough days, gives you hope of eternal life, gives purpose in life. That's an amazing yield from small seed. No ordinary seed – gospel, that turns bad soil good and bears abundant fruit!

Acres of faith

- That's seed God is busy sowing. When you look at parable and think why he told it, it's more than just warning about birds, rocks, thorns that kill faith (certainly that!). It makes us thank God for sowing seed in us; also makes us desire to be good soil where this seed can grow. God wants seed to grow into strong faith; what we want, too. True that cares, concerns, sins of daily life make our soil rockier, thornier than we want it to be. Reading this makes us want to be good soil that gets lot of seed, grows lot of faith.
- Reading this also shows us very heart of God. God wants acres and acres of faith. So he does what most farmers don't: sows seed on rocks, thorns, paths. Very generous with seed (almost reckless), because he knows his gospel can turn bad soil good and sprout into strong faith. That's what's important to him; what he wants; what's on his heart. So every day, all over world, with patience and with love that never ends, God (like farmer in field) is busy sowing seed. And our prayer: plant gospel seed deep within me, and let it grow into strong, healthy faith.



Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 (NIV 1984)

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."

¹⁸ "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. ²² The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."