

4 Lessons From The Parable Of The Sower Pleasant Plains 6-3-2018PM NICK ANGEL

- ***READ Mark 4:1-9*** As Jesus is teaching the people in and around His home base of Capernaum, we find Jesus so surrounded and crowded by the people that He is forced to get into a boat by the sea so that He might be able to teach. And teach the people is exactly what Jesus did. In fact, we just read where Mark records Jesus as saying, *"Listen to this!"* as He goes into His telling of the parable of the sower that we just read together.
- It is at the end of this parable that all three synoptic Gospel writers record Jesus as saying, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."* This was said in an attempt by Jesus to get the people to recognize that this was not just story telling time, but that Jesus had a point He was trying to make in the sharing of these parables with the multitudes.
- Thankfully for the Apostles, Jesus goes on to explain this parable along with others in an attempt to make sure that they were on board and in line with His thinking since they would one day be leading the cause of the Gospel and the Kingdom here on earth. Yet, the multitudes had to go away and ponder the parables on their own. Thankfully, we have recorded for us Jesus's explanation of the parable of the sower, and this evening we are going to consider 4 lessons that we can and need to learn that will help us in our efforts of being sowers for the Kingdom of God.

I. Always be ready to sow the Word.

A. The sower was throwing his seed in every direction hoping that it would take root.

1. It probably wasn't actually that the sower was purposefully throwing the seed out on the side of the road, but that some would fall out of his sack as he was in the process of sowing. Yet, we don't see him stopping and taking time to pick up that seed that had been dropped. In his mind, he very well might have been thinking that it just might take root and grow up.
2. The sower's job was simple...get the seed into the soil so that there might be a crop to be harvested when the time comes. He was well aware that his lack of effort in this regard would only lead to the lack of a harvest. Just as logic would tell us...you cannot reap if you do not sow.

B. We must be prepared to share the Word of God with anyone at anytime the opportunity might arise and present itself.

1. This is something that has been given to us to do by Jesus. He tells His Apostles in **Matthew 28:19,20** to go into the world and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They were then to teach these new disciples everything that had been taught to them by Jesus. What is included in those teachings? Making disciples! Disciples are to be a multiplying type of people.
2. If we are going to do that then we must be able, ready, and prepared to share the Word of God with those we might have opportunity with. This goes back to our lesson this morning...if we want to be able to have a strong faith that allows us to share the good news with others then we ourselves must first know the Word. We cannot teach or explain that which we do not know ourselves.
3. Beyond this, we must be like the sower of Jesus's parable and be able and willing to show that Word with anyone. It isn't our place to judge whether or not someone might accept the Word...it is just our responsibility to try to plant it. In reality...it is not we who are trying to change the hearts of men. We have no power to do such a thing...but the Word does. It is the Word of God and the Gospel that contains the power to save and change. **(Romans 1:16)**
4. Therefore we simply need to be busy speaking that Gospel when we have opportunity. We need to have prepared ourselves before hand and shining our influential lights, and then we share that good message that has done so much for us in our lives. At that point, our job as sowers has been accomplished. We might do some watering, but it is God who will be busy and at work providing the growth and increase. **(I Corinthians 3:4-7)** Unfortunately, God is not the only one at work.

II. Know that Satan is working against us.

A. There were many forces at work against the sower.

1. Notice everything that the sower has to worry about messing with his seed that he has just sown. There are birds that ate the seed. There are adverse soil conditions and a scorching sun that will burn up the seed. And then there are the thorns that came up and choke out what little crop the seed might have been able to begin producing. There were many obstacles that were against the sower and his crops.
2. If we have ever done any sort of planting of crops or even just a little backyard garden then we have seen the exact same thing. Insects can quickly lay waste to our plants. Animals and little critters seem to have a magnetic attraction to our crops. Squirrels, rabbits, deer, and the like are just waiting for you to plant some tasty food for them. And then the things we need for growth can even turn against us. We need good sunlight and water for our plants, but too much of either can cause us problems. The harvest is nice, but there are some obstacles that we have to be aware of when planting our own crops, and the same is true in the fields of the world in regards to the spreading of the Gospel.

B. Satan will do anything and everything he can to keep the Word from being firmly planted, established, and growing.

1. He'll first try to do everything he can to hinder us from even getting out and being busy doing the work of the Lord in sharing the Word with others. He will try to fill our lives with so many other things that we don't seem to have time. He will fill our hearts with doubt to cause us to think that the work isn't worth it. He will try to cause us to think that we are not capable of doing the work. Satan's easiest course of action is to simply keep the sowers in the house and from ever going out to spread the Word and the good news.
2. If we do overcome those roadblocks, then we will only be met with more and greater struggles because Satan will then work on keeping the seed from being established. This is what we see all throughout this parable and in Jesus's explanation of the parable. At face value we see the parable as just being how life works, but in the explanation we understand that this is actually describing the work of Satan in hindering the hearers from receiving and growing in faith. Sure we know that Satan loves nothing more than for the Word of God to have no effect on the hearts of man, and he will do whatever He can to keep that from happening. He is behind the fact that the Word doesn't always have the effect that it can and should have.

III. Different people are going to respond to the Word in different ways.

A. The seed landed in many places, but it didn't have the same result in every place.

1. In the four different places we see the seed falling we see four different situations and circumstances. In the first location we see the soil being not really soil at all, but just the side of the walking path in which the man was using to sow the seed. This was nothing but a buffet line for the birds looking for a quick meal. Secondly, we see the seed falling on ground that was rocky and without much soil. Even if these seeds took root they wouldn't be strong and thriving roots because they had no soil depth to establish themselves in. Thirdly, we find that some seeds fell in among the thorns. These seeds were able to take root and grow to some degree, but they were eventually choked up by the surrounding thorns.
2. The last set of seeds fell among the soil that was good and ripe for crop yielding. Those seeds were able to take root and receive the good nutrients offered by the good soil. They grew big and strong and yielded a worthwhile harvest. The same seeds were sown in all four of these different places, so it wasn't any sort of deficiency in the seeds as to why the crops didn't grow. To the contrary it had everything to do with the condition of the soil, and so it is when it comes to the spreading of the Gospel. It is all about the soil and the soil is the heart.

B. People will respond how they respond based upon the condition of their hearts.

1. There will be some people who hear the Gospel and they will immediately reject it because their hearts have been hardened against anything pertaining to God. **(Mark 4:15)** These types of people see absolutely not use for God or spiritual things in their lives, and they will reject anything and everything pertaining to Gospel as soon as it is sown. It's sad for us to think that there are people like this in the world, but it is an unfortunate reality. Satan has done his very best to make these types of hearts obstinate to the Gospel and it will have no effect on them.
2. The next kind of heart is one that will hear the Word presented and they get excited at the prospect of living for the Lord. **(Mark 4:16,17)** However, after actually considering what a life given to Jesus entails, the excitement fades away very quickly and they are gone nearly just as quickly as their had arrived to their small degree of faith. Any sort of true opposition or sacrifice for the Gospel's sake is just too much for them to bear and they quickly fade away.
3. The third type of heart is the one where the Word is received, takes root, and begins to grow and develop into a working faith. **(Mark 4:18,19)** Yet, when the difficulties of life being to show up...when the world begins to make its empty promises of riches and glory...well this heart is choked up by these things and it amounts to nothing. These people might believe in God, but there is no fruit that will ever be produced in their lives.
4. But then lastly Jesus speaks of the heart that is ready and receptive to the Word of God and the Gospel. **(Mark 4:20)** This heart has been searching for truth, readily receives, accepts, and allows the Gospel to shape it into the type of heart that Jesus desires for men to have. These hearts belong to those who are willing to give everything up at the word of Jesus because they have fully devoted their lives to Him. These are the people who are ready to be strong fruit bearers for the cause of Christ. They will be those who themselves are ready to get out and begin sowing the Word for the Kingdom of heaven. But sadly...these people are only seen after we have looked at three other groups who don't yield a good crop.

IV. Be patient and don't lose hope.

A. The sower's success in the grand scheme wasn't that great.

1. The fact of the matter is that the sower didn't exactly have great success in regards to the statistics of his sowing. He sowed in four different types of soil and only one out of those four types brought any sort of a meaningful harvest.
2. If we are voting for whether or not this guy deserves to be in the hall of fame then I doubt that a .250 average is going to get him accepted. Yet, that is simply the reality of the situation that he found himself in, but he wasn't going to stop him from doing what he needed to do in order to provide for his family by sowing year after year and season after season.

B. Many may reject the Word proclaimed, but we must continue onward still.

1. Unfortunately, Jesus attributes the same kind of statistics to the work that we are to be doing in the spreading of the Word of God and the Gospel. There is only one type of heart that will end of producing good fruit for the Lord, and there are countless other types of hearts that won't. We can easily become discouraged in looking at these statistics and end up allowing them to hinder us from engaging in the work at all.
2. Chuck mentioned this morning in our Bible class just how discouraging and sometimes frustrating it can be to not run into too many of those people whose hearts are open and ready to receive the good news and truth of God's Word. I firmly share in those discouragements and frustrations, but we must remember that we are the ones who have the power to change hearts. That power resides in the Lord and His message.
3. When I think about discouragement that comes from seeing the will of God not being obeyed, I think of the prophets of the Old Testament who constantly struggled against the

unfaithfulness of the children of Israel. How often do we see them totally dejected because of the wickedness all around them and the hard heartedness of the people against God. The Lord realized that the discouragement was real, and that is why He tells Samuel in **I Samuel 8:7**, *"Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them."* Samuel was not the source of the message, but God was. Therefore, Samuel could lessen the strain upon himself by remembering that he was only the messenger, and we should remember the same.

4. We can help ourselves to avoid complete discouragement and giving up in our duty by remembering that in due time we will reap what we have sown. (**Galatians 6:9**) Sometimes it will take time for us to see the results of our labor, and even if we don't see the results we can still remain encouraged knowing that we will eventually receive the greatest rewards of eternity with God. If we have been busy in giving great effort to our duties as disciples then we will receive that just reward from our Father when we stand before Him in judgment. Satan obviously doesn't want that by any means, but we can continue to do the will of the Lord by leaning upon the strength that He and our Savior provide when we are striving to do all things according to His will.

There are some of the parables that Jesus shares with the multitudes that might seem a bit foreign to us, but thankfully I believe most of us can grasp the truths laid out by Jesus in this particular parable. Yet, that understanding shouldn't be our last interaction with these teachings for we need to now take these things and go do something with them. We have ears and have heard, so let us now use our hands and feet to go and spread the Word to the glory and honor of our God.

PRAYER *Our loving Father in heaven. Thank You so very much for the teachings of Your Son that are available to us in Your Word. We thank You for our ability to understand, and we ask that You help us to not just be hearers of the Word but also doers. Help us to be ready at all times to share the Gospel and Your truths with others. Help us to not lose heart, but to always remember that You are with us. Even as we go throughout this week we know that You are with us, and we ask that you help us to take those opportunities to sow the Word. May all glory be to Your name now and forever. In the name of Your Son we pray these things...amen.*