

Title: Parables – The Sower. Matthew 13:1-23

Tim Shelley / 13th March 2011 (Compiled by Gordon Palmer)

Aim:

- a) To see the way Jesus used this parable and to help us to learn more about the Kingdom of God.
- b) To help us to focus on what the seed in this parable means to us

Parables are earthly stories with a spiritual meaning.

Clue to understanding: There is a danger of seeing too much in a parable but also a danger in missing the point.

In this story it was a typical Middle Eastern farmer of that era scattering his seed evenly across the soil. But Jesus' focus is on the seed not the sower.

1) Read Matthew 13:1-9. There is nothing extraordinary in this story. Summarise the story in your own words.

2) Read Matthew 13:10-12. Why did Jesus talk to the crowds in parables?

Why did Jesus want some people to know the 'secrets of the Kingdom' whilst he didn't want others to know?

Who are the 'them' in these verses?

("The secrets of the God's Kingdom can be grasped only by those who already have the spiritual capacity to receive them, i.e. the disciples." (Source RT France TNTC))

What does Jesus want to say to us today especially about his kind of ministry and people listening?

3) Read Matthew 13:18-23.

What is the seed?

What are the birds?

What does the shallow soil mean?

What are the weeds and what do they do?

What is the desired outcome?

A) The Kingdom

What sort of Kingdom is God's Kingdom? The expectations of the crowd were for a different kind of Kingdom and King.

How do the kings (or leaders) of this world seek to expand their kingdoms?

What expectations do we have of Jesus as our King?

B) The preaching of the Kingdom

From this parable, what means does Jesus use to expand his Kingdom?

What is the vulnerability of the seed?

By contrast, what is the power of the seed (what happens when the word of Jesus is sown into people's lives)?

C) Response to the preaching

Jesus said, "It is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come." (Mark 7:21)

Tim said, "We focus on faith sharing in the mind, but Jesus says renewal needs to take place in the heart."

What do you think he meant?

How do we sow seeds in people's hearts?

Look again at the different outcomes of the preaching of the word.

In your journey of faith, which ones can you identify with?

The followers of Jesus (the disciples) are the 'shop window' – where it's working.

That is the good soil.

Going on:

Is there a work for God to do in our hearts today? Is there a danger that we could drift away? If this message is from God, what needs to be put in place so that our faith grows from something vulnerable to something of his power?