

# Sowing Seed & Softening Soil

November 19th 2006

## Introduction

*What experience have you had on the farm or in the country?*

The world of the first century was agrarian (centered on agriculture). The pages of the New Testament reflect the fact that the majority of people engaged in farming or herding. When Jesus told stories about tenant farmers and shepherds he was using illustrations from everyday life. In the previous chapter, Jesus had a confrontation with his family and with the religious teachers. Jesus tells this parable about how different people can respond to his teaching.

## Sowing Seed

### Mark 4:1-9

*From what setting does Jesus teach this parable?*

- Sitting in a boat, surrounded by the crowds.

*Where is the crowd situated as they listen to Jesus' teaching?*

- They are crowded around the shore

*What similarity is there between the people hearing Jesus' teaching and the soil receiving the farmer's seed?*

- It is the same thing. The seed represents the teaching. The soil represents the people. Jesus is doing the very thing his parable is about.

*How is Jesus' teaching similar to seed?*

- When it impacts our lives, it is designed to produce a crop and a harvest.

Notice that in the parable, the seed is the same but the soil is different just as God's word remains the same, while different people receive it in different ways.

## Softening Soil

In Greek the same word is used here for the "shore" the crowd is standing on and for the "soil" that the farmer is sowing the seed onto.

*What four types of soil does Jesus say the farmer sowed seed onto and what happened to each?*

- Path – birds ate it
- Rocky places – Shallow soil – Scorched by the sun
- Thorns – choked by the thorns
- Good soil – grew very well and multiplied.

## Spiritual Harvest

*What is sowing seed intended to do?*

- It is intended to produce a harvest.

*How does God's word produce a spiritual harvest in our world?*

- It gets into our hearts and begins to grow and change us from the inside out.
- By producing a good and healthy spiritual crop that God will harvest.

*Is it possible for someone to change from rocky soil to good soil? If so, how?*

- Yes it is. Their heart has to be softened to what God is trying to do in their life.

*What determines the type of soil someone is?*

- Situation – Someone going through a difficult time may be more receptive to listen to God. Other people who are comfortable in their lives may feel they do not need God.
- Personality – We all handle things differently. Some people are laid back and others uptight. This can make us more or less susceptible to God's word.

*Which types of soil produce the harvest God is looking for?*

- Only the good soil. The rest did not produce any harvest.

### Mark 4:10-13

*When Jesus speaks of seeing and hearing, how is he using those terms metaphorically?*

- These people really have eyesight but some lack spiritual perception.
- They have the gift of hearing but some are unable to hear what God is trying to tell them.

*What does Jesus say is the difference between those on the outside and those on the inside?*

- The outsiders appear to be able to see/understand but cannot
- The insiders will understand what Jesus is teaching.

## Parable Explained

### Mark 4:14-20

*How does our life, as soil, make a difference to how we receive God's word?*

- If we are hard and calloused toward God, we will not be able to receive what he has for us.
- If our hearts are tender, he can use us to produce a harvest.

Jesus says that the seed sown in rocky places is received with joy but the joy is short-lived because it has no root. *What in your life anchors the joy you have from receiving God's word?*

- Faith provides an anchor that helps us get through the tough times.
- Christian friendships are an anchor.

- Scripture is an anchor.
- God is the ultimate anchor who provides us with everything we need.

*How does Satan take away the word before it has a chance to root?*

- He gets us to discredit it or casts doubt on the truth about God.
- He convinces us that we don't need it.

Eph. 4:27 warns not to let the devil get a "foothold" in your life. *What are some ways we allow Satan to creep into our lives?*

*How can you make sure that the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the other desires of the world will not choke the life out of your Christian walk?*

*What can you do to increase your fruit as a Christian?*

*In what area of your life do you need to start listening to God?*

*What is one biblical truth that you want to cultivate in your life this week?*

## Put it into Practice

Identify one area in your life where you have been robbed of your joy in Christ. Pray about that this week that God would give you deeper roots so that no one can steal your joy.

**Leaders:** We often use these verses to talk about evangelism. Tonight we have focused on how God's word has impacted each of us as individual types of soil. Have a prayer that God would soften the soil of each person heart and that God would give us a renewed sense of joy. Also pray that God would bring about a harvest that starts with each one of us.