

Title: The Secret of the Seed: The Parable of the Sower

Video URL: <https://youtu.be/BK0N2I87HOg>

Ellen and I recently saw the newest Indiana Jones movie. One of the exciting draws of this movie series is the fascinating search for valuable artifacts and the dangerous journey to find them. Today, in our Gospel, Jesus shares a parable about the Sower and the Seed. In it, Jesus discloses “the mysteries of the kingdom,”¹ which has such great value that we should not allow anything to hinder our discovery of it. Perils, warnings, and promises are all included as Jesus “proclaims what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.”²

The New Interpreter’s Bible explains that the Greek Word for “parable” literally means “something cast beside.” In this parable, Jesus throws a story alongside our life to illustrate vital truths about how his kingdom operates in both seen and unseen ways. The parable is about a farmer. But it was also about his Seed. Most of all, it was about the soil. As a whole, the parable demonstrates how the kingdom of God works and grows as “the Seed” is sown.

When Jesus explained the parable, he drew a parallel between “*the word of the kingdom*”³ and “*the seed that was sown*”⁴ in a person’s heart.” The particular word that is used to describe this Seed is the Greek word “*logos*.”⁵ It is a word used to describe a comprehensive understanding of something. It is

¹ Matthew 13:11

² Matthew 13:35

³ Matthew 13:19

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Strong’s Concordance #3056 (log'-os), Definition: a word (as embodying an idea), a statement, a speech

the same word that John uses to describe Jesus as the full expression of God the Father.

His “Word” is the agent of all life, just as it was at the beginning of creation when God spoke all things into existence. God’s “Word” has the power and potential of life—a life that makes all things new. Jesus said, “***My words are spirit, and they are life.***⁶ Therefore his “Word” is the Seed of the kingdom, and it is by its authority the King of the kingdom reigns.

People typically don’t want to be put under the reign of a King. They want to see life in their own ways and approach life on their own terms. And if God won’t have things their way, they refuse to hear what He has to say.

Examples of this “law of sin” abound throughout the Bible. Esau’s life was a case in point. He comes in from the field hungry because he has been working hard. Jacob knows this and takes advantage of it. Jacob knows that all Esau can think about is his immediate need for food. So, Jacob tells him that he can have the meal he has prepared if Esau will give him his birthright, which he willingly surrenders. Esau’s disregard for his birthright reveals a mind controlled only by the desires of his flesh.

In contrast, “***the law of the Spirit of life,***⁷ which Paul writes about in our New Testament lesson, can help us overcome “***the law of sin and death.***⁸ The law of the Spirit of Life may seem to be weak, but that is only due to our human weakness, not his. In Christ Jesus, we are called to take hold of his great and precious promises so that “***through them, you may***

⁶ John 6:63

⁷ Romans 8:2

⁸ Ibid.

become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world because of sinful desire.⁹ This high regard for God's Word with all the spiritual treasures it contains is what Paul is pointing to when he describes those who have ***“...their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”***¹⁰

In his book, “The Renovations of the Heart,” Dallas Willard, an American philosopher and lay theologian,” wrote, *“It is in our thoughts that the first movements toward the renovation of the heart occur. Thoughts are the place where we can and must begin to change.”*¹¹

Dallas describes people so governed by their own opinions that they can not think objectively about spiritual things. Jesus dealt with this kind of resistance throughout his ministry. Paul referred to this hardened mindset when he shared, ***“...mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.”***¹²

Jesus depicts this hostility through the Seed that grew up amid THORNS. In Matthew’s description, what was sown among thorns is the one who hears the Word, but ***“the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word.”***¹³ Luke adds, ***“The pleasures of this life.”***¹⁴ Mark still further mentions ***“the lusts of other things.”***¹⁵ Each difficulty may involve a whole host of things that require changing how we think and prioritize the things we value in life.

⁹ 2 Peter 1:4

¹⁰ Romans 8:5b

¹¹ Dallas Willard, *Renovations of the Heart*, 2002, p.95-96

¹² Romans 8:7

¹³ Matthew 13:22

¹⁴ Luke 4:14

¹⁵ Mark 4:19

Paul describes this struggle in our New Testament lesson from Romans when he addresses the spiritual conflict in those who live “*according to the flesh*” as opposed to those who live “*according to the Spirit.*”¹⁶ The “*law of sin and death*” is like the law of gravity constantly pulling us downward. But “*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from the law of sin and death.*”¹⁷

In our Old Testament lesson, Isaiah writes, “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*”¹⁸ Then, he promises that God’s Word will not be unfruitful in aiding us to accomplish and discern his purposes. Therefore, receiving God’s Word is the door that unlocks spiritual transformation.

This transformation is much like the metamorphosis of an ugly caterpillar when it rolls back its unattractive covering to reveal a butterfly in all its fragile, colorful beauty. But the rolling back of that outer skin is often painful, but with God’s help, we can and must cooperate with the Spirit in laying aside all that is contrary to the glory of the Lord in our life.

I like the way that Phil Hooper, an Episcopal priest from Fort Wayne, Indiana, expressed this purpose when he wrote:

“*How many times have you heard this familiar parable (of the Sower and Seed) and wondered, immediately: which type of soil am I? How fruitfully have I cultivated the Word? How*

¹⁶ Romans 8:5b

¹⁷ Romans 8:1

¹⁸ Isaiah 55:8-9

*thorny or rocky have I let myself become?”*¹⁹ The writer to the Hebrews suggests that there is something more than just ourselves we need to consider, for we need to **“exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”**²⁰

Jesus’ whole purpose in sharing the parables about the kingdom is to mend and ultimately transform the social and spiritual landscape of our lives. Therefore, as we stand alongside one another, we should ask, *“How can I help you clear away the stones? How can I tend the places where the thorns have cut (and hindered) you?”*²¹

Jesus ends his parable by saying, **“Whoever has ears, let them hear!”**²² May God gives us ears to hear what he is saying so that we may **“...bear much fruit and prove to be (his) disciples.”**²³

¹⁹ Sermons That Work, 2023, “Islands” by The Rev Phil Hooper

²⁰ Hebrews 3:13

²¹ Hooper, Sermons that Work, 2023, “Islands”

²² Matthew 13:9

²³ John 15:8