

Introduction

1. French Master Jean Millet entitled one of his most famous paintings *The Sower*.¹ (Show)
 - a. Before advent of modern farm machinery, this scene very common in agrarian cultures.
 - b. In Spring-of-yr farmers would sow their fields by hand all across Europe/Middle East.
 - c. Avg. person seeing time-time-again only sees natural, physical phenomenon, Lk.8:5-8a.
2. But Jesus was not the avg. person was He? He saw in this common scene a parable, v. 4.
 - a. παραβολή = casting or placing side by side.² Using what common to illustrate spiritual.³
 - b. This = one of few parables Jesus ever explained. All of us are in it & shows our destiny.
 - i. Read Mark 4:11-12. Do you see it? Our destiny is where we are at in this parable.
 - ii. Our very forgiveness is determined by what Jesus teaches in this parable.
 - iii. Whether or not belong to God's family is determined by kind of soil we are.
3. The 3 ingredients in the parable are the sower, seed, & soil. Let's look at them. (Title/Text)

I. Sower Is God (vv. 5, 11).

- A. Not Explicitly Stated, But Implied.
- B. Throughout Bible God Is Seen As A Gardener.
 1. He placed Adam/Eve in garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8; 1:28).
 2. Then God chose Israel and called Israel His vine (Isaiah 5). But Israel produced weeds.
 3. Along came Jesus to replace sinful/rotting Israel. He said, *I am the true vine, etc., Jn. 15.*
- C. God wants to take our lives and attach them to the Lord Jesus Christ so can be fruitful.
 1. God wants to cultivate, water, and fertilize us to make us into someone special.
 2. He wants us to be healthy, productive, and reflective of Him—the Gardener.
 3. God loves you do much He wants to be your personal gardener!

II. Seed Is God's Word (vv. 5, 11).

- A. V. 11 Says Seed Is The Word of God.
- B. A Seed Has In It The Germ Of Life.
 1. When placed into the soil, given water/sunshine, it sprouts and produces a new plant.
 2. We are seeing this all over as we watch plants germinate, sprout, grow this Spring.
- C. Word Of God Has Capacity To Produce Life, (1 Peter 2:23).
 1. Over and over Bible says Word of God is alive – like living seed.
 2. Reason is because its author is the Holy Spirit.
 - a) When we respond to the message of the Word, the Holy Spirit enters life (Eph. 1:13).
 - b) By His creative power the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life which was lost thru sin.
 - c) The Bible calls this being born again, John 3:3. We are given new life in Christ.
 - d) As we continue to be fertilized by the Word, the Holy Spirit develops that new life.
 - e) He causes our new life to develop, mature, and grow.

¹ http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean-Fran%C3%A7ois_Millet_-_The_Sower_-_Walters_37905.jpg. Accessed 5/1/15.

² Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, #3850.

³ Strong, J. (1996). *The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, #3850.

II. Soil Is The Human Heart (w. 4-8, 12-15).

1. Seed needs soil to grow in.
 - a) How well grows determined by soil.
 - (1) In our front yard section of grass that never grows grass well. Only weeds.
 - (2) Something is wrong w/soil so that the growth is affected adversely.
 - b) Kind of soil determines the kind of growth.
2. The reception we give the seed of God's Word determines the kind of growth we have.
3. Only 4 kinds of soil – so there are only 4 kinds of hearts. You are in this parable.
 - a) Your heart, my heart is revealed right here. We are looking into a mirror.
 - b) Everyone of us is one of these four kinds of soil.

A. Path Soil = Hard Heart = Never Believe (vv. 5, 12).

1. In Palestine fields are long narrow strips of land.
 - f) In between fields are paths used to walk on (become hard, packed with earth).
 - g) When a boy, I rode my bike on hard paths like this. Seed is easy pickings for birds.
2. Some people react to God's Word like this – it bounces off heart and never sprouts.
 - a) These folks are not interested in Word. They are turned off. They never believe.
 - b) Satan is involved – takes away the word. God calls them, but listen to Satan instead.
 - c) They might have one of several reactions. THEY MAY REASON
 - (1) I DON'T NEED IT. I CAN LIVE A GOOD LIFE WITHOUT BEING RELIGIOUS IN ANY WAY.
 - (2) IT ISN'T TRUE – TEEN GIRL AT HOCKADAY SCHOOL, TX. BIBLE WRITTEN BY MEN. CASE CLOSED.
 - (3) TOO COSTLY. IF I ACCEPT CHRIST I'LL HAVE TO GIVE UP TOO MUCH.

B. Rocky Soil = Shallow Heart = Believes for A While (vv. 6, 13).

1. In Palestine some soil covers a bedrock of limestone.
 - h) Soil = 2/3 inch deep; then solid rock. Seed springs up quickly = surface moisture.
 - i) When hot sun rises plant wilts in heat. Roots can't get past bedrock to water table.
2. Some people react to Word like this – they are excited, but shallow.
 - a) Hear good news and want what Christ offers. Maybe a sermon stirs emotions.
 - b) They respond w/enthusiasm (pray sinner's prayer).
 - c) True response involves the mind and the will.
 - (1) We must understand that Christ wants us to surrender to Him as well.
 - (2) More than emotions. Leads to discipleship = self-denial, Jesus 1st, hardship.
3. Shallow heart makes superficial commitment and falls away when things get tough.
 - a) When testing = trouble, adversity or affliction for being a Christian.⁴
 - (1) Fall away = to w/draw or absent oneself from, apostatize.⁵ All of us know some.
 - (2) Started out great but then some trying times happened. Disillusioned & gave up.
 - b) This kind of soil gets upset over hard times God allows and quits following Christ.
 - c) I have known several people who did this (trials w/career, marriage, illness).
4. Finishers of race are not those who start well – but those who keep running.

⁴ Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, #3986.

⁵ W.E. Vine, op. cit., #868.

C. Thorny Soil = Crowded Heart = No Mature Fruit (w. 7, 14).

1. In Palestine farmers were tempted to be lazy and tried clear land by burning.
 - a) Burn off unwanted growth. The field looked clean, but roots still underneath.
 - b) Watched Round-up commercials enough to know – don't get root, weed back up.
2. Some people receive Word this way – comes into crowded heart (v. 14).
 - a) Cares of this world = distractions of this age:⁶ riches and pleasures of life.
 - b) Crowded heart = materialistic heart – person who lives for world.
 - c) Go on their way, not God's way. Their life never becomes about God, but them.
 - d) Life dedicated to houses, cars, careers, money, pleasure, family, friends, ed., etc.
 - e) What would you say about soil that never produces fruit? Worthless, **Heb. 6:7-8.**
3. Fruit not mature = reach its goal.⁷ Fruit does not ripen (come to maturity & perfection).⁸
 - a) It never reaches the goal for which seed was planted = grow ripe, usable fruit.
 - b) This person never produces ripe spiritual fruit salvation should lead to, **James 2:17.**

D. Good Soil = Fruitful Heart (w. 8, 15).

1. In Palestine some soil was clean, deep, and fertile.
2. Good soil = quality, character, integrity, free from defects (not hard, shallow, weed infested).
3. All of the other soils represent defective responses to the Word. Let's review for min.
4. Path – never believes, Rocky – believes short while, Crowded – never grows. Unsaved.
5. Good soil has a balanced response to the Word. Notice what Jesus said.
 - a) Retain the Word = hold it fast – listen w/interest, concern, & keep coming back to it.
 - b) Perseveres in testing = patient continuance even in greatest trials/sufferings.⁹
 - c) Produces spiritual fruit = bear fruit – change, bear fruit, grow (character, commitment)

Conclusion

1. I came across a great question this week – What happens to them?¹⁰ (Show)
2. If your soil is hard need to rototill it – break it up and let Word in.
3. If your soil is shallow need to deepen it – make total commitment to Christ.
4. If your soil is crowded need to weed it – choose Lord over the world.
5. If your soil is good – keep following Jesus Christ thru His Word.

⁶ Strong, J. (1996). *The New Strong's Dictionary*, op. cit., #3308.

⁷ Biblical Studies Press. (2006). *The NET Bible*. Biblical Studies Press, Luke 8:14, note 49..

⁸ *The Amplified New Testament*. (1987). La Habra, CA: Zondervan; The Lockman Foundation, Luke 8:14.

⁹ Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, op. cit., #5281,

¹⁰ <http://www.neverthirsty.org/media/otherbiblestudies/savedonlyonce/20060813p1.jpg>. Accessed 5/2/15.