

2025-09-07

## **Sowing Seeds**

Mark 4:1-20

Most of us, if not all of us have tried to grow some plants in our lifetime. I have learned that there are some people who have a green thumb and some do not. Those with the green thumb seem to be able to grow anything they want to. Others of us struggle with keeping plants alive. About the only thing we really do well at is growing weeds and some cacti. I have tried growing vegetable gardens. My success or lack of success is in direct proportion to the amount of time I have spent caring for the garden. Most of my efforts were simply planting lots of seeds, turning on the watering systems and **hoping for the best**. I did not take the time to carefully prepare the soil and plant the seeds at the right depth or space them apart correctly. I did not take the time to monitor if they were getting too much water or too little water. I did not thin what I planted to help some plants grow better. I remember my mom had big vegetable gardens. She grew all kinds of things and canned a lot of it. She spent hours each day in the garden. And she was rewarded with an abundance of produce. Our scripture today is about Jesus telling the parable of the farmer who went out to sow his seed.

**Mark 4:1** *“And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.”* Again, Jesus is surrounded by a great multitude of people. In the beginning of His ministry Jesus called people to *“repent and believe in the gospel”* (Mark 1:15). That was His primary preaching theme. Now Jesus is going to begin teaching the people about the kingdom of God and many life lessons. And He is going to use parables. Parables are meant to help people understand what Jesus is teaching. When Jesus explains some parables, He is teaching people how to understand them. Parables are meant to make you think. Those who are seeking Jesus to know and experience God, they understand the parables. But people who are following Jesus for so many other things or are seeking to destroy Him do not understand or care about the parables. Parables to them are confusing. Jesus used this primary parable to describe the crowds who follow Him.

After Jesus told the parable of the farmer sowing his seed, He told the people, *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”* (Mark 4:9). Jesus wants people to think, to think deeper about spiritual matters and the kingdom of God. Unfortunately, most of those who followed Jesus were **superficial followers**. They were not disciples. They sought Jesus only to get what they wanted, the healings and free food. They really were **not interested in changing their lives to be like His**. They did not commit

themselves to doing what He taught. Christianity is about changing your life. Jesus wants us to **act** differently, **think** differently, **relate to others** differently, and **live** differently than how the world does. It is interesting that there are many religions, leaders, spiritual people and the like who teach a variety of different things people are to do to improve their lives or earn future rewards. Lots of people listen to and do what these leaders teach. They will change their lives, **but they will not listen to, believe in and do what Jesus commands**. Jesus wants us to live the way He designed life to be lived. In this parable of the farmer going out to sow his seed Jesus describes four different groups of people that make up the crowds that follow Him. He really wants all of them to respond in faith, believing His teachings, loving Him and living out all He commands (John 14:21, 23-24), but most do not.

**4:10** *“But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable.”* It was evening time. The larger crowds have left. They got what they wanted. But the twelve and many others stayed with Jesus. They wanted more. They wanted to know. They wanted understand. To them, life was more than food and clothing, health and wealth. They were seeking a purpose in their life. They were seeking the kingdom of God.

Before Jesus explained this parable to the disciples, He said, *“To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them’”* (Mark 4:11-12). This mystery of the kingdom of God is not difficult to know and understand for the natural person. **It is actually impossible to know and understand** for the natural person (1 Corinthians 2:14). The natural person does not have the Spirit of the living God living in them. It is the Spirit in us who gives us understanding of the things of God. God is not trying to keep this mystery from anyone. He wants all people to know Him. It all begins with truly believing in the sacrifice God has provided for the forgiveness of our sins so that we can have a right relationship with Him. *“The cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”* (1:23).

Yes, to those who are outside the kingdom of God, to those who do not trust in God’s sacrifice for their sins, to those without the Spirit of God living in them, parables are just a nice story and nothing more. **They can see the story** because it is an actual event, but they have no perception of how it relates to the kingdom of God. They know nothing about the kingdom of God. **They hear the parable**, but for them it goes no deeper than a nice story. Because if they really understood the parable they would turn from their sinful life and receive from God total forgiveness for their

sins. God wants people to believe, but they refuse to believe that Jesus, God in the flesh, died in our place for our sins. Then He rose from the grave in His physical body to prove that “*Death is swallowed up in victory*” (1 Corinthians 15:54).

**4:13-14** “*And He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word.’*” Of course, the disciples did not understand this parable that is why they asked Jesus to explain it to them. Understanding this parable is the foundation for understanding all the parables because Jesus showed the disciples how this parable related to the kingdom of God. The farmer sows the seed. The picture is of a farmer scattering his seed by hand. A good farmer could evenly spread out his seed by hand. They had lots of practice. This was the fastest way to sow seed. Sometimes the farmer would drag the field afterwards to put some soil on top of the seeds. Some people plowed their fields and planted their crops in rows. But this was slower and a lot more work. Things really did not change until the 1930’s with tractors and spreaders and seeders. Then in the 1950’s there was another boom in farming with pesticides, soil management and hybrid seeds. Jesus sows His Word. His disciples will do the same, sow God’s word.

**4:15** “*And these are the ones by the **wayside** where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.*” The wayside is the hard packed ground. It is the paths that are walked. The birds come and eat the seeds that are sown here. Some people in the crowds around Jesus had hearts as hard as this ground. They heard the word of God but soon after they hear the devil comes and takes the word away so that the word could not grow. The word was in their lives but their hearts were so hard, they refused to believe the truth. These people heard the truth but nothing else happened with the truth.

**4:16-17** “*These likewise are the ones sown on **stony ground** who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.*” The stony ground has some soil on top of the rock. But for a plant to grow, it must grow a strong root system. Under this thin layer of soil is solid rock. They too have hard hearts like the first group. These people heard God’s word. They immediately responded with gladness but they have no roots. They do not know why they believe. They do not understand the truth of God’s word and work. They do not know the cost of following Jesus. Without roots the sun burns up the plant. That is, tribulation and persecution prevent God’s word from growing. Many in the crowds around Jesus were glad and rejoiced over what they received from Him. But their hearts were stony ground. There was no place for God’s word to grow in their lives. They did not accept the gospel truth.

**4:18-19** “Now these are the ones sown among **thorns**; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” Some seed fell among the weeds and thorns. These weeds and thorns choke the word of God in people’s lives. They kill God’s word in people’s lives. Jesus gave three things that choke His word. First, **the cares of this world**. People get too worried about what other people think. They let worry and anxiety over things and interests in their lives prevent them from believing and living God’s word. Second, the **deceitfulness of riches**. Jesus said, “*you cannot serve God and mammon*” (Matthew 6:24). Mammon is wealth, riches, an accumulation of lots of money. There are many people who base their life’s decisions on their wealth not on the conviction of God. Even in these crowds around Jesus were wealthy people who wanted more. Riches are deceitful. Riches do not bring love, joy or peace. Jesus challenged the rich to give from their wealth. Riches can choke out God’s Spirit in people’s lives. Third, **the desires for other things**. This includes anything else not in the first two, that will choke and kill God’s work in their lives. These Jesus called unfruitful. Bearing fruit is evidence of a changed life. If there is no evidence of change, there is no changed live.

**4:20** “But these are the ones sown on **good ground**, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: Some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.” In the crowds that surrounded Jesus were some who had open, receptive hearts. This is the good ground where roots can grow. They heard the word, like the other groups did. This group received the word. The difference was they let God’s word grow in them. They accepted it, believed the gospel and wanted to change. They wanted to know, and understand. They understood that there was a cost to believing in Jesus. They did not let the cares and worries of the world stop them. They did not let their riches control them. They did not pursue their desires for other things. They pursued Jesus. Because of their pursuit, everyone produced fruit. Some more than others, but all produced fruit. For Christians, the question is not what type of soil are you. Christians are this good soil. The question for Christian is what amount of fruit are you bearing? The crowds of today are no different than the crowds of Jesus’ day. God’s word continues to go out among the crowds. You never know who is going to believe and who will not. Share God’s word as you can. Let God do His work in people’s hearts.

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Our mission statement: **Spread the gospel of Jesus Christ;**  
**Teach believers to worship God; Foster growth in the Christian faith**

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## **Sowing Seeds**

Mark 4:1-20

### **Questions to ask yourself:**

Do you have a “green thumb”?

Do you have a heart to sow the gospel?

Your success depends on the amount of time you spend at each.

Most of those who followed Jesus were \_\_\_\_\_ followers.

If everyone has ears, what does Jesus mean by saying,

*“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”*

Are people interested in changing their lives?

Is it possible for non-Christians to understand the things of the Spirit? Why?

1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16

What must a person truly believe before they can begin to understand God?

What soil describes non-Christians? What soil describes Christians?

What amount of fruit are you bearing?

### **Actions to take:**

For Christians: make sure you soil, you heart is good by following

God’s Spirit. Don’t get caught up in worries, riches, any other thing.

The amount of fruit you produce is in direct correlation to the amount of time you spend knowing God and doing His will. Spend more time in God’s word and more time loving and serving others.

For non-Christians: what soil is your heart? Why? Why not change by believing in and trusting Jesus?