

The Gospel of Luke

The Parable of the Soils

Luke 8:1-15

1. The Prominent Presence of Women in the Life of Christ (vs.1-3)

Jesus was breaking a social convention by having women as disciples. Jesus frequently highlights the value of women around Him when His societal contemporaries would have done just the opposite (cf. Luke 23:55ff; Gal 3:28).

2. The Setting for the Parable (v.4; Matthew 13:1-2; Mark 4:1)

Jesus was in a boat in the Sea of Galilee when He told this parable to the crowd. While Jesus preached the same message all across the land, the gospels all apparently record the very first time Jesus ever told this parable (cf. vs.9-10).

3. The Proclamation of the Parable (vs.5-8; Matthew 13:3-9; Mark 4:3-9)

A farmer sowing his seed was a common activity of which the entire crowd would have had first hand knowledge. This parable was given during a larger teaching time but Jesus provided no explanation for it during his lesson (cf. Mark 4:10).

4. The Questions About the Parable (vs.9-10; Matthew 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-12)

Without an explanation of this story, it was a riddle and the disciples were clueless as to its meaning. The absence of its explanation was magnified by Jesus' admonishment for the crowd to understand it (v.8).

A. The Purpose of Parables (v.10)

The disciples were given the meaning of this parable, but Jesus withheld it from the people. This was an act of judgment upon the people. They rejected the plain and clear message from Jesus Christ and now they would be unable to understand His preaching (cf. Luke 11:29; 16:31).

B. The Importance of This Parable (Mark 4:13)

Understanding this parable is the key for understanding Jesus' other parables.

5. The Explanation of the Parable (vs.11-15; Matthew 13:18-23; Mark 4:13-20)

A. The Sower

This character is not even mentioned in the explanation and is not the primary focus of the parable. It is likely that Jesus had Himself in mind as the sower (cf. Matt 13:37). Because the sower was not explicitly named, it can refer to anyone who spreads the seed.

B. The Seed (v.11)

The seed is the Word of God. Matthew calls it the word of the kingdom (Matt 13:19) while Mark simply calls it the Word (Mark 4:14). This is the message about the kingdom of God (cf. v.1) where repentance from sin (Matt 4:17), faith in God (Luke 8:50), and forgiveness of sins (Luke 5:20ff) was emphasized.

C. The Soils

All of the soils picture a different type of a heart reception of the gospel.

I. The Road Soil (v.12; Matthew 13:19; Mark 4:15)

A hard beaten dirt path, unsuitable for any seed to grow or flourish, describes the hearts of people who are utterly unreceptive to the message of the gospel. They hear and, almost immediately forgetting (cf. Mark 4:15), do not understand and will not believe the message to be saved. This is a picture of the heart of a resolutely unrepentant unbeliever (cf. Heb 10:29).

II. The Rocky Soil (v.13; Matthew 13:20-21; Mark 4:16-17)

Unlike the soil by the road, the rocky-soil heart receives the message of the gospel with joy and likely with enthusiasm. Initially there are visible signs that this person truly has believed the gospel. However, this person ultimately capitulates to external pressures brought against Christ, His people, and His gospel by falling away. This is a picture of the heart of an unbeliever whose unbelief is unmasked by persecution or affliction.

III. The Weedy Soil (v.14; Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:18-19)

The weedy-soil heart hears the message and shows some signs of having truly believed the gospel. However, this person has never truly repented from their sinful desire for riches and other things of the world (cf. 1 John 2:16). This is a picture of the heart of an unbeliever whose faith is shown to be false because of a continuing and ultimately overwhelming love and concern for this world's pleasures and woes.

IV. The Good Soil (v.15; Matthew 13:23; Mark 4:20)

This is the picture of the heart of a true believer. This is someone who has truly understood the message and whose faith is displayed by their acceptance of and holding fast of the gospel, and displayed in perseverance this believer continues to bear fruit.