

Word Wednesday #24 - Parables 1 - August 2, 2023

Yeshua returns to Simon Peter's house in Capernaum. His earthly family waits outside, but Jesus instead explains that His disciples are now His family. He leaves town, walking west along the north shore of Lake Galilee. The multitudes follow Him a few miles before He stops at a small bay, the "Sower's Cove." He steps into His disciples' fishing boat and sits down, beginning to teach the crowds in parables. Those willing to hear and understand the nature of the kingdom of God could do so. Those unwilling to understand would not.

Mother and Brothers: Matthew 12:46-50

[46] While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak to Him. [47] [Someone said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak to You."] [48] But Jesus replied to the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?" [49] And extending His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold: My mother and My brothers! [50] "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."

- Some of us made decisions to follow Jesus that put us at odds with our natural families. Many in other countries pay with their lives for this decision.
- These words would have been especially startling in a society that took the command to honor your father and mother as the most important commandment in the Torah.
- As with Matthew 5, Jesus is not abolishing but elevating the command from the outward to the inward, or from the purely physical to the spiritual.
- Those who honor, respect, obey and do what His Heavenly Father asks are his family members.
- Chief among the Father's will is that "All come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9)
- McGee: "The strongest relationship today is the relationship between Christ and a believer."

Matthew 13 Introduction

- McGee: "Matthew's Gospel is key to open door to both the Old and New Testaments. If that is true, then chapter 13 is the key to the Gospel of Matthew. It will give us a better understanding of what the Kingdom of Heaven is than any other place in the book."
- Believer's Bible Commentary: The kingdom of heaven is the sphere in which God's rule is acknowledged. It has two aspects: (1) outward profession, including all who claim to recognize God's rule; and (2) inner reality, including only those who enter the kingdom by conversion.

Geographic Setting - Matthew 13:1-2

[1] On that day, Jesus had gone out of the house and was sitting by the sea. [2] And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach.

- 1 mile south of Capernaum, there is a section of shoreline that slopes down in a cone-shape to form a natural amphitheater. People sitting far up the slope can hear someone on the shore clearly. The geography is remarkable.

- As He did when he first called Peter, Jesus makes himself dependent (we might even say he was vulnerable), on Peter's (or whoever's) boating skills to ensure the boat remains in a relatively stable position while He gives a long teaching.

“He spoke in Parables” - Matthew 13:3a

[3] And He told them many things in parables...

- Jesus' central theme in the Parables is the Kingdom of God, both present and future and Jesus has the authority to define the parameters of the kingdom and determine who is included and excluded. He is God.
- See the lesson discussion guide for additional thoughts.

Parable #1 - Sower & Four Soils Matthew 13:3-9

[3] And He told them many things in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow; [4] and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. [5] “Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and they sprang up immediately, because they had no depth of soil. [6] “But after the sun rose, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. [7] “Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. [8] “But others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times as much. [9] “The one who has ears, let him hear.”

- Jesus uses familiar surrounding geography as the backdrop of many teachings.
- Much of Israel is rocky ground. Writings indicate they scattered the seed and then tilled/plowed the land to mix the seed in
- A few parables have an explanatory summary, but only two parables receive a point-by-point explanation (the four soils and the wheat and the tares, which we will look at next time).
- Let's skip to Jesus' interpretation in verses 18-23:

Sower Explained: Matthew 13:18-23

#1 Sown by the Road

[18] “Listen then to the parable of the sower. [19] “When 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 sown with seed beside the road.

- McGee: “The Good Sower represents Jesus, and the field represents the world.”
 - This understanding is inferred from the parable of the wheat and tares.
 - Jesus (and, by extension, His disciples) casts His Word broadly. Today we are to “broadcast” His Word.

Word Wednesday #24 - Parables 1 - August 2, 2023

- The four types of soil represent four types of potential disciples. The sower, field, and seed remain the same; the difference lies in the type of soil that receives the seed.
- This first group hears the Word but has a hardened heart, similar to the hard soil.
 - They refuse to repent and, as a result, are open to the enemy's attacks.
 - The devil provides various reasons why having faith is illogical, as depicted in the book "The Screwtape Letters."
- In Jesus' day, this group would have comprised those hostile to Him. Typically, these were the religious elite of various backgrounds but could have been anyone who rejected His message.
- In the Old Testament, birds could be associated with something evil, but not always. Leviticus discusses both clean and unclean birds, and there is an important Levitical law related to birds, which carries a specific blessing, one of only two such laws.
 - **Deuteronomy 22:6-7** *"If you happen to come upon a bird's nest along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs in it, and the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; [7] you shall certainly let the mother go, but the young you may take for yourself, in order that it may go well for you and that you may prolong your days.*
 - The other command that carries a specific blessing?
 - **Exodus 20:12** *"Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be prolonged on the land which the LORD your God gives you.*
 - We shouldn't draw vast conclusions about birds from one example
- This passage also raises questions on election vs. free will
 - "You can argue about election all you want to, but in this parable, there is a lot of free will exhibited." McGee
 - Luther was comfortable with the apparent paradox between election and free will.
 - The saved are chosen before the foundation of the world and predestined to believe. For it is by grace we are saved through faith, not of ourselves.
 - The lost are individually accountable for rejecting. God does not pre-ordain.

#2. The Rocky Ground

[20] "The one sown with seed on the rocky places, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; [21] yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution occurs because of the word, immediately he falls away.

- In Jesus' day, this would have been the large crowds that got excited but fell away as soon as His teaching stopped making them comfortable.
- McGee: "These are what I call Alka-Seltzer Christians. There is a lot of fizz in them, but they never get into orbit."

#3. The Thorny Ground

[22] “And the one sown with seed among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, and the anxiety of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

- The third type is possibly the scariest: the person who hears the Word and thinks they’re ok.
- Because anxiety and covetousness are often heart issues, people in this group can externally fake authentic belief very well (deceiving themselves as well as others).
- Judas fell into this category.
- They hear the word and give intellectual agreement to it, but they don’t have any fruit in their life.
- McGee: “extreme poverty and extreme prosperity—[these] are folk who are the most difficult to reach for Christ.”

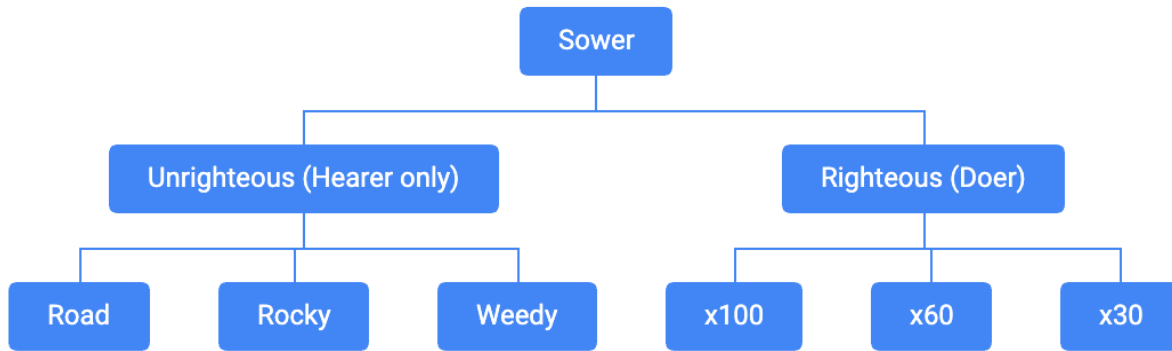
#4. Good Ground

[23] “But the one sown with seed on the good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times as much.”

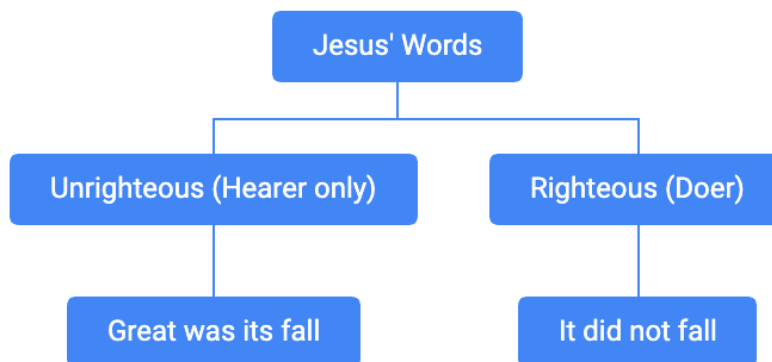
- The fourth soil represents believing disciples.
- They are hearers and understanders (i.e., doers) of the word. Their houses are built on the Rock. They are producing fruit by doing many acts of righteousness. Some good, some better, and some best.
- Besides Judas, the other disciples fell away also, but unlike Judas, returned to Jesus and were restored.
- A thirtyfold harvest is still outstanding. A hundredfold harvest was rare and unusual.
- Remember Who is supposed to get the credit for a good harvest!
 - **Deuteronomy 8:7-10 “For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of streams of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in valleys and hills; [8] a land of wheat and barley, of vines, fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; [9] a land where you will eat food without shortage, in which you will not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. [10] “When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.**

Parable of the Sower Analysis

- McGee: Something we learn about the Kingdom is this: “God [rules] over the entire earth as He calls out a people to His name to bring [them] to a saving knowledge of Christ.”
- Despite being slightly more complex, this still fits Blomberg’s “triadic parable” structure, though with seven potential application points.



- A farmer doesn't care whether a seed sprouts; he or she only is interested in bearing produce.
- McGee nails the discipleship action of this parable: **“My friend, it is well for all of us to examine ourselves to see whether or not we are really in the faith.”** Are you bearing fruit? Are you a doer and not a hearer only?
 - *James 1:22 But prove yourselves **DOERS** of the **WORD**, and not just **HEARERS** who **DECEIVE** themselves.*
- Does the parable begin to sound like a parable we just studied?
 - ***Matthew 7:24-27 “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts on them, will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. [26] “And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. [27] “And the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and its collapse was great.”***



- Here, Jesus used two different stories to describe essentially the same thing.
- He **wants** disciples who hear and do His Words; He will use whatever means at His disposal to tell stories that resonate with His audience.

Why do You speak in Parables? Matthew 13:10-13

Matthew 13:10-13 *And the disciples came up and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” [11] And Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. [12] “For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. [13] “Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*

- **Matthew 13:23: this is the one who hears the word and understands it**
- **Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!**
- God desires that people would Shema (hear and obey), but not all did, and not all do today.
- Verse 13 is quoting Isaiah 6:9-10: the people could hear the soundwaves, but they could not truly *Shema* and repent.
 - The Bible has a concept of a “faithful remnant.” The majority may not have had ears to hear, but a small, faithful group will. This is exactly like our post-modern world today.
- The disciples were part of that faithful remnant in Jesus’ day. The masses likely contained a mixture of all four soils. They needed additional assistance.
- The context of the parables, indicates that, at least to *THAT* general population, but perhaps not always to us, Jesus used parables to convey the message in simple terms that they understood.
 - **Could** they all understand it? Yes
 - **Did** they all understand it? No. Only a faithful remnant did.
 - Were the parables used to clarify or encrypt? Both.

Blessed are your eyes and ears! Matthew 13:14-17

Matthew 13:14-17 *“And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, ‘YOU SHALL KEEP ON LISTENING, BUT SHALL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU SHALL KEEP ON LOOKING, BUT SHALL NOT PERCEIVE; [15] FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART, AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.’ [16] “But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. [17] “For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

- Matthew 13:16 is our memory verse for this lesson.
- Spiritual blindness and deafness hid the message of the Kingdom. This is a particular focus of John’s gospel.
- As with the previous passage, this is not God’s ordaining spiritual blindness and deafness; **the people chose their own way.**

[34] All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak anything to them without a parable. [35] This was so that what was spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled: "I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL PROCLAIM THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD."

- Jesus' purpose is to make things known that were once hidden.

A Lamp on its Lampstand (Mark 4:21-22)

And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, or under a bed, is it? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand? [22] "For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light.

- Mark inserts this parable after the parable of the four soils.
- The words in 4:21 are nearly identical to Matthew 5:15, evidence that Jesus probably said much of what comes to us in the four gospels at different times and places.
- 4:22 says Jesus came to reveal, not to conceal.
- It fits the theme of hearing, understanding, and obeying His words.
- To blend our parables:

Soils Parable	Soils Explanation	Foundation (Mt. 7)	Lamp (Mk 4)	Status
1st Soil - Path	Heard, not understood; evil one snatches away	Heard but does not do - House on the Sandy Flash Food Plain	(no light/lamp to begin with)	Unrighteous
2nd Soil - Rocky	Heard only what he/she wanted to	Heard but does not do - House on sand	Lamp under a basket; light dies	Unrighteous
3rd Soil - Thorns	Heard, but doesn't truly trust	Heard but does not do - House on sand	Lamp under a basket; light dies	Unrighteous
4th Soil - Crops	Heard and understand	Heard and Does - House on the Rock	Lamp on a lampstand; shines	Righteous

- Notice each parable has an identical structure:

