

PROBING THE PARABLES OF JESUS

Mark 4:1-41

- ***The parable of Jesus***

He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. ² And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, Mark 1:1-2 NASB

Jesus began a new method of teaching. He began to teach by parables. Note the setting was 'by the seashore', and the crowd was great (pleistos) means very great. The multitude was so great that they overflowed the seashore, and they pressed in upon Jesus so much that he was forced into a boat.

Parable (parabole): literally means placing a thing by the side of something else for the purpose of comparing. The word comparison best describes a parable.

- 1. A parable is a comparison: it is an earthly event pointing out a heavenly truth. It is a comparison between the earth and heaven.***
- 2. A parable is a comparison: the earthly story has to be delved into to discover the heavenly truth. The spiritual point is found only by active thought and effort, by actively comparing the physical world with the spiritual world. In fact, the more a man thinks and meditates upon a parable, the more he usually sees the truth.***

Listen, O my people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

² I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old. Psalm 78:1-2 NASB

³ "Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴ as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And after the

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sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. ⁸ Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." 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?"
Mark 4:3-13 NASB

- **Behold – pay attention to this! (v3)**
- **The seed and the sower and the soils.**
 - **Note v5-6: No depth of soil...no root.**

¹⁶ That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.
Ephesians 3:16-19 NASB

⁶ Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.
Colossians 2:6-7 NASB

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual

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songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. Colossians 3:16-17 NASB

And He said, He who has ears to hear, let him be hearing [and let him ^[a]consider, and comprehend]. Mark 4:9 AMPC

- ***Jesus gave the disciples some explanations.***

¹⁰ And as soon as He was alone, those who were around Him, with the Twelve [apostles], began to ask Him about the parables. ¹¹ And He said to them, To you has been entrusted the mystery of the kingdom of God [that is, the secret counsels of God which are hidden from the ungodly]; but for those outside [of our circle] everything becomes a parable, ¹² In order that they may [indeed] look and look but not see and perceive, and may hear and hear but not grasp and comprehend, lest haply they should turn again, and it [their willful rejection of the truth] should be forgiven them. ¹³ And He said to them, Do you not discern and understand this parable? How then is it possible for you to discern and understand all the parables? Mark 4:10-13 AMPC

⁹ He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.' ¹⁰ "Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed." Isaiah 6:9-10 NASB

¹³ But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 3:13 NASB

¹⁴ The sower sows the Word. ¹⁵ The ones along the path are those who have the Word sown [in their hearts], but when they hear, Satan comes at once and [by force] takes away the message which is sown in them. ¹⁶ And in the same way the ones sown upon stony ground are those who, when they hear the Word, at once receive and accept and welcome it with joy; ¹⁷ And they

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have no real root in themselves, and so they endure for a little while; then when trouble or persecution arises on account of the Word, they immediately are offended (become displeased, indignant, resentful) and they stumble and fall away. ¹⁸ And the ones sown among the thorns are others who hear the Word; ¹⁹ Then the cares and anxieties of the world and distractions of the age, and the pleasure and delight and false glamour and deceitfulness of riches, and the craving and passionate desire for other things creep in and choke and suffocate the Word, and it becomes fruitless. ²⁰ And those sown on the good (well-adapted) soil are the ones who hear the Word and receive and accept and welcome it and bear fruit—some thirty times as much as was sown, some sixty times as much, and some [even] a hundred times as much. ²¹ And He said to them, Is the lamp brought in to be put under a peck measure or under a bed, and not [to be put] on the lampstand? ²² [Things are hidden temporarily only as a means to revelation.] For there is nothing hidden except to be revealed, nor is anything [temporarily] kept secret except in order that it may be made known. ²³ If any man has ears to hear, let him be listening and let him perceive and comprehend. Mark 4:14-23 AMPC

The emphasis is upon the kind of ground which receives the seed, that is, the kind of person who receives the Word of God. All four grounds (all four types of persons) heard the Word, but each received it in a different manner. How each received the Word depended upon the kind of ground they were. The following chart shows this.

The wayside ground...	...is an unplowed heart...	...which results in a hardened life.
The stony ground...	...is a rootless heart...	...which results in a superficial life.
The thorny ground...	...is a worldly heart...	...which results in a strangled life.
The fruitful ground...	...is an honest & good heart...	which results in a fruitful life.

- **Jesus is teaching here, but He is also reflecting upon the results of His teaching.**

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- ***He is the sower but all of us are to be sowers also, sowers of the Word concerning Jesus Christ and His kingdom.***

²⁴ For, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, ²⁵ But the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word which was preached to you. I Peter 1:24-25 NASB

- ***The seed we sow is from Jesus and it is Jesus, the Living Word.***
- ***A parable revealed truth to those accepting and appreciating it...concealing it from those resenting or abusing it.***
- ***"The parable, it is supposed, is meant to do two things, namely, to reveal truth to the receptive, and to conceal it to the unreceptive. S. Goebel***

²¹ And He began to speak to them: Today this Scripture has been fulfilled while you are present and hearing. ²² And all spoke well of Him and marveled at the words of grace that came forth from His mouth; and they said, Is not this Joseph's Son? ²³ So He said to them, You will doubtless quote to Me this proverb: Physician, heal Yourself! What we have learned by hearsay that You did in Capernaum, do here also in Your [own] town. ²⁴ Then He said, Solemnly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable and welcome in his [own] town (country). ²⁵ But in truth I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were closed up for three years and six months, so that there came a great famine over all the land. Mark 4:21-25 AMPC

- ***Here is a precept: keep an ever-watchful eye on what you are hearing...(v23)***
 - ***Listen, perceive and comprehend.***
 - ***Hear with attention.***
 - ***Hear for your personal application.***
 - ***Hear retentively, so as to remember.***
 - ***Here prayerfully so the Word will be blessed in your life.***
 - ***Here practically so you can consent and obey.***

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- ***Here is a proverb within the parable...***

21 And He began to speak to them: Today this Scripture has been fulfilled while you are present and hearing. 22 And all spoke well of Him and marveled at the words of grace that came forth from His mouth; and they said, Is not this Joseph's Son? 23 So He said to them, You will doubtless quote to Me this proverb: Physician, heal Yourself! What we have learned by hearsay that You did in Capernaum, do here also in Your [own] town.

24 Then He said, Solemnly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable and welcome in his [own] town (country). 25 But in truth I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were closed up for three years and six months, so that there came a great famine over all the land. Mark 4:24-25 AMPC

- ***In proportion as you give yourself to hearing, you will gain by hearing.***
- ***Those who are not interested in the Word find it disinteresting.***
- ***Those who hunger find food.***
- ***Those who come joyfully are made glad.***
- ***Those who come in faith receive assurance and confirmation.***
- ***Here is a promise: To Him who has will more be given.***
- ***When you 'hear', you get more desire to hear.***
- ***You get more understanding of what you hear.***
- ***You 'possess' more of what you hear it and blessed in what you hear.***
- ***You gain wisdom and strength and delight in what you hear.***
- ***God will give you more as you learn to value what He has already given you.***

Listen to what Ebenezer Blackwell said...

That you may walk (live and conduct yourselves) in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him and desiring to please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and steadily growing and increasing in and by the knowledge of God [with fuller, deeper, and clearer insight, acquaintance, and recognition]. Colossians 1:10 AMPC

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26 And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; 27 and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. 28 The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. 29 But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

Parable of the Mustard Seed

30 And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, 32 yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade."

33 With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; 34 and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples. Colossians 1:10 NASB

- ***Jesus teaches the crowds via parables but to His disciples He explained everything completely.***
 - ***The root – the shoot and the fruit...there is a growth process and purpose (v28) There is sure growth, certain growth...gradual but good.***
 - ***A man sows the seed (not Jesus the sower) but each of us. (v26)***
 - ***The harvest is imminent but not immediate, but when ripened, it is ready for harvest.***
 - ***A radish grows quicker than an oak tree!***
 - ***We must trust in and cooperate with the growth process.***
- ***The mustard seed (v31-34)***
 - ***Fruit doesn't much look like seed...be patient and wise during the transformational process of spiritual growth.***
 - ***Tiny seeds that are empowered to grow produce amazing outcomes.***

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³⁵ On that same day [when] evening had come, He said to them, Let us go over to the other side [of the lake]. ³⁶ And leaving the throng, they took Him with them, [just] as He was, in the boat [in which He was sitting]. And other boats were with Him. ³⁷ And a furious storm of wind [of hurricane proportions] arose, and the waves kept beating into the boat, so that it was already becoming filled. ³⁸ But He [Himself] was in the stern [of the boat], asleep on the [leather] cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, Master, do You not care that we are perishing? ³⁹ And He arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Hush now! Be still (muzzled)! And the wind ceased (sank to rest as if exhausted by its beating) and there was [immediately] a great calm (a perfect peacefulness). ⁴⁰ He said to them, Why are you so timid and fearful? How is it that you have no faith (no firmly relying trust)? ⁴¹ And they were filled with great awe and feared exceedingly and said one to another, Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey Him?
Mark 4:35-41 AMPC

- ***Jesus and His mom had experienced a long day...He said, "Let's go to the other side of the Lake."***
 - ***It was time for rest and peace but it was interrupted by hurricane force winds.***
 - ***The disciples panicked...there was a huge storm and Jesus was asleep.***
 - ***Jesus tames the storm...so rest and peace do come...the disciples were rebuked for their lack of trust in Jesus...***
 - ***If they had been more 'aware of what they had heart' from Him, they might have more accurately discerned the truth about who Jesus is and what He can do...***
 - ***He can handle the storms in our lives too...He shut down the raging waters...He can bring a calm to our 'boats' too.***