

Remnant Life Church
June 23, 2012
Mark 4:1-20

How Does Your Garden Grow?

- This parable is often called the parable of the sower
- It should be called the parable of the soil

What is a Parable?

- An earthly story with a heavenly meaning
- “a placing of one thing beside another with a view to comparison” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary)
 - **BAD COMPARISONS**
- Jesus used parables to teach some 60 times as recorded in the Gospels
 - Most in Matthew and Luke
 - A few in Mark (4th chapter)
 - None in John (discourses)
- Jesus used parables for several reasons
 - The people of the day would understand clearly by their own experiences – they would be able to identify
 - To reveal to those on the inside (believers)
 - To hide things from those on the outside (unbelievers)
- **Central theme** of the passage is the condition of my heart (soil) to receive the Word of God (seed) in order to produce fruit.
 - Jesus begins and ends this parable by calling the people to be attentive
 - V. 3 – *Listen!*
 - V. 9 – *He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*
 - Hearing and listening are two different things
 - Hearing my mom and listening to her
 - Everyone could hear Jesus as he taught from the boat just off shore on the Sea of Galilee
 - Jesus wanted them to listen
 - Listening is more than just auditory function
 - It involves visual contact
 - It requires focus and attentiveness
 - It requires a comprehensive process
 - Not like the teacher in Peanuts
 - Listening requires a response to accept or reject
- This parable evokes a very familiar image to the listeners
 - Their livelihood, aside from fishing, was comprised of farming (not cow farming but cultivating the land)
 - Every person would have seen someone with a seed bag around their waist walking through a field slinging seed from their hand.

- The sower only knew he had been successful if there was a good harvest; if there was fruit

The seed lands on 4 different types of soils

1. Along the path or wayside (v. 4)

- a. The farmer's fields in that day were long, narrow tracts of land often serpentine strips divided by paths
- b. The paths or wayside were as hard as concrete by foot, animal and wheel use
- c. The seed that landed on these would never be able to penetrate and would either be eaten by birds or blown away by the wind
- d. Jesus tells us that there are those whose hearts are so hardened that nothing is able to penetrate it – not even God's Word
 - i. This is the **closed heart**
 - ii. The ones who cannot see or refuse to accept how the seed could impact their lives
 - iii. **Matt. 13:19** – *When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.*

2. Rocky ground (v. 5)

- a. Many places in the Palestine region are a 2 to 3 inch veneer of top soil over a bedrock of limestone
- b. Any seed that lands here will quickly be heated by the sun and just as quickly it will grow
- c. But the roots meet the rock and cannot secure or feed the plant – sun and wind come and the plant withers and dies
- d. Many people, at hearing God's word get excited quickly but are never willing to take the time to drive their roots in deep for the times of trial
 - i. This is the **confused heart**
 - ii. Surface knowledge but no depth – like the soil
 - iii. The blessings and benefits of salvation come with a cost (repentance, dying to self, living a new life and leaving the old behind)
 - iv. This is something that needs to be done daily
(**Phil. 2:12** – *Work out your salvation daily with fear and trembling...*)

3. Among the thorns (v. 7)

- a. The hearers of this word seem to be in the best shape of all
- b. This is the **cluttered heart**
 - i. All soil before planting has to be plowed.
 - ii. Plowing turns the soil and also exposes rocks while killing weeds
 - iii. The true farmer knows that if only the surface of the plant is taken the root still remains
 - iv. Many upon hearing the Word only deal with surface things in their lives
 - v. The roots of the world remain (greed, lust, things of the world and flesh)

- vi. If they are not tended to or dealt with they will choke out the things of God and kill the seed
 - c. A profession of faith may have been made but if there is no change in the person the question of true salvation needs to be asked.
 - i. **I John 2:15** – *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*
 - ii. A changed heart and nature must be reflected in the life
4. Good soil (v. 8)
- a. Good soil is the **cultivated heart** (open to receive)
 - b. The good ground for a farmer was ground that had been tilled, cleared and prepared to receive the seed
 - i. Humble – **2 Chron. 7:14; Psalms 25:9**
 - ii. Hungry – **Isa. 26:8; Heb. 11:6**
 - iii. Honest – **Psalms 53:1; 2 Corin. 12:9**
 - c. The good soil not only allows the seed to grow and develop but it also produces fruit
 - d. What does that mean to a Christian – what should our productive, fruitful lives include?
 - i. Holiness and righteousness – live the right way and do the right thing (**Rom. 6:22; Phil. 1:11**)
 - ii. Genuine spirituality (**Gal. 5:22-23**)
 - iii. Lifestyle of praise and thanksgiving (**Heb.13:15**)
 - iv. Sharing of God's blessings (**Rom. 15:27-28**)
 - e. The production will not be the same or equal (30/60/100)
 - i. Ask God how He wants to use you
 - ii. Don't compare yourself with anyone else only who God has called you to be

Jesus challenges the people to listen but He also warns them –

- He challenges us today
- Which soil are you?
- To us who call Him Lord and have professed to have given our lives to Him I ask this one, last question...

Got fruit?!?