

The Sower

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[0 : 00] I'd like us to turn once again to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 13, and reading at verse 1. That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea, and great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood on the beach.

And he told them many things in parables, saying, A sower went out to sow. Especially those words there in verse 2 or verse 3.

A sower went out to sow. The Bible was really a storybook.

Many of you, no doubt, as when you were young, read the story Bible, and received your instructions by that, and were trained up in the faith, and in the belief of the Lord Jesus Christ by reading such books.

But the Bible as a whole is a storybook. It's a story about what God planned to do with his creation, and how he planned to achieve that particular plan.

[1 : 42] And although the Lord is a storybook. And although the Lord is a storyteller, he is much more than a storyteller. His words and his teachings are unique in the history of the whole world.

And although the thoughts and the ideas that he propagated and gave to the people of his day, still are viewed with wonder at his insights and his knowledge into the human frame and the human mind.

He talks in his parables about camels trying to squeeze through the eye of a needle. He talks about people trying to reduce or remove the speck from another person's eye while they've got a plank in their own.

And so they are larger than life stories whereby he tries to impress simple truths into the understanding of those who are listening to him.

And so the Gospels are full of the parables of Jesus, the prodigal son. We have also the tax collector and the Pharisee, the parable of the good Samaritan.

[3 : 05] Of the rich fool, of rich man and Lazarus. Again and again, he teaches the people and teaches us 2,000 years later by means of the parables that he is declaring.

And they are all parables which speak of the kingdom of God or the origin of the kingdom of God. Or even the blessings of the kingdom, the instruction of the kingdom.

All in all, there are something between 20 and 30 parables that we hear spoken of by the Lord Jesus Christ, even in just this one particular gospel.

Parables are real life stories with a spiritual aspect to them.

Remember the way we used to be taught, parables are life stories, ordinary stories with heavenly meanings. But there are also two other types of stories which have particular emphasis to them.

[4 : 24] For those of you who are slightly older, you would remember Aesop's fables. One of the most famous ones that people remember is the tortoise and the hare. And these are not real life stories at all.

We are told that here we have hares and tortoises engaged in the race. Other times we're told about farmers and a crane.

I think I told you that the last time I was here. About Aesop and the parable of the farmer and the birds who were stealing the seed from the field. And also there are allegories.

Many of you will know Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and others of you no doubt more recently would have read C.S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia.

And so we have all these different types of literature which are all involved in telling a story. It is only the parables which are engaged in trying to impart something more than a mere story to us.

[5 : 35] It's trying to impart to us a lesson concerning the kingdom of God. And we have here in this particular parable the origin of that kingdom.

In this gospel as I've said before here we have to reach parable 13 before we become the very first parable. And then in this particular chapter there are seven parables all together.

All teaching this same truth. They are parables concerning the kingdom of God. They are kingdom parables.

A sower went out to Saul. That's what we're told. Really it's not a parable about seeds.

It's a parable about soil. Now the Lord himself in the explanation of it from verse 18 to 23 tells us that the seed is the gospel.

[6 : 45] The seed is the good news that is being spread abroad. Which is being sowed into the hearts and minds of those who hear it.

And the soil is the human heart. Soil which either brings forth fruit hundredfold or sixty or thirtyfold. And so the parable is really about the type of soil into which the seed falls.

The seed is always a good seed. The seed is always the good gospel the Lord Jesus Christ is declaring during his time here on earth. In which we as the preachers of the gospel continue to declare.

It's a good seed. It's a good word. It's the heart that needs to be renewed. It's the heart that has to be renewed from the outside. The power to believe is not something that's innate in us.

It's something that has to be done to us. Remember when Peter makes the proclamation. Who do men say that I am? Peter says you are the Christ. The son of the living God.

[7 : 52] And Christ says flesh and blood has not revealed this to you. But my father who is in heaven. Something that's given to us. And so the way the soil is improved.

Is the miracle of the father. He takes the soil of our stony hearts. And hardened hearts. And makes it into fertile soil.

Whereby his truth can take root. And bring forth much fruit. To God's praise. And God's glory. And so the first thing.

The Lord tells us here. As he sowed. Some seeds fell. Along the path. And the birds came. And devoured them. It speaks.

Of a heart. That's been hardened. By life. And the world. In which that life has been led. And the practices. Which that life is engaged in.

[8 : 54] And during the short time. We've been given to live here. In this world. It's a soil. Our heart. That's been trodden down. By ill use. Over many years.

In where we've gone. The books. We've read. The programs. We've watched. The newspapers. We pick up. All tending to. Turn our hearts. And our minds.

And our thoughts. Away from the gospel. Into the world. In which we live. And we become fashioned. By what we read. And what we think.

And what. We watch. To be like the world. In which we live. And the parables. Are meant. To give us. A different view. To give us.

A different. Idea. Of the culture. Into which we've been. Brought. Christian. Life. Is.

[9 : 49] Sometimes. Designated. As a counterculture. A culture. That's different. To the world. In which we live. A culture. Which is different. To the worldly society.

Which we are surrounded with. Commercialism. And. All the other aspects. That. Engage us. And want to sweep us away. Now because.

The heart. The heart. The heart. The heart. The heart. The heart. Has been hardened. By the life. We've. Been living. The gospel seed. Is. Finds it.

Very difficult. To permeate. The hardness. Of. Our hearts. You know. What a calloused hand is. Or a calloused foot. It's very hard.

Someone who's been working very hard with their hands. Or someone who. Walks long distances. That. Their feet get very calloused. And it's very difficult. Even for. A needle.

[10 : 47] To cause any pain. Because. There's so much. Hardness of skin. That the same thing. Applies to our hearts. Our hearts. Become calloused. The most.

Sensitive. Aspects. Of life. Sometimes. Don't. Permeate. That skin. And we are left untouched. By the. Tragedies. Or the. Joys of life. And. And that's what the Lord here is saying.

You have. A heart. That's hardened. It's calloused. And the seed that. That I'm trying to. Plant.

There. In that heart. Will not sink in.

Because. Of the hardness. Of your heart. The Lord here. Who. Draws an analogy. Between. The birds. Of the air.

And. And the devil's workers. Says. The birds. Soon. Come. And devour it. They. They pluck it up. The birds.

[11:42] Came. And. Devour them. But. What. What. Is it. That makes. A human heart. So hard. Well. Sin does. Sin. Hardens. The heart. The more. We engage. In sin. The more. The conscience. Is blunted. Or seared. And so.

We don't see. Any danger. In the sin. And we. Engage in it. More and more. We read. What. Romans 1. Had to say. About.

A hard heart. It holds. Down. The truth. In unrighteousness. It actually. Suppresses. It. More and more.

We know. When the rich. Ruler. Comes to the Lord. And says. What. Must. I do. To inherit eternal life. The first thing. The Lord Jesus Christ.

[12:38] Says. You know. Keep the commandments. And here. The Lord. Is saying it. In. A very similar way. You know.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then you will be saved. That's the gospel. You know that truth. And yet. You hold down that truth. You suppress it. You don't want to know it.

Because sin. Lies in the door. Sin. Is more. Glamorous to you. Sin. Is more. Actively. Engaged in by you.

And you enjoy it. More. More. Because that. Which. May be known of God. By the creation. As you look around it. And God has shown it unto us.

And so that we are without excuse. As you look around the creation. We see. Powers God had in power. We see that he made all things. By the word of his power. In the space of six days.

[13:36] And all very good. We know. That. This universe. Came into being. By that power. By that creative fear. His creative word. God said.

Let there be. And from that. Came all. That we see. In. The creation today. See. That's what happens.

When. God gives us over to a corrupt mind. He. Hardens the heart. The more the heart. Is hardened. The more we hold down the truth.

In unrighteousness. And the more. We give ourselves over to. Sinful practices. And the more. We. Not only indulge in them. The more we enjoy them.

No one says. Sin is not. Enjoyable. People would. Engage in sin. If. It wasn't enjoyable. In the first instance.

[14:30] Anyway. But sin is a very hard master. Sooner becomes the fact. That. Sin cannot. Not be engaged in. Because you cannot do without it. Same applies to.

Like alcohol. Or. Hard drugs. You cannot. Live. Without it. Sin is exactly the same process. There comes a time. When you cannot.

Live. Without it. The. The. You go. From bad to worse. Is what I'm trying to say. The more you engage in something.

The more you want it. The more you practice it. And that's why. The heart. Becomes hardened. What makes us. Then. Reject God.

Reject. His truth. Well. It's. Nothing less. Than a hatred of God. A hatred of God.

[15:27] Which says. Do not. Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not covet. Do not commit adultery. Do not bear false witness.

We hate God. Because God. Meets us there. At the very point. Where we want to do these things. And he says. Don't do it. Almost.

All of God's. Attributes. Which the catechism tells us. Is. His being. His wisdom. His. Holiness. His power. Justice.

Goodness. And truth. All these. Are an offense. To. The human heart. God. God's goodness. Is an offense. To us. God's truth.

Is an offense. To us. His holiness. Is an offense. To us. And instead of producing. Repentance. In us. And a desire.

[16:23] For mercy. And. Forgiveness. It hardens. The heart. It. It suppresses. More and more. The knowledge. Of God. In a deeper.

And deeper. Descent. Into sin. If you. To ask. Why. Is the western world. With all its riches.

With all its advantages. All its privileges. Why. Is it descended. Into. Such a state. Of sin. And greed. And hatred. And bestiality.

Why. When the example. Of purity. And holiness. Is so clear to us. Why. Have we chosen. The opposite. And gone. In exactly. In the opposite. Direction.
What we have to say. Is that people. Love. Sin. No other reason. Sin. Is more attractive. As I said. Sin. Is more exciting.

[17:23] It's also against. God. And his precepts. But in the first analysis. Sin. Is attractive. And exciting. To. The heart. That is not. Being brought.

To a saving knowledge. Of Christ. Men. Love. Darkness. Rather than light. Because. Their deeds. Are evil. When the Lord. Came preaching. The kingdom of God. As I said. These parables. Are all. About.

The kingdom of God. God. And God's right. To rule. Over the hearts. And minds. Of men and women. The people. Especially.

The scribes. And the Pharisees. The rulers. Of the church. Didn't want it. They rejected it. The Lord's teaching. Went totally against. Their precepts.

[18:16] And their ideas. Of what it meant. To please God. In the same way. As the world today. The world thinks. It can please God. By. By giving him. A small corner. Of our lives.

To give. Pay lip service. To what he is. And what he has said. To take parts. Out of the Bible. That they think attractive. And discard the rest. People don't want.

The gospel. They don't want. Yes. They want the gospel. Which says. Come to heaven. But they don't. Want to hear. The part of the gospel. That says. If you don't live. As I ask you to live.

And no one give your heart to me. There's a hell. For those. Who reject me. That's Christ's message. Time. And time again. If you go right back.

To the beginning. Adam. Was. Created. Perfect. He and Eve. Walked. In the garden. In the cool of the day.

[19:14] In fellowship with God. He enjoyed. Their company. And they enjoyed. His. God. But Adam. Adam. Came to the place.

Where. He. Wanted. To reject. God's. Advice. To him. Also. You may eat. Of all the trees. Of the garden.

Except. The tree. Of the knowledge. Of good and evil. He even had access. To the tree. Of life. Didn't want that. He wanted.

The tree. Of the knowledge. Of good and evil. He had. Knowledge. Of good. But he was tempted. To discover. What evil was. And so.

He knew. Experimentally. In his own self. What evil was. And that evil was. Disobedience. To God. God. In his laws. It's all there. In it's.

[20:09] It's. It's. Seed form. In that first disobedience. It was. Good. To look at.

It was good. To eat. And it was desirable. To make one wise. Yes. And so. It is. For all of us. A knowledge. That will separate us. From God. and so Adam at the suggestion of the devil rebelled against God and fell from his first estate carrying his whole human nature with him and also all human nature that followed him we told Adam in his first transgression rebelled against God that all mankind by the fall lost communion with God that Adam by his first transgression lost that sense of fellowship and joy and engagement with God because he separated himself and because he was the covenant head he took all of us with him in his first estate he was holy and harmless and undefiled but in the moment that he rebels against God he falls and he is made liable to all the mysteries of this life and to hell itself the reasons for rejecting the gospel are the same today we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we believe that he died for sinners but we don't want to give our lives to him we know the truth of the gospel as is contained here in the scriptures we know the one that of Christ the God man coming to this earth and giving his life a ransom for the many but it means absolutely nothing to us it evokes no emotion in us that the innocent son of God comes to this world lays down his life and we pass by on the other side as Jeremiah says have you ever seen such suffering as my suffering the heartache is my heartache and yet it means nothing to us we pass by on the other side and we carry on living the life that we've always lived and so Adam sinned not only for himself but for his posterity all mankind that followed him and so we are made inheritors of the fallen human nature that he achieved for himself and so that's the human hearts is hardened hardened because of the nature we have hardened because of the practices we engage in hardened because we love sin hardened because we hate God the second type of soil here we're told about is that some seeds fell along rocky ground where they did not have much soil

and immediately they sprang up since they had no depth of soil the seed falling on rocky ground where it had not much soil or stony ground but it had not much soil it springs up too quickly and it springs up quickly and doesn't have time to develop any root form or root bundle down into the earth when the sun comes up they're scorched and they wither away children very often and those who are in charismatic churches or sometimes even in evangelical churches where there is an excitement built up in the church where there is great excitement in the church there is there is much excitement and the things to do much excitement and in being engaged in the fellowship and people join the fellowship and very often it's a fellowship that draws them not Christ and when things get difficult because of the word when the excitement is not enough to keep away the separation from friends who are at odds with the gospel when persecutions come as as the Lord tells us here and having no root in himself he endures for a while but when tribulation and persecution arises on account of the word immediately he falls away they wither the little faith that they have withers away and they go back to the state from which they came they hear the gospel and they receive it with joy they make a profession of faith but when trials and persecution perhaps illness or unemployment or death of a loved one happens they fall away they blame God they turn against God because they never really trusted in God were never really born again and then the third type of soil that the Lord talks about as of what was sown among thorns this is the one that hears the word but the cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches choke the word and it proves to be unfruitful the third type of soil is a soil that speaks really of a heart that's strangled by the world in which we live oh as the Lord says the deceitfulness of riches and the world cares Spurgeon talks about it as the trinity of cares what we shall eat and what we shall drink and what we shall put on each and every one of us is tainted with such cares we all have to be very careful we don't allow ourselves to be submerged by such cares and deceitfulness of riches and to remember whose we are and whom we seek to serve how many of our lives are not choked and by riches today we have to remember what the Lord says how difficult it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God if we think of ourselves as ordinary people today we are very mistaken we are all rich beyond the imagination of our forebears live in homes which are carpeted of central heating glass in their windows tiles on the roof roof not houses where there's soil on the floor and the walls are built with stone and earth and the roof has soil or grass sods on the roof and there's no central heating and as cold as one fire we have every advantage we have wash machines where they had to wash by hand we drive cars where they had perhaps to walk or go by cart we have clothes which are beyond their imagination we are all extremely rich don't have to look back 2000 years to the time of

[28 : 46] Christ we only have to look back on this island to 50 60 years to know the difference of the lifestyles which we live today to which was lived by your forebears you know a certain rich young ruler was offered eternity but chose riches instead go sell all that you have give to the poor and come and follow me and he went away sad because he had many riches he was offered heaven but he preferred this world and his rewards a man man called Jim who was missionary to the

Indians in South America is reputed to have said in fact he wrote that he could not he gave up what he could not keep he could not lose he gave up life and self here in this world for the heaven that was his in Christ Jesus how much more are we to guard against being choked with riches perhaps he gives us our hearts desire whatever they might be and sends leanness to our souls there's this too about riches they don't jerk a person all at once it's like a wall that's been standing for decades and one day it falls on the way out of

Stornoway on the Paris road there's the old castle wall that's there just after Mary Van Garage on the left hand side going out and there is a wall that's got a big hole in it the lintel is still there Stornoway is still standing I suppose the weight of the stones are keeping it upright but it's a wall that's on its way down you've seen many dry stone walls collapse sure in your area around here there are many stones on the west side and that's the way it reaches like riches little by riches like a wall falling down or by ivy growing over the wall it eventually covers the whole wall or the wall falls down and so the parable of the rich man and Lazarus and the rich fool are there for our profit let's not waste them let's not put it off till later prevarication is the greatest enemy of our souls to think that something we need to do today can be done later only got to think about what happened less than 48 hours ago to know that times things can change very very suddenly and finally here we have the good ground as the rock was sown on good soil this is the one that hears the word and

understands it part of our problem I suppose is that we don't try to understand God's word we come to church little folding of the arms little closing of the eyes and a little sleep even under God's word we don't try to understand we don't engage our brains into what God's word is saying and that's the problem we don't try to understand it Lord on one occasion later in this chapter in fact do you understand what I said and the disciple says yes well I suppose the question has to be asked here do we understand what's being said here in this parable this parable which is about the origin of the kingdom do we understand what the Lord is saying well just finally and briefly there's the good ground the Lord has improved it the Lord has manured it the Lord has worked it the Lord has dug it over so that it will bring forth some thirty some sixty and some a hundred fold it's important for us to know it's the Lord's doing it's not something we can do to ourselves by our own ingenuity by our own labor by our own striving for more understanding yes we have to strive for understanding we've got to engage ourselves in

God's word we've got to submerge ourselves in God's word but the change in our heart is not something that we can do we can do a preparation for the work of God you know when revival comes to an area revival begins in the house in the house of God it spreads out there and it begins in the house of God because in the house of God people have been prepared by the preaching of God's word they place themselves under the sound of the gospel and when the spirit comes in power he uses that accumulated knowledge to bring into flower to bloom what has been growing quietly and silently and so it's important for us to know that the change occurs because of what the Lord has done the seed is always good seed the soil the heart has to be changed and only [35 : 27] Christ can do that he changes it he gives us a new heart he writes his laws in our hearts he puts his spirit within us he gives us fleshly hearts for stony hearts all this are miracles of God's doing in us when any person is brought from death to life it's a miracle when any person is translated from the kingdom of God from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God it's a miracle and miracles are happening all the time think of the rich young ruler who went away sad and the disciples who said who then can be saved well we can say with God all things are possible because it's he who works it's he who makes new it is he who gives us the desire for himself we love

God because he first loved us and gave a son to be a savior for us let us then conclude our worship singing to God's praise in Psalm 19 Psalm 19 verse 7 God's law is perfect and converts the soul in sin in sin that lies the end of verse 11 that's five stanzas to God's praise Psalm 19 page 223 and verse 7 God's praise God's love is perfect and converts the soul in sin that lies

God's testimony is for sure and makes and makes the simple wise the status of the Lord are right and do rejoice the heart the Lord's command is true and doth light to the eyes in part unspotted is the fear of God and doth endure forever forever the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous all together they more than all they might have

I know to be desired are than any heart I know to be desired are than any heart any from the cold that proper sweet and far more more over they thy servant war now he is life to frame a great reward reward provided is for them that keep the same and now may grace mercy and peace in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit one God rest on you and abide in you now and always amen