



WEEK TWO: PARABLE OF THE SOWER

There are some important principles for interpreting parables:

- It must be true to life
- The immediate context must shape the interpretation
- Contain relevant details
- They are not the basis for doctrine – they are illustrations to help us understand important issues relevant to our faith

[Read Matthew 13:1-9](#)

The following are the four elements of this parable. Those listening to Jesus would understand the metaphor he was using. Their lives depended on having good harvests to provide their staple of life: bread. However, they did not always understand the spiritual dimension. Jesus *“used parables as illustrations to teach a deeper truth that becomes understandable to the audience”*.

The Sower – Jesus Christ

The Seeds – The Gospel of the kingdom – the Word of God

The Birds – Representing Satan, the evil one

The Soil – Our hearts and minds as we are presented with the Gospel of God’s Kingdom

Jesus was in a boat just off the shore of the Sea of Galilee, sitting, as was the custom of teachers of those days. He starts by telling the people that a farmer went out to plant some seeds. As he scattered them, they fell on four distinct types of soil. Firstly it fell on ground that was hard so that the seed could not sprout or grow and so was immediately picked up by the birds.



This represented someone who, because of their sinfulness and hardness of their heart, hears God’s word but doesn’t accept it or act upon it.

- We have all come across people like this, and maybe we were like it too.
- Do we find it frustrating and think it’s not worth persevering in sharing our faith?
- Why do people harden their hearts when they hear what Jesus did for them?

The second group, the stony ground are those who initially show some interest in the Gospel. Initially, because the second type of soil was stony, the seed was able to begin to grow. However, given there was no depth to the soil, it was impossible for deep roots to grow and so, in the hot sun, the plant withered.

- I'm sure we are aware of many people who fit this category. They come into church and seem to want to know more about the Christian faith. However, that interest was shallow and not deep enough for them to be prepared to put in the time and effort to get themselves established.
- What do you think is the best approach to take with such people?

The third group, those whose seed landed on thorny soil, like the stony ground, the plant couldn't take deep root because of the number of thorns that began to overtake it.

- Do we understand why people are so easily overtaken by things that prevent their faith to grow?
- Is it possible to try and encourage them to overcome this?

And lastly, the fourth group sowed their seed on ground that was good, having the depth of soil for the plant to become well rooted, grow and produce fruit.

Now you might sit back and think you've understood all that and you're doing fine. But let's apply these four soil types to ourselves.

Firstly, what are our thoughts about the Sower. Do we understand this represents Jesus and what he was doing then and is trying to do now, in people's lives?

- Do we believe, without any doubt, that Jesus is the Son of God? If we do, does it affect the way we live?
- Do we believe that because of who he is, Jesus is able to do the impossible, and change and enable even the worst of sinners to grow and become part of God's Kingdom?

Secondly, do we believe that the Word of God, the Bible, is just that?

- How do we sow the seeds of the Gospel into other peoples' lives?
- Could we do this if we didn't fully believe this truth?

Thirdly, do we believe in the existence of Satan, the evil one?

- *1 Peter 5:10 says, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."*

Fourthly, do we understand that the soil represents our hearts and minds in relation to how we respond when shown the Gospel of God's Kingdom.

- The first person is hard so that the word will not 'sink in'. They might hear but are not listening.

- The second person is rocky, meaning not able to be tilled. Firstly they receive the word with excitement, but the moment things start getting tough, then they reject their faith.
- The third person hears the word but the thorns, or cares of the world and seeing riches as being more important, means the seed cannot flourish because they are choked and unable to bear fruit.

All the above hear without fully understanding that they must obey and live by the Word.

- The fourth person, however, listens and understand what is being said. They can bear fruit and share those truths with others.

Can we fit ourselves into any of these groups? Hopefully, we will be counted in the last of these, and are sharing the good news of the kingdom with other people, not just by our words, but by how we live.

Read verses 10-17

Maybe like the disciples, we have not fully grasped why Jesus taught in parables, but understanding only comes to those who listen. I'm sure, like me, you've watched a programme on the television but realise that you haven't 'heard' what was being said because your mind was elsewhere. The same, sadly, applies to sermons. We give the appearance of listening but we're thinking about something else entirely, so that whilst we 'hear' on one level, we have gained no understanding.

Some people deliberately close their ears to God's teachings and their hearts become hardened (see verse 15).

Read verses 18-23

When Jesus had finished teaching the people, he was questioned by the disciples and had to explain to them the meaning of the message.

Let us learn from these verses so that our hearts might be good soil in which God's word can be planted and achieve an abundant harvest.



Prayer:

Father God help us to hear your word and then allow it to grow in our hearts so that our lives will be like this abundant harvest. Amen