

The Parables of Jesus

- The Good Seed Sown

(Mark 4:26-29)

The parable of "The Good Seed Sown" is found only in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus was teaching his disciples and the multitudes on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus, at that time, brought forth the parable of the "Sower and the Four Types of Soil." In the evening when they were alone

together, the disciples asked Jesus to explain the meaning of that parable, which He did. In Mark's account, we read that it was at that time that Jesus also shared with them the parable of "The Good Seed Sown."

To help us have a better understanding of the parable of the "Good Seed Sown," we need to mention a few items concerning the parable given just prior, which was the "Sower and the Four Types of Soil." These two parables are closely linked with each other. In that parable Jesus tells of a "sower" who went forth "sowing seeds." The "sower" represented both the Father and Jesus who continuously cast forth the "seed." The "seed" being the Word of God, the Good News, concerning salvation, redemption and the restoration of the relationship between the Father and man. This has been declared and preached in the Torah, the Prophets, the Jewish scriptures, and by Jesus, Himself. The different "soils" represented the different conditions of men's hearts upon hearing the "seed" of that Good News.

In the parable of "The Sower and the Four Types of Soil" we see that three of the four "soils," or heart conditions, would not be "good soil" in producing a "crop" that would bring forth a great harvest of fruit. Only one of the four would truly be ready and open to receive the Good News of salvation. Upon hearing the "seed" of the Gospel message, this "heart" receives it with gladness. It would grow to bring forth *"some thirty, sixty and a hundred fold fruit."* The "fruit" that is to be brought forth is the character and lifestyle of a true child of God which was taught and role modeled to us by Jesus.

It also meant that this lifestyle of a true disciple would become a tool or "seed" in helping to bring forth more disciples just as Jesus' life did. There was something about the character and lifestyle of Jesus that attracted and drew people to Him, as well as the message He preached. He lived what He spoke. This was much different than many religious leaders of that time who spoke the Word of God but did not truly live it

Jesus, in Mark's account, continues along those lines concerning the "seed." In the parable of the "Sower and the Four Types of Soil" the emphasis is placed upon the hearer of the Good News and the condition of their heart whether or not they will receive the "seed." The parable of "The Good Seed Sown" places the emphasis on the growth process of that "seed" when it has been "planted" in good "soil" – a ready heart. Through this parable, Jesus reveals the One who not only established the process of the "seed of salvation" growing into a born-again child of God, but it also clearly establishes who it is that actually brings it to fruition and its completion. I will give you a little hint – it is God, the Father. I guess that was a big hint.

In the parable of "The Good Seed Sown," Jesus taught His disciples how the "growing process" of that "seed" actually takes place in the life of a person who truly receives the Good News. If we take a good, hard look at what Jesus teaches through this parable, and put aside for the moment some of our "traditional" ways of thinking, we may see that Jesus is teaching us a very important principle that may cause us to rethink some of the ways we approach our evangelism programs, as well as some other "believers" and "discipleship" programs. Let's see...

The Parable of the Good Seed Sown:

Mark 4:26-29 - *"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."*

A key phrase in this parable is the very first thing we hear Jesus say, *“So is the kingdom of God...”* What does this simple phrase mean? This phrase is what is called a “simile.” A “simile” is a figure of speech involving the comparison between two different things for the purpose of giving emphasis to what is being said or taught. It allows the hearer to better grasp and understand the true meaning of what is being brought forth by using thoughts, ideas or images that the person listening would be familiar with and relate to, thereby, hopefully being able to better understand the truth that is being taught.

By using the phrase, *“So is the Kingdom of God...”*, Jesus was saying that what He was about to teach is a principle that explains how the Kingdom of God works and more importantly, how God works. He is going to use something in the natural realm that most people were familiar with - the growing process of a seed to its completion in bearing fruit and then being reaped to express a principle of the Kingdom of God.

In the parable of the “Sower and the Four Types of Soil,” we read that the sower goes forth and sows “**his seed.**” The seed is the Word of God. Therefore when it refers to “**his seed**” it is referring to the Father and to Jesus because it is **their** Word – the Word of God. In the parable we are discussing, we read that Jesus tells of “a man,” or we can say a farmer, who went and “cast seed into the ground.” Jesus makes no mention of the seed being the man’s seed. This tells us that Jesus is not just referring to Himself but also to others such as the disciples and anyone else who would now go forth as God’s representatives to cast forth “God’s seed,” which is the “message of the salvation.” This is very important for us to grasp.

Another important aspect to keep in mind is that, at the time of creation, God had established a very profound and specific principle. He declared that every herb, plant, tree, and every living thing would produce “after their own kind.” (Genesis 1:11, 12, 21, 24) In other words, every living thing would produce from their own specific seed, their own specific kind. This is a vital principle that God had established, not just in the natural realm, but it is just as true in the spiritual realm. So how does this all relate to our parable being spoken and taught by Jesus?

Remember, it is “His seed,” the Father’s seed that is being cast forth. According to the principle that God, the Father established, “His seed” will produce “after His own kind.” In other words, the “seed” of the Word of God, the Good News, the Gospel, if “planted” in a heart that is seeking the truth, will only grow to be a heart and lifestyle that will bring forth fruit that is “after God.” The seed will produce after “God’s own kind.” If it is the pure “seed” of God and His Word, then the “fruit” must look like, act like and be like the one Person who was our role model for this type of individual who would be “after God’s own kind.” That of course would be Jesus, who was the Son of God. It is not to be after any other person’s “own kind” (man or woman), any church’s “own kind” or any ministry’s “own kind.” Hmm... Let’s pause and think on that.

One of the functions of the disciple of Jesus is to “cast the seed” of the Gospel on behalf of the Father that has now been deposited within each disciple. The disciple does not only do this by their words but most importantly through their lifestyles and manner of behavior. We must remember that our actions actually do “speak louder than our words.” The “Fruit of the Spirit” as taught in Galatians are actually the character traits that are to be exhibited in the true born again child of God. It is within that “fruit” where we find the “seeds” that will bring forth more “crops” which leads to a great harvest in the Kingdom.

Each one of us as believers in Jesus, are the “fruit” of those who have “cast the seed” of the Gospel before us and throughout these past 2000 years. As any good farmer knows, the seeds are always found within the fruit. Therefore, the “seed” of the message of the Good News is now within each of us and the fruit that we bear forth. We, through the “fruit” of our words and our Christ like manner of behavior, now “cast forth” the seed of the Good News, to anyone and everyone. If the “seed” falls on “good soil,” a heart that is ready, open and seeking the truth, it will grow and bring forth fruit with more seeds and the cycle continues.

In our parable, Jesus then goes on to say something very strange but yet interesting. He tells us that after the man had cast forth the seed, he “slept.” This is totally contrary to the way we are taught by some of our “church growth” programs. They tell us we are to diligently work with those whom we have cast forth the seed to. So what is Jesus trying to teach us when he tells us that the man “slept?” I believe He is stating that the farmer rests in the understanding of the natural process of how the crops will grow. Jesus tells us that the man would, “...rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.”

It is a mystery to the man, yet he knows he must “trust” the process and the natural ways that things grow. The farmer may not totally understand it. However, it is what it is and the farmer yields to the greater knowledge of the One who knows all things. The principle the man trusts in was established by God to Noah after the flood as found in Genesis 8:22, “*While the earth remaineth, **seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.***”

Yes, the farmer is anxious for his crops to grow. Yet, the farmer knows that if the soil was prepared correctly for the seed, that at the right time, he who cast forth the seed will see the results of their labors, “...*first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.*” It is a natural thing for the seed to sprout and then grow to the point where it brings forth its fruit and then it is reaped. The farmer may need to water it, fertilize it and even prune it at times but ultimately he yields to and allows the course of nature to do what it does. More importantly, he trusts in the principle that God had established to do what it does.

The farmer in his own understanding does not know how this actually works. All of this happens over a period of time in the growing process of the seed. It may take many days and even weeks before the man may see anything even breaking through. The process does not go from a seed to grain immediately when planted. It does not pass from the planting stage to the harvesting stage overnight. It must pass through several growth stages first.

It is a maturing process. It matures at its own pace and in its own time. It cannot be rushed. If the process is rushed the farmer ends up with a withered crop that most likely will bring forth immature fruit, if any at all. Whatever fruit that does come forth will not be good for anything and ultimately be worthless.

In the natural realm, it is God who brings forth His watering through the rain. Natural fertilizer that God provides is the best kind of fertilizer for the seed, if you know what I mean without going into detail. Many times nature provides its own pruning process in ways that may seem like it is putting stress on the growing plant but it is actually causing it to grow stronger. God knows what He is doing – both in the natural realm and in the spiritual realm.

That is what Jesus was teaching His disciples. They were to simply cast forth the seed of the Gospel, the Good News. As they learned in the previous parable of the “Sower and the Four Types of Soil” and this parable, their task would be to cast and sow the Gospel everywhere and to everyone. After that, they were simply to “trust the process” that the Father sets in motion. After we sow the Gospel, it is the Father’s role through the Holy Spirit what takes place in the heart of those who hear the Word. If the heart is “good soil” then the seed will grow forth in its time and bring forth much fruit.

The truth of this parable is expressed by the apostle Paul in 1Corinthians 3:5-7 as he states, “*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but **God gave the increase.** So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but **God that giveth the increase.***”

Paul is stating that yes, he had sowed the seed of the Gospel to the Corinthians and it was received on “good soil” – ready hearts. Yes, Apollos may have come afterward and did a little “watering.” He brought encouragement, exhortation and taught the scriptures to the Corinthian believers. But, ultimately, it is God

and His supernatural ways that “does what God does” through His Holy Spirit. This is what will cause a harvest of abundant fruit to come forth from that seed that was sown.

Yes, God may call upon us to help “water, fertilize and even prune” at times. There are many scriptures that refer to this. However, we need to make sure that it is through God’s leading and not in our own understanding and human zeal to “help God” or try to “move the process along faster” than it should. We are to let God do what He does in people’s lives “supernaturally” without getting in the way.

Sometimes, unknowingly, we try to “play God” with those that are hearing the seed of the Good News. Sometimes we force things, whether we realize it or not we may end up doing more harm than good. Yes, we are to be there when needed. But ultimately, it is God that brings the increase and truly brings forth this new plant that grows from **His** seed to be after **His** kind. It is God that will bring forth and birth the new believer through the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit, from that seed of the Gospel message.

God loves and knows how to “grow” each one in their own time and in the way that He knows is best for that individual. Leadership and pastors must **trust God** with **His own** people because ultimately they are **HIS** people. This is difficult for many of us because we are so engrained with thinking that we must be doing something. Is it because we are so “works oriented” with thinking that we “must be doing something” so we begin to start “doing something” in our own way and in our own understanding? Could it be that we are so engrained to try to control and manipulate the process under the guise of helping God? Could it be that, without realizing it, we take over the process thinking that we have a better way? Or could it be a lack of trust in God doing what He does in and through the Holy Spirit in the life of the one who received the “seed, “the Gospel message? Hmmmm...

As Jesus concludes the parable, we see that “trusting in the process” that God has established **actually does work**. Fruit is brought forth. Not just fruit, but fruit after “His kind” and fruit ready for the sickle and for harvest. This is simply referring to the fact that when the time comes, this wonderful precious fruit, this Child of the most High God, will be reaped and harvested at that time of Jesus’ second coming. Whether this happens at the time of the person’s last breath on this earth or at the actual return of the Lord, they will be “harvested” and brought forth into the presence of the Father. Whenever that time may come for you and I, it will be at that time when we will hear those words, “...*well done thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord.*”

Just as a farmer cannot force a crop to grow, an evangelist, a pastor, an apostle or anyone else cannot force spiritual life or growth on others. The main point of the “Parable of the Good Seed Sown” is that the way God uses His Word in the heart of an individual is mysterious and completely independent of our human efforts. We, as disciples of Jesus just need to be faithful in the sowing and casting forth of the Good News.

Yes, we are to be available if, when and as necessary. God may use us to water and fertilize the believer with the water and the spiritual bread of the Word of God. We may be used to do some pruning by bringing loving correction as led by the Holy Spirit. However, we must be very careful to not interfere in an incorrect, controlling or manipulative way as the religious leaders did with the people in Jesus’ time. We all know how Jesus felt about that.

In Matthew 28:20 Jesus commissions us to go forth and preach the Gospel to all nations – to everyone. We are to go forth sowing and casting forth **His seed** - the Good News. We are to pray to the “Lord of the Harvest” that more laborers would go forth and sow and cast forth the “Good News” seed. We must always keep in mind that ultimately the results, as well as all the glory, belong to our God. What a tremendous lesson Jesus was teaching His disciples through this parable at that time and to us as His disciples, today. Let those who have ears to hear, let them hear.