

Our Heart Must Be Fertile

It is up to us to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and to do our best to help it grow in the hearts of the people we minister to. To do this our heart must be fertile.

Introduction

Jesus often spoke in parables when he was teaching. Parables are great ways to illustrate kingdom truths and biblical messages and apply them to life. Applying scripture to everyday living is essential to living a healthy Christ-centered life and carrying out the great commission of going and making disciples.

One of the parables Jesus taught is the Parable of the Sower. The teaching is shared in multiple gospels, but we are going to focus on the text found in Mark 4:2-8.

Mark 4:2-8

(2) He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: (3) "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. (4) As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. (5) Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. (6) But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. (7) Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. (8) Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

Jesus is sharing to many people gathered to hear him speak. He is trying to prepare for more teaching and using an agricultural illustration to explain what he is teaching them. Not everyone understands the parables though, and this one is no exception. After Jesus and the disciples leave everyone gathered he explains the parable to the twelve disciples.

We are going to look at his explanation of this parable to them and apply it to our lives today. The farmer sowing the seed is an example of us sharing the gospel with others. As a farmer scatters seed, we share the word of God with others and the good news of Jesus Christ. The results of our sharing are similar to the results of a farmer casting seed.

The farmer wants the seed to grow and be fruitful, but he must be sure to cast the seed on fertile ground, but some are bound to be cast elsewhere. The word of God is the same. We want to do our best to plant the word of God in fertile hearts so that it can grow and bear fruit in someone's life. This parable shares the four types of people that hear the message of Jesus Christ and what happens to them. We have the deceived, the short-lived, the busy, and the Church.

The Deceived

The first people Jesus refers to in this parable are the deceived. Mark 4:15 says:

Mark 4:15

(15) Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.



Some people we share the love of Christ with have very hard hearts. Their heart is so hard it is like a stone path. Nothing can grow there. Something in their life has made their heart very hard. These are people that do not want to hear anything about the Lord or scripture. They even refuse help sometimes when it is coming from a person of faith, just because that person is a follower of Jesus.

We will encounter the deceived as we share the love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus with others that we come in contact with in our day-to-day lives. They may even listen to what we have to say or accept help but their hearts have been hardened so much by the devil that nothing we say or do can take root in their life.

The best thing to do is to continue to pray for insight and ask the Lord to break up the hardened parts of their heart so that their heart can become fertile ground for the word of God to be planted in and can grow and flourish.

The Short-lived

Next, we have the short-lived people. Mark 4:16-17 says:

Mark 4:16-17

(16) Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. (17) But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

The deceived can sometimes become short-lived and that is a step in the right direction. We want to continue to pray for them and work with them.

The short-lived hear and receive the teaching or message that is shared with them. They accept the help they need and want to be part of the solution for others. They tend to be mostly focused on themselves and what they can receive instead of sharing the good news of Jesus with others.

These are hearts that are not fertile but can grow a little. Unfortunately, when difficult times come or new needs arise, the short-lived person will turn to whoever can provide for them, not necessarily relying on the provision or protection from the Lord. There is no foundation to the little faith they have and it withers away quickly.

Don't stop trying to work with the short-lived. It can be frustrating, even more frustrating than the deceived who do not want to hear or experience anything. The short-lived ones keep coming back and falling away. Again, pray for the Lord to be able to break up the hard spots in their heart to make their heart more fertile and be more open to his teachings and love.

The Busy

The next type of people are the busy. They are too busy to hear the word of God or the good news of Jesus Christ. Mark 4:18-19 says:

Mark 4:18-19

(18) Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; (19) but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.



These hearts are more receptive, but there is so much going on in their lives they cannot focus on what God is trying to do in and through them. The worries of this world are like weeds and thorns keeping too much attention so the person can not grow their faith and live out the great commission of going and making disciples.

Things like having enough food or shelter, being able to pay our bills or provide clothes for our household, and more are all things in some parts of the world that can distract us. In other areas, it is things like entertainment, hobbies, or working too many long hours can be distracting us. People in the Church are not immune to this and this is often what leads to burn-out. We can get so engrossed with the tasks and processes in the church that we lose sight of Jesus' message of repentance, forgiveness, love, grace, and mercy.

We must be careful to give the word of God in our hearts enough attention and not allow other things in our life to choke it out.

The Church

Finally, we have the Church; the worldwide brother and sisterhood of true believers and followers of Jesus Christ; the one Church. Mark 4:20 says:

Mark 4:20

(20) Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

True believers and followers of Jesus Christ have fertile hearts. Their hearts are ready for the word of God and the good news of Jesus Christ. These people accept the teachings of Jesus and plant them firmly in their hearts and then cultivate those teachings. This fertile heart will allow the seed of the scripture to grow and be fruitful.

Being fruitful is ultimately what we are supposed to be, and God sent Jesus to teach us this. Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to empower and equip us to do this. Jesus gave us the great commission to go into all the world preaching the gospel and making disciples. Disciples are different from basic followers. Disciples make other disciples. They are not consumers, they serve others and teach others to do the same thing. They are the Church; the one Church.

Some are more fruitful than others and that is okay. Whether you can share with thousands and bring many into the faith, or share with a few and bring one into the faith, what matters is that you are being obedient to the Lord's call on your life and fulfilling the great commission.

Conclusion

Our hearts must be fertile for the word of God to take hold and have deep roots in our lives. It is the only way for us to have a positive impact on this world and to fulfill the great commission of going and making disciples.

Keeping our hearts fertile can only be accomplished by reading and studying the scriptures regularly and praying without ceasing. We must be the hands and feet of Jesus in this lost and dying world thereby sowing good seed and hopefully, that good seed takes root in other fertile hearts.



It is up to us to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and to do our best to help it grow in the hearts of the people we minister to. But it starts with you. It starts with your heart. Your heart must be fertile and allow the word of God to grow in your life before you can sow it in others' lives.

