

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 NIV (Pentecost Study 7)

Later that same day Jesus left the house and sat beside the lake. ²A large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat there and taught as the people stood on the shore. ³He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one: "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. ⁴As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. ⁵Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. ⁸Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! ⁹Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

18 "Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds: **19** The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. **20** The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. **21** But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. **22** The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. **23** The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

Q.1. Imagine being in the crowd of v.2; why did you come; and how would you describe the scene?

Q.2. What characterises each of the 4 soil-types Jesus describes? What happens to the seed in each type of soil?

Q.3. How does the farmer sow the seed, and should getting 30, 60, or even 100x yield satisfy him?

Q.4. What does Jesus mean by the proverb 'Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.' V.9 (see v.23)?

Q.5. Look around as Jesus finishes this story v.9; do you think people know what a parable is? Have they understood this one? What about the disciples?

Q.6. As a parable of the kingdom (see v.11) who is the farmer and what does the seed represent?

Q.7. What part does the Devil play in the parable see e.g. v.19? Might he have a part to play in the hearts of the 2nd and 3rd group vv.20-22?

Q.8. What type of people do vv.20-21 describe?

Q.9. What type of people does vv.22 describe?

Q.10. What characterises the good soil v.23? What does the harvest represent?

Q.11. How might this parable help the disciples understand what was happening in the ministry of Jesus and in their future ministries?

Q.12. Why does the farmer scatter the seed randomly? What does Jesus mean by this? Who is the target of the sowing? What is the fruit today?

Application: for reflection, prayer and action

Q.13. How can those whose hearts are described in vv.20-22 move toward those described in v.23? What step might be involved? See Col 2:6-7

Q.14. What are the weeds of this generation and how can we prevent them choking out our fruitfulness?

Q.15. What does the parable reveal about farmers (us) seed (the gospel), various soils (human hearts), and how a harvest happens? How much time is involved?

Q.16. How does this parable parallel the growth of God's kingdom?

Matt 13:1-9, 18-23 (my suggested answers)

NB. Please answer the questions yourself. We all have different ways of answering; God may give you greater insights than mine. Put '*John thinks*' ... before each answer.

Q.1. Your answer.

Q.2. The 1st soil is hard and the seed lies on the top and is easily eaten by birds; the 2nd soil is ploughed but rocky – the seed grows quickly but has no deep roots so as the sun shines it withers and dies; the 3rd soil is surrounded by weeds which grow alongside and prevent fruitfulness; the 4th soil is fertile and produces a large harvest.

Q.3. The farmer sows liberally – know he will find some good soil for a big harvest

Q.4. The proverb is a call to ponder and reflect: what does Jesus mean? Who is the farmer? What does the seed represent? What do the soils represent?

Q.5. You answer. The disciples didn't understand so Jesus has to give an explanation.

Q.6. Jesus is the farmer sowing the seed (the gospel of the kingdom)

Q.7. The devil snatches the seed out of the hard-hearted. He probably works subtly to increase the effects of the rocks and weeds; keeping people distracted and selfish

Q.8. I describe them as 'fair-weather' believers. They want faith to be easy, fun and entertaining. Any trial or hardship and their faith is given away for an easier way.

Q.9. I describe these people as 'compromisers' – those who want what Jesus gives but also what the world offers. They are self-focused won't sacrifice to stay faithful.

Q.10. The good hearts of v.23 are those who have deep roots in Jesus, stay firm under pressure or hardship trusting God, produce fruit and fruitfulness.

Q.11. This parable helps understand why Jesus' ministry has a mixed response, as will the ministry of the disciples in the future. It appears that most of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law will not follow Jesus and even some who eagerly followed him some months ago have fallen away.

Q.12. Jesus sows liberally because he loves everyone. He hopes everyone will respond, grow and produce fruit themselves. But he knows some will not.

Q.13. Those described in vv.20-22 are not static; they can move – self-reflection, prayer, repentance and do as Paul says in Col 2:6-7

Q.14. The weeds are all around us – subtly whispering – you need more, you can have it all (if you just do one doggy thing) they come in advertising, TV, Radio etc

Q.15. This parable reveals Jesus' method of growing his kingdom – through his followers –i.e. with us growing & sowing the gospel liberally – bearing fruit.

Q.16. The parable helps us understand why Jesus' ministry had a mixed response. The kingdom is growing but not everyone see it, understands it nor responds to Jesus