

Evensong Sermon	Year C	Mark Chp 4 v1-20

The parable of the sower is one those parables which you will have heard many times. Jesus used parables to reveal the truth to those who were open to what God was saying and to conceal the truth from those who had closed their minds to what God was saying.

This parable, the parable of the soils, is one that most people can relate to – most of us have seen a farmer walk the field and begin to sow into the field. All have seen crops springing up and begin to grow. This common sense approach was used by Jesus to teach spiritual truth.

The sower, is the one who sow's the word of God

The seed is the Gospel of grace – the good news that Jesus came into this world, died for sinners, rose again from the dead and offers full and free salvation to everyone who will receive him. In this parable, some of the “seed” produces fruit and some does not – the problem is not with the seed = it is all good seed = the problem is with the soil.

In this soil represents in this parable the heart or mind of the person who hears the Gospel and how each responds to it. Everyone who hears the Gospel hears it in a different way – Some revile it? some reject it? Whilst some receive it?

So if we examine parable, we need to focus on the kinds of minds that hear the Gospel and how each responds to it.

There are essential four types of minds

The Closed Mind

The Confused Mind

The Cluttered Mind

The Cultivated Mind

**The Closed Mind**

The wayside refers to a narrow path that ran beside and through fields. The soil on these is very hard and compact – like concrete as a result of the feet of many travellers. When seed fell it could not penetrate the soil and it remained there in the open – devoured by birds.

Such a person may well hear the Gospel – but doesn't fully understand it.

They can not see the connection between the Gospel and their own life.

Such a person has hardened their hearts for years against the call of the Gospel, and like the soil has become hardened.

The seed was good, but the soil was unprepared to receive it. The seed just could not penetrate the soil – it could not germinate.

### **The Confused mind**

In Palastine as in many others, there are stony places – places where the top soil is very thin – covering a very rocky area underneath. The ground looks good and productive – and seeds germinate and quickly spring up – but with no depth of soil, as soon as the sun beats down the tender plants, it withers, and dies without producing any fruit.

This is the kind of soil that speaks of the mind that makes an emotional response to the gospel

“That just what I need! I might as well give Jesus a try”

They may have a crisis and come to Church but is it sustained. Human response: Joyfully receiving the Word with shallow roots (16).

----- 2. Result: They fall away due to troubles and trials (17).

But such a response is not deep

### **The cluttered mind**

The soil looks really ready to be sown, but underneath it has not been dug over properly. Underneath there are living roots and seeds of thorns and weeds. The surface has been cleared, the thorns have been moved away, but underneath the surface they are there.

When the seed germinates and springs into life – the thorns and weeds are already there to choke out the tender plant.

Such a person tries the benefit of the Gospel, but clings to their old ways – they worry and focus on earthly matters. The seed of the Gospel cannot survive to produce fruit in a heart filled with other things. This kind of person starts well, but soon fades away.

### **The cultivated mind**

Some of the seed fell onto good ground. This was ground that had been prepared and worked on properly. It had been ploughed and tilled – ready to receive the seed – the seed germinated and within the heart of the soil reached maturity.

This is the picture of the heart that has been ploughed deeply by the word of God. When the seed of the Gospel enter this mind of heart, it germinates, grows up and bears fruit to the glory of God.

So the only seed that produced fruit was on good ground – on hard soil, the seed never penetrated the hard ground, on the other soil the seed penetrated and then disappeared.

You see, when we invite Jesus into our life, He will make His presence known. He will cause the new believer to begin to bear fruit for the glory of God, new fruit through being a disciple of Christ. Through good works, through praise and thanksgiving, through the helping of those on the margins of society for example.

Today this parable challenges us to reflect on the type of soil that we are.

It challenges us individually, to look at our own heart, and examine it.

It is also a warning – in that we are responsible for what we hear – we need to know our own heart.

Jesus presents four different types of soils, or audiences to the Word of God, with only one type being preferable – the Good Soil.

So remember;

If the word does not take root in our heart, we cannot bear any fruit for God. The fruit Jesus has in mind here is probably what Paul called the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, etc. Only the abiding Word of God taking root in the heart of the believer can give rise to these spiritual traits.

That secondly, a persistently fruitless hearer of the Word cannot be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus said in Luke 6:43, "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its fruit." Fruit does not make a tree good. Fruit does not give life. Fruit is a sign of life and reality. Good and bad trees are known by their fruit. Bad fruit or no fruit means bad tree or no inner reality. Therefore fruitfulness is essential to being a true disciple of Jesus.

So as we come before God in our time of prayer this evening, let us pray that we both listen and hear to the word of God. That through our ongoing relationship with him, we show the fruits of the Spirit to those around us – and we become Disciples of Christ, sharing in the promise of eternal life.