

## The Parable of the Sower

### Matthew 13

If we refuse to accept the truth when it is staring us in the face it may become hidden from us.

After openly announcing the arrival of God's Kingdom, demonstrating it with dramatic miracles and sending His disciples out to do likewise in His name, Jesus of Nazareth is facing a backlash from some established leaders. Pharisees and teachers of the Law criticise His practise of the Sabbath and say He's evil, that His power to heal and perform exorcism comes not from God but the devil. At this point it appears some of His own family are sceptical, concerned He may have lost His mind.

So at this point in His ministry Jesus begins to use more *parables*, memorable but enigmatic stories that we have to think about. Spiritual truth is here but we have to dig a bit as if it is buried treasure. If we don't want to see it, after a while we won't be able to.

If all we want is a comfortable religion with familiar traditions, or the novelty of seeing a miracle, these parables will seem little more than amusing folk wisdom. But in the longterm they will act as an indictment against us for here was truth and the offer of grace from God and we refused to take it seriously!

That's the gist of what Jesus says when His disciples ask. They notice the change of style and ask, why so many parables all of a sudden? And Jesus also starts using this little statement at this point, 'He that has ears to hear, let him hear!' What does that mean? It sounds like a riddle, something we have to figure out. Eugene Peterson in the Message translates it like this, 'Are you listening to this, *really* listening?'

Are we paying close attention to Jesus as we read His words in the Gospels?  
Really listening?

Like, enough to think seriously beyond the surface of mere words to implications? Are we earnestly seeking truth, hungering for the sense of Almighty God actually speaking to *us*? Do we desire more than anything else today to hear His message deep inside where decisions are made and directions are set? Are we listening enough that we're prepared to respond and obey and change things? Listening with a heart and will to stop doing what He says is wrong and begin loving and serving in new ways with costly obedience? For humble, genuine seekers and disciples these stories bring light. They illustrate valuable, spiritual truths which instruct our minds and feed our souls.

They help us mature in character with the result of fruitful lives, lived in our Master's service.

But for opponents of Christ or those merely curious thrill seekers? Well, consider the Parable of the Sower. The message of God's Word is sown widely and generously. The truth that human beings are created in God's image but fallen in sinful disobedience from which we cannot save ourselves however such is the grace and love of our Maker He sent His Son to bear and deal with our sin at the cross so that whosoever believes in Him will not perish condemned but inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Some people have hearts like the path and simply aren't interested, it's not difficult for the enemy to keep their focus on worldly things and they remain spiritual non-starters. Others give a shallow response, glad of the free food and healthcare but, reluctant to become committed disciples, like stony ground they have no commitment or persistence and their faith soon withers. The tragic ones are those who start well with sincerity but life just gets busy and crowded with natural pleasures and anxieties. Too busy these days for church or reading the Bible, too caught up with other things, they slowly get infected with worldly values and backslide, usually quite miserably!

I have a question at this point.

What was the *clear* message Jesus *had* been preaching which at least 75% of His hearers seemed to reject resulting in these mysterious and in the end quite damning parables? The Gospels tell us very plainly what Jesus preached at the start of His ministry – 'The kingdom is near – REPENT and believe the Good News!' Ah, there's the snag!

For while many might be willing to accept challenge-free good news in the way someone worried about a sick relative will thank you for your prayers, but repent? No way! That would mean having to admit we've been wrong, ask forgiveness and do things differently.

A minority do listen carefully, according to Jesus, and, like seed sown in good soil, do repent, believe, follow and grow and multiply as they mature with lives of loving devotion and service, pleasing to God and fruitful in His great Kingdom plan of salvation and eternal life.

So, which kind of soil are you? Are *you* listening to Jesus, *really* listening?

'He that has ears to hear, let him hear!'