

³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear..."

¹⁸ "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." -Matt. 13:1-23

Alright, let's get the usual study stuff of this parable out of the way. Here's a handy chart to help:

Seed on the Path	Don't understand Message, Evil One snatches it away
Seed on the Rocky Place	Receives Message with joy, but hardships cause them to fall away
Seed among Thorns	Hears Message, but worries make the Message unfruitful
Seed in Good Soil	Hears Message and understands, producing fruit

So often, when we hear this parable we focus on the hearer, where the seed falls, or what that means. And it is written in such a way that we're supposed to. But parables are not allegories, stories where every thing pairs up with something. While this particular parable is one of Jesus' more allegorical parables, it is still a parable, a story that makes a point, or maybe more than one.

As we continue our look at Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom of God, we have to see that this is ultimately a parable about the Kingdom. The seed in this story, wherever it falls, is called, "the Message about the Kingdom." What exactly is that message? Jesus has been preaching it His entire ministry; "The Kingdom of God is near." In fact, the Kingdom of God is Jesus Himself. There is no other message, no other meaning of the Kingdom of God. It is Jesus ruling in us. This can be the Church, but not always. There are churches where Jesus doesn't rule. This is anyplace where Jesus rules as King.

Often we can distort the message, though. The message we as Christians or as the church can bring can be something other than Jesus reigning in our hearts. It can be focused on our ability to fix the world, often called the "social gospel". It can be focused on all we can get out of a relationship with Jesus, often called the "health and wealth gospel". It can be focused on behavioral management, often called the "gospel of ethics". But Jesus' message, while encompassing all of these, was much bigger than any of them. It takes us more than a lifetime to comprehend the extent of the Message of the Kingdom, and we can only begin this exploration if we don't stop along the way.

Before the Message can land on any kind of soil, we have to preach it in its entirety. And for us to preach it, we have to let it be as big, broad, and far-reaching as it is. Jesus is King, which means that no matter what, we submit to Him, obey His teachings, live as His ambassadors to this world, and seek to accomplish His goals for this world. To stop at fixing this world's injustices, or taking all we can from Jesus, or being "good" people keeps us from scattering the true seed of the Message of the Kingdom in the first place.

Questions to ponder:

What does the Message of the Kingdom of God mean to you right now?

Is Jesus King in your life?

How might you offer Him parts of your life that you haven't given up to Him yet?