

# The Parable of the Sower

**“Take heed therefore how ye hear:** for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.”

Luke 8:18

## **Introduction:**

1. The entire parable and its full context may be found in Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-25; and Luke 8:4-18.
2. The parable is simple, and Jesus explained it fully; little to no time needs to be spent thinking about planting.
3. You know the parable; but the importance is how you respond to preaching, not if you grasp the parable!
4. We are long and loud about our KJV Bibles, one-word arguments, hermeneutics, ancient landmarks, etc., etc.
5. Here are four hearers: you make a choice each time you hear the Word of God as to which one you will be.
6. The lesson is not primarily theological in describing different degrees of preparation God makes in each hearer, but it is rather practical in describing different degrees of attentiveness and obedience by each hearer.
7. While it is an axiom of truth that God must prepare hearts for men to understand, that is not the lesson here.
8. It does not matter which ground is regenerate or unregenerate; such worries only distract from the true lesson; the unregenerate can only be the first three kinds of ground, but the regenerate can be all four kinds of ground.
9. If the truth be told, which it will be one day soon, we have been all four kinds of ground at various times.
10. Our Lord explained and applied the parable to His disciples – those born again and able to hear and obey.
11. The purpose of hearing and obeying the preached word is fruitfulness, not obtaining eternal life by a decision.
12. The issue here is not eternal life by missing the invitation, but it is rather fruit bearing by those already saved.
13. The judgment is severe for not hearing rightly – the little knowledge you think you have will be taken away.
14. The blessing is great for hearing rightly – you will be given more knowledge than you hear, by His blessing.
15. To avoid missing this parable, the key issue is applying and obeying truth, not just hearing more sincerely.
16. You can only do part of being good ground here; the real test is what you do with the truth every other day.
17. I fear that many are not bearing the fruit they should, and some are not bearing any fruit at all, in spite of the blessed Lord giving us extensive knowledge and instruction in the word of God and many motivating lessons.
18. If you knew what part of my time is wasted on chasing, exhorting, worrying, and praying for slipping, sliding, fruitless, discouraged, barely-Christians, you would be angry and sick at the same time. Thus the parable!
19. The salvation at stake, and mentioned by Luke, is practical salvation from heresy, fruitlessness, and sin.
20. The danger is clear – fruitlessness deserves God’s judgment (Luke 13:6-9; John 15:1-8; II Peter 1:9).
21. We love the truth of God, and we want more, but we will lose what we have without a godly response.
22. It is a great privilege to hear and understand preaching, and you better respond accordingly, or you lose.
23. Most Christians now want smooth things and fables rather than sound doctrine (Is 30:8-11; II Tim 4:3-4).
24. The good ground is seen in Neh 8:1-18, <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/exposition/preaching-service/sermon.php>.
25. See the table below for a side-by-side comparison of the three accounts of the parable and its explanation.

## **The Wayside Hearer**

- A. *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side” (Matt 13:19).*
- B. *“And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts” (Mark 4:15).*
- C. *“Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12).*
- D. The person hears the word – it is sown by the preacher in his heart – but he does not grasp the full importance and application of it. It remains there loosely floating for a short while, then it is gone!
- E. The lack of understanding is a choice: it is not lack of intelligence, education, age, Alzheimer’s, etc.
- F. Your understanding is your thinking apparatus that is able to synthesize, store, and apply knowledge.
- G. The devil cannot take away the word of God, unless you give it away by misunderstanding (Jas 4:7).
- H. It is a calloused habit of carnal, lazy hearers that hardens ground until conviction and action are lost.
- I. These are churchgoers doing the motions – holding themselves upright, with pain, during preaching.

- J. The preaching makes it to this hearer's heart only in the sense of an awareness and notion of truth.
- K. Preaching becomes only words, sounds, and out-there-somewhere truth, so the devil steals it; and this person trading God's pure word to Satan for their lazy, selfish, wicked habits is worse than Eve!
- L. Christ's lesson is something you are able to do, so do not fatalistically enable Satan (II Tim 2:24-26).
- M. You let the devil steal the word by not preparing for, focusing on, and following up the preaching.
- N. Many take seats in Christian churches, who have no heart for hearing and understanding the gospel; the last thing to be said of them is that they are hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Mat 5:6).
- O. You miss understanding by not preparing ... (1) tiredness from inadequate sleep, (2) skipping preparatory reading, (3) arriving late in a tizzy, and (4) having carnal activities close to preaching.
- P. You miss understanding by not coming with a prayerful, ready mind ... eager to hear God's word.
- Q. You miss understanding by weak focus ... due to laziness, too much television, no disciplined focus.
- R. You miss understanding by distractions while hearing ... (1) daydreaming, (2) taking notes, (3) sore back, (4) child behind you, (5) person beside you, (6) full bladder, (7) a fly, and so forth and so on.
- S. You miss understanding by not reviewing ... considering, searching, studying, and talking about it.
- T. You miss understanding by rebellion and stubbornness ... which are equal to idolatry and witchcraft.
- U. You miss understanding by not applying it yourself ... thinking of others and deferring repentance.
- V. You miss understanding by pride ... self-righteous offence at correction and rebukes by the pastor.
- W. You miss understanding by not appreciating the glorious privilege of hearing the Bible preached.
- X. You miss understanding by sleeping or dozing during the most important part of your week by far.
- Y. You miss understanding by failing to remember and keep instruction with you (Ps 119:11,30,98-100; Pro 1:5,8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1-5,20-21; 5:1,7; 6:20-21; 7:2-3,24; 8:32-33; 19:20; 22:17; 23:12; Deut 6:6-9).
- Z. There is activity to occur after hearing the word (Luke 2:19,51; 9:43-45; Ac 17:11; I Thes 5:20-21).

## The Stony Ground Hearer

- A. *"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended"* (Matt 13:20-21).
- B. *"And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended"* (Mark 4:16-17).
- C. *"They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away"* (Luke 8:13).
- D. The disciple hears the words – even with gladness in his heart – but will not pay the price of persecution or endure difficulty of afflictions. So they are offended with the tribulations of Christ's strict doctrine, separated living, small churches, or circumstances, and they fall away from the truth.
- E. **Anon.** *strictly*, Straightway, at once, forthwith, instantly (OED). The early response is joyful belief.
- F. They have no root in themselves: keeping this the practical phase, they have no true commitment.
- G. Here are negative deterrents to fully following Jesus Christ – worldly opposition and persecution.
- H. Jesus promised a sword, so do not be surprised or resentful. It is to test your love (Matt 10:34-39).
- I. Afflictions are to build your faith, so that you can be perfect. Rejoice! (Rom 5:3-5; James 1:2-4).
- J. Afflictions are to give you an opportunity to show some real Christ-like character (I Peter 2:18-23).
- K. It is continuing that measures the real disciples, not those making professions of zeal (John 8:30-31).
- L. We must enter the kingdom of heaven through much tribulation, both then and now (Acts 14:22).
- M. Many of the Pharisees believed on Him, but they loved friendship more than truth (John 12:42-43).
- N. This age of carnal Christianity is based on a form of godliness without true dedication (II Tim 3:5).
- O. Asaph was about to be offended, but he went again to the sanctuary and was corrected (Ps 73:1-28).
- P. All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, so be wisely expecting it (II Tim 3:12).

- Q. All temptations are common; God is faithful in temptations to provide a way to escape (I Cor 10:13).
  1. Do not flatter yourself – you are not the second Job; your temptations are similar to others’ trials.
  2. They will vary in your life, and they may vary in kind at times from others, but not in difficulty.
  3. God is a faithful Father, and He will not allow you to be tempted too much (Psalm 103:14; 13:3).
- R. Solomon warned if afflictions alter our faith and obedience, then we are weak Christians (Pr 24:10).
- S. These hearers are a disgrace, for they give up for nothing, though Jesus suffered and died for them.
- T. These hearers are ridiculously inferior to sinful athletes, because they cannot endure the least trials.
- U. These hearers will get discouraged by about anything (the same things everyone else faces) and tire!
- V. These hearers will actually reason ... since they cannot be perfect Trojan warriors, they will retire.
- W. What can we say about such persons, when our King has called us to be soldiers in His kingdom!

## The Thorny Ground Hearer

- A. *“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matt 13:22).*
- B. *“And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful” (Mark 4:18-19).*
- C. *“And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14).*
- D. The disciple hears the word – even with gladness – but cannot resist the draw of this world. He becomes preoccupied with his life and pleasures, and he does not bring any fruit to full perfection.
- E. Here are positive deterrents to fully following Jesus Christ – worldly attractions and distractions.
- F. The love of money is a horrible evil, which drown men in destruction and perdition (I Tim 6:6-10).
- G. Pleasure is a horrible vice in spiritual matters (II Tim 3:4; I John 2:15-17; James 4:4; II Tim 4:10).
- H. He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man, both naturally and spiritually (Proverbs 21:17; 23:21).
- I. The rich young ruler was thorny ground: riches choked his desire to follow Jesus (Mark 10:17-22).
- J. It is nearly impossible for those trusting riches to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Mark 10:23-27).
- K. Ananias and Sapphira blew it with riches, for they lied to the Holy Ghost for money (Acts 5:1-11).
- L. These are double minded hearers – which cannot be pleased both financially and spiritually (Jas 4:8).
- M. Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God is a characteristic of our carnal generation (II Tim 3:4).
- N. We are constantly bombarded with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life – to our souls’ ruin.
- O. The man who intermeddles with all wisdom must separate himself from carnal distractions (Pr 18:1).
- P. You cannot serve God and mammon, as Jesus explained so pointedly (Matthew 6:24; James 4:4).
- Q. The successful Christian businessman is an illusion of the devil to seduce hearers from fruitfulness.
  1. Men want so very much to be able to have both – like the rich young ruler, but it is impossible.
  2. Be a successful Christian, and let God increase your business, if He thinks you can handle it.
  3. From a carnal standpoint, God can open more doors and wider than you can by any means.
  4. From a spiritual standpoint, the greatest riches you have are God’s word (Ps 119:14,127,162).
  5. So the choice – to try to love and God and success leads to lose-lose: success and Christianity!
  6. If you doubt it, then think Lot, Samson, or Solomon (his son lost 83% of the kingdom quickly).
- R. Demas loved this present world, and so did Lot in pitching toward Sodom (Gen 13:12; II Tim 4:10).
- S. Bodily exercise has little profit; godliness and contentment are very profitable (I Tim 4:7-9; 6:6).
- T. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to be “without carefulness,” even in neutral matters (I Cor 7:29-32).
- U. This hearer is the belly worshipper condemned elsewhere, minding earthly things (Phil 3:18-19).
- V. What is in your life that captivates your attention and affection – position, pay, pleasure, house, car, children, marriage, body, clothes, independence – whatever it is, it is vanity and vexation of spirit.
- W. Are you too young, too stupid, or too wicked to know the things of this world are not a good trade?
- X. How can we summarize the first three grounds: the lazy looser, the weak sissy, the greedy gambler?

## The Good Ground Hearer

- A. *“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matt 13:23).*
- B. *“And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred” (Mark 4:20).*
- C. *“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15).*
- D. This man hears the word preached in his heart, understands it, and applies the lessons to his own life.
- E. He diligently puts the word into practice and bears fruit by Christ’s strength to praise of God’s grace.
- F. The good ground hearer has *an honest and good heart* (Lu 8:15). What is true of the other grounds?
- G. They receive the word with a ready mind, search the Scriptures, and believe and obey (Acts 17:11).
- H. Some forget they were purged of their old sins and bear no fruit, the ungrateful wretches (II Pet 1:9).
  - 1. The evidence and proof of electing grace in your life is abundance of fruit listed (II Peter 1:5-8).
  - 2. This near-sighted man, a belly worshipper, sees earthly things but misses heaven (II Cor 4:18).
- I. Branches that do not bear fruit are purged away, for they cumber the Lord’s vineyard (John 15:1-8).
- J. Some trees cumber the ground, and they should only receive a space of time to repent (Luke 13:6-9).
- K. Fruitbearing is a long distance race, laying aside weights and sin to be *patience* (Lu 8:15; Heb 12:1).
- L. They keep their bodies under, with the temperance of athletes striving to be the best (I Cor 9:24-27).
- M. They look in the perfect law of liberty, see their blemishes, and make needed changes (Jas 1:21-27).
- N. Good ground has lesser and better yields, by blessing and diligence (Matt 25:14-30; I Cor 15:10).
- O. The Thessalonians were good ground hearers: the whole world bore witness of them (I Thes 1:6-10).
- P. Fruit is the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of righteousness, the fruit of wisdom, and the fruit of souls.
  - 1. Such hearers grow in the Christians graces of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:8-10; II Pet 1:5-8).
  - 2. Such hearers also grow in the truth, knowledge, and the ability and zeal for kingdom duties.
  - 3. We are to grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (I Pet 2:1-3; II Pet 3:18; Heb 5:12-14).
  - 4. Such hearers both love God and His glory and hate the world and its vanity, more and more.
  - 5. Such hearers are more and more spiritually minded and zealous for Christ and less so for earth.
  - 6. Surely this includes greater love for brethren as well, for you cannot have one without the other.
- Q. Good ground is seen in Neh 8:1-18, <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/exposition/preaching-service/sermon.php>.

## The Application

- A. *“And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath” (Mark 4:21-25).*
- B. *“No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have” (Luke 8:16-18).*
- C. If you are slothful or weak regarding hearing and obeying preaching, whatever spiritual blessings of knowledge and providential preservation you have will be taken from you and given to the faithful.
- D. We love God’s truth, and we want more, but we will lose what we have without a godly response.
- E. It is a great privilege to hear and grasp preaching, and you better respond accordingly, or you lose.
- F. The math of hearing preaching is scary: obedient hearers (5+5=12!) Disobedient hearers (1-1=-1!)
- G. If you are diligent and strong regarding hearing and obeying preaching, you will gain in knowledge.
- H. If you are any ground but the good ground – you are profanely stupid and wicked for trading in the riches of gospel truth for the tinsel or soap bubbles of depraved laziness, weakness, or covetousness.
- I. Keep this point strongly in mind – it is not how you hear here, but rather what you do in your home.

- J. You can only partly be good ground here; the real test is what you do with the truth everywhere else.
- K. The context dictates how we understand Mark and Luke's use of our Lord's proverbial statement, which He might well use at other times for other applications, but different here.
1. Let the light of your good works shine before men – let them see your fruit (Matthew 5:15-16).
  2. Hypocrisy might be hid from men, but it shall be revealed in the Day of Judgment (Luke 12:1-3).
  3. He that hath ears opened by the grace of God ought to pay special heed to this sober warning.
  4. For judgment will be measured against men according to their use or neglect of the gospel.

**Conclusion:**

1. Do you have ears to hear? How do you hear? Every time you hear the Word of God, you must make a choice.
2. A beautiful combination is a wise reprovener and an obedient ear (Pr 25:12). Have you done your part for it?
3. God is looking for those who tremble at His word (Is 66:2); the reward and punishment are very great indeed.
4. See the table below for a side-by-side comparison of the three accounts of the parable and its explanation.

**For Further Study:**

1. A Preaching Service <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/exposition/preaching-service/sermon.php>
2. Noble Hearers <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/noble-hearers.pdf>
3. Cut It Down! <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/cut-it-down.pdf>
4. Perfect Mirror <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/perfect-mirror.pdf>
5. Belly Worshipers <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/practical/belly-worshippers-2/sermon.php>
6. Sojourning Here in Fear <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/sermons/exposition/sojourning-here-in-fear/sermon.php>
7. Running Scared <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/running-scared.pdf>
8. Lip Service <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/lip-service.pdf>
9. Proverbs 4:20 [http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/proverbs/commentaries/04\\_20.php](http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/proverbs/commentaries/04_20.php)

# The Parable of the Sower

## Matthew

## Mark

## Luke

	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>
<b>PARABLE</b>	<p><i>“Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold” (13:3-8).</i></p>	<p><i>“Behold, there went out a sower to sow: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred” (4:3-8).</i></p>	<p><i>“A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold” (8:5-8).</i></p>
<b>WAYSIDE</b>	<p><i>“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side” (13:19).</i></p>	<p><i>“And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts” (4:15).</i></p>	<p><i>“Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved” (8:12).</i></p>
<b>STONY</b>	<p><i>“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (13:20-21).</i></p>	<p><i>“And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended” (4:16-17).</i></p>	<p><i>“They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (8:13).</i></p>

**Matthew**

**Mark**

**Luke**

<p><b>THORNY</b></p>	<p><i>“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (13:22).</i></p>	<p><i>“And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful” (4:18-19).</i></p>	<p><i>“And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (8:14).</i></p>
<p><b>GOOD</b></p>	<p><i>“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (13:23).</i></p>	<p><i>“And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred” (4:20).</i></p>	<p><i>“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (8:15).</i></p>
<p><b>WARNING</b></p>	<p><i>“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (13:9).</i></p> <p><i>“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath” (13:12).</i></p>	<p><i>“And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (4:9).</i></p> <p><i>“And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath” (4:21-25).</i></p>	<p><i>“And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (8:8).</i></p> <p><i>“No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. <u>Take heed therefore how ye hear:</u> for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have” (8:16-18).</i></p>