

ciful way. The book was and is extremely popular. The movie was so popular it developed a cult following. Probably millions of people have seen it.

How many people have come to faith in Christ as a result of reading the book or seeing the movie? It is hard to tell. Millions have been entertained. This is the extravagance of God. Millions and millions see it but, produce no crop. Extravagant.

The seed of the gospel has been lavishly spread down through history. God is Extravagant.

2. God gives everyone a chance to hear the gospel.

The parable describes seed being sown in four different soils.

I do not believe the intended picture is, the hard sun-baked path, adjacent to the thorny soil and the stoney soil and the good soil is just a short throw away.

I see it as the path under our feet is hard baked soil. A little farther up the path is a clump of thorns, and a little farther on is some stoney ground. Beyond that comes a field of good soil. Jesus is intending to say, God spreads the seed over a large area and a big number of people, the whole world.

Every person in the world is a creation of God, loved by God. Every person in the world is deserving to hear the message of eternal life. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

We do our best to use every means at our disposal to spread the Gospel; the spoken word, the written word, the internet, mass media, radio and television., personal testimonies, plus many other means.

But some people whom God loves are beyond our reach. What about them? A favorite argument of the skeptics is, 'what about the noble savage, a good man, who never heard of Jesus, is he going to hell? That isn't fair.'

God takes care of that. Who witnessed to Saul of Tarsus to convince him of the truth of the gospel? No man. It was the Holy Spirit.

Who told the Prophet Jonah to go to Nineveh? No man. It was the Holy Spirit.

Who told Abraham to leave his home in Ur of The Chaldees and go to Canaan? No man. It was the Holy Spirit.

Here is a story that happened in this room. Some of you may know this story. It is at least 25 or 30 years old.

Fred was transferred with his job with a major bank from Minneapolis to St Louis. He and his family attended our church. Fred gave this testimony while standing in this sanctuary. The story took place before the Islamic revolution in Iran. Fred was from a former Muslim family in Iran. When he was a teen ager his mother became ill, to the point of death. She was a patient in a Teheran hospital waiting to die. The husband/ father gathered the family in the hospital but refused to allow the children to see their mother. He wanted them to remember her as a healthy woman. The family was standing in the hall near her room when her room door opened. Mother walked out fully dressed and asked to go home. The family was stunned.

Many questions were asked, 'what happened, what are you doing, where are you going?'

Mother told her family Jesus appeared to her and told her He healed her. She felt better immediately, got out of bed and got dressed. She said let's go home.

Needless to say the entire family became Christians. Fred eventually came to the USA and married a Christian lady.

No man spoke to Fred's mother. It was the Holy Spirit.

God sowed seeds in a Teheran hospital room.

That is not an isolated story. That story is being repeated over and over in Muslim countries around the world. Jesus is appearing to people and they are putting their faith in Him to be their savior.

God gives every person an opportunity to hear the gospel. God is sowing seeds in places where Christian people cannot go. That is the point of the parable. God is extravagant and gives every one a chance.

Jesus fed 5,000 men plus women and children with 2 fish and 5 loaves of barley bread. That meal was served at the end of the day after He had taught them all day. All of those people heard the gospel and ate supper. How many followed Jesus and were present at the crucifixion? No one can say. Extravagant.

The gospel invitation goes out to all, 'whosoever will may come'. God doesn't count the responses like we do. He just gets the seed out.

I am a volunteer chaplain at Parker Adventist hospital. I go to the hospital every Friday morning. I am assigned to 1 West, a medical surgical floor with 33 rooms. I go from room to room talking to the next patient. I attempt to establish rapport with the patient so we can have a conversation. I tell every patient that

'Jesus loves them'. If I feel it is right I offer to read a story about Jesus from the Gospel of John. I offer to pray for every patient. most accept but, a few decline. So you ask, how many patients accept Jesus and become followers. I have no way of knowing. I believe what I do is the extravagance of God. The patients hear about Jesus, how many follow him? I don't know.

I have told you two things from the parable of the sower and the soils.

1. God is extravagant with His grace.
2. God gives every one a chance to hear the gospel.

If you have not given your life to Jesus, I invite you to do it now. By a simple prayer ask Jesus to forgive your sins.

Let us pray.

The Lord bless you, and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine on you,

And be gracious to you;

The Lord lift up His countenance on you,

And give you peace.'

Numbers 6:24-26

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

April 25, 2021

Pastor Emeritus,
Dr. John Wilson



www.wcag.org

Parable of the Sower

April 25, 2021

Pastor John Wilson

Mark 4:3-9, 13-20

I love it when the Lord shows new truth to me out of the Scripture. I am well familiar with the parable of the Sower and the Soils. I have been preaching in our little A/G church about the parables of Jesus. About one month ago as I approached this parable to prepare for this sermon, my understanding of it just didn't feel right. When I preach, the message must be right in my spirit. I must feel it is correct.

It is to be a word from God to the church.

As I prayed over this passage, I felt a prompting from the Lord that the parable is not about the soil but the seed. A common understanding of this parable is about four kinds of soil, the conclusion being, only good soil produces plants. That is self-evident truth.

Is there need for the Son of God to come from heaven to tell a story with a self-evident truth?

- Yes, I know seeds don't grow on hard parched ground.
- Yes, I know seeds don't produce plants when choked out by other plants.
- Yes, I know only good ground produces good plants.

So, what is it about the seeds that Jesus wants me to know?

We casually read that some seed fell beside the road, some seed fell among thorns, and some seed fell in the rocks, as if that is normal.

Seed is money to a farmer. None should be wasted. Modern farmers use exact GPS locators to plant seed for maximum yield. Ancient farmers were as careful with their seed but, without the technology. The picture of an ancient farmer with a bag of seed hung over his shoulder and casting seed into the air then looking to see where it lands, is not correct. He planted his seed as carefully as the modern farmer.

With that understanding of seeds, Jesus described three unusual circumstances;

seed falling on hard ground,

seed falling in the rocks,

seed falling in the thorns.

No farmer would waste seed on any of those three soils.

The parables describe spiritual life using earthly stories. The point of the parable is, God lavishly sows seed in unlikely places. That is not self-evident truth. That must be revealed.

In the explanation, Jesus says, ***The sower sows the word***. Mark 4:14 That is The Word of God, the message of the gospel.

1. God is extravagant.

And He *said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. Mark 4:13-14

In terms of this parable, God sows the Word in unlikely, unproductive, hard to reach, risky places. A farmer would never sow good seed in such places, that are not likely to produce a crop. God does it because He is extravagant with His grace.

Biblical examples show God's extravagance. When the Hebrews left Egypt following the night the death angel passed over, the Egyptian women gave their gold and silver to the Hebrew women. That gold and silver was used to make the utensils and to cover the inside of the Tabernacle.

God directed the Hebrews to make the lamp stands of pure gold. The Ark of the Covenant, the furniture and the interior beams were covered with gold. The tabernacle was a moveable tent used in the desert. Extravagant. Was a security guard needed?

Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana. The supply of wine had run out so the waiter asked Jesus' mother to ask Jesus for help. Jesus directed that the six stone water pots be filled with water. Each held twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus turned that water into the best wine so the guests could continue the celebration.

That is 120 to 180 gallons of good additional wine for a wedding party. Extravagant.

In the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 men plus women and children Jesus provided fish and bread, as much as anyone wanted. Some people probably had second and third helpings. Extravagant.

Jesus tells his followers to give and it will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over. All descriptions of extravagance.

The message of the parable of the sower and the soils

is, God is extravagant in sowing the seed of the gospel among people. In other words, He sows a lot of seed. The soils are people.

Soil #1 beside the road, hears the word.

These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. Mark 4:15

God knows that soil #1 will not produce a crop, but he sows the seed.

Soil #2 in rocky places, hears the word.

In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. Mark 4:16,17

God knows that soil #2 will not produce a crop, but He sows the seed.

Soil #3 among the thorns, hears the word.

And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. Mark 4:18,19

God knows that soil #3 will not produce a crop, but he sows the seed.

Jesus sowed seed into Judas for three years but, it didn't work out so well.

We like to think of ourselves as efficient, good planners. We don't waste our money or our time. We look for bargains. Nothing will move a person faster than the sign, 'SALE'. Getting a bargain is almost a religion to some people.

We like results.

What if one of the missionaries supported by our church sends a report home that he has been very busy sowing seed. He has a blog, a radio program, a Twitter account, he distributes literature, he helps in a food kitchen, witnesses to all of his neighbors but in the four years he has been on the field and supported by this church he cannot report one conversion to Jesus.

Would we continue to support him with monthly contributions? Would we suggest he try different methods,

or speak to his field supervisors in order to increase his output of missionary results?

We like to hear the reports of good soil that produces 30, 60, 100 fold. People will give money to support those missions.

God sowed seed in three kinds of soil that produced nothing. I am glad God is extravagant with his grace toward me. He gives and gives and gives and gives and keeps on giving. Horrors of horrors, if God would say, 'I have given John all of the grace I plan to give him. From now on he is on his own. He must live by the law.'

The story of the Old testament is the story of God's revelation given to His chosen people, the Jews. God expected that the Jews would be an example to the whole world of what life could be like when God's commandments are followed.

God sowed a lot of seed for a lot of years into the Jews without good results. Israel wasted the seed. But God kept sowing. Extravagant.

The Jews did not live by the laws of God, so they were sent into the seventy year Babylonian captivity for discipline. It worked, they returned home different people. God sowed a lot of seed into the Jews.

Jesus said the parable of the Sower and the Soils is the basic parable. Without understanding this parable, none of the other parables can be understood.

And He *said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? Mark 4:13

The basic understanding of the parable of the Sower is the extravagant love of God for people. He goes to extraordinary lengths to bring salvation to people. Jesus explains it as a farmer sowing seed in many places that will not produce a crop.

Jesus came to the earth to be the means of salvation. The Holy Spirit is active in the earth to bring the offer of salvation to all people. This understanding is basic to the work of God. All that we have and all that we do is to point to salvation, resulting in eternal life in heaven.

Man's view is, I will sow seed where I know I will get a good crop.

God's view is, I will sow lots of seed everywhere.

J R R Tolkien the noted British author of, The Lord of The Rings. wrote the story of the Gospel told in a fan-