

Pr Russ Willcocks: The Parable of the Sower (23/3/19)

Introduction:

Jesus was a masterful teacher who often taught in parables. A parable is 'an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.' Through them the mysteries of the kingdom were communicated.

The Parable of the Sower:

Matthew 13:1-23

Matthew thirteen verse one indicates that Jesus gave this parable by the lakeside. Historians conclude that this spot was a natural amphitheatre! Making it the perfect place for sharing with a big crowd of people without a microphone.

This was one of the few parables for which Jesus gave both the parable and the explanation. Jesus gave us an explanation, but if you take a moment to think about the other parables Jesus taught you will recall that they often had multiple meanings. What if this parable is no different!

So let's search its meaning a little further than we generally have. Let's see if the Holy Spirit can't help us see things in the parable that we haven't before.

Luke 8:4-8

Jesus doesn't say who the sower is. Pr Russ says that he thinks this could be because there are many ways in which the seed of the kingdom is scattered. Of course the primary application is that God is the sower, but not the only one.

Sometimes He sows, sometimes we sow, sometimes others sow without even realising they are sowing.

In the parable Jesus speaks of 4 different types of ground

- Hard packed ground
- Rocky ground
- Thorny ground
- Good ground

We usually look at these soil types as representing our heart - and rightfully so. But could it be that there is another lesson from each of these?

Could it be that each of the ground types also represent the environment into which we sow our gospel seeds?

- Hard packed ground
 - Would you scatter all of your seeds in an environment that you knew was too hard for them to bear fruit?
 - Could it be that the hard packed ground represents an environment that has been packed down too hard for a seed to penetrate it?
 - This could represent a heart where the ground has been packed down by neglect and hasn't been cultivated by love and acceptance - opening it up and allowing the roots to develop.

- Rocky ground
 - If you were to buy a piece of land without seeing it and then on your first visit out to the property you were to find that it had rocks all through it, what would you think? It would need lots of hard work before it could be productive! Right?
 - Could it be that the rocky ground represents an environment in which there are so many rocks that the seed isn't able to take root?
 - This could represent a heart where there are barriers and obstacles that obstruct the seed from taking root. When given this kind of start is it any wonder that they get scorched when difficulties that arise?
- Thorny ground
 - Weeds tend to grow anywhere, anytime, without cultivation or care. In the thorny ground the weeds grow faster than the seeds of the gospel.
 - Could it be that the thorny ground represents an environment that has too many lures to draw us away and choke us of the life of the gospel message?
 - This could represent a heart that is filled with opposition to the gospel in which the gospel seed is sown, but choked before it really took root. A heart that has not been properly prepared so as to allow the seed opportunity to flourish.
- Good ground
 - The kind of ground that you normally plant seeds into is ground that has been prepared for the seed. It is soft, free of weeds and rocks, and has been supplied with nutrients that will cause the seed to flourish when it grows.
 - Could it be that this kind of ground represents an environment that has been cultivated with love and the building of trust prior to the seed being sown? Could it be that this is the fertile ground of friendship and Christlike love?
 - This could represent a heart that has been thoroughly prepared for the planting of the gospel. Love has been demonstrated, trust awakened, and the result is that the seed flourishes and eventually becomes a sower of other seeds.

Challenge:

Obviously, the best kind of soil for you to be is the good soil!

But take the challenge a step further than simply looking into your own heart. Look at the way in which you are interacting with those around you. Look at how your life is either providing cultivation or barriers. Look at whether you are packing the dirt down so as to harden it toward the gospel seed, or plowing it in preparation for the sowing. Look at whether you are supporting the growth of weeds by your un-Christlike attitude, or pulling out those weeds by speaking the truth in love.

We are all both the sower and the soil! We have the privilege of both cultivating and being cultivated.

Be good soil for the gospel and for those around you!