



Parable of the Soils

Luke 8:4-15 (Matthew 13; Mark 4)

Mixed responses to Jesus:

A gentile Centurion is honoured for his faith: an authoritative leader has come amongst us!

A widow's son is raised from the dead creating awe among the crowd: a great prophet has come amongst us!

John the baptizer is in prison and somewhat confused: are you really the one or not?

A self-righteous Pharisee seeks to humiliate Jesus: he is a charlatan and a fraud, law breaker!

A woman of ill repute seeks to honour Jesus: no gift of gratitude is too great for this man!

An entourage of women support Jesus' ministry with both their time and their money

Parables



- Short stories or analogies (the kingdom of God is like ...)
- From the common experience of the listener to the uncommon; from the familiar to the profound
- Parables not primarily about making things clearer per se (as illustrations illuminate)
- Parables serve to stretch the mind and provoke peoples' imaginations (e.g. riddles; Socratic method of teaching by answering a question with a question)
- Jesus' parables are an invitation to see things from a different perspective; contra popular expectations and misconceptions about God's kingdom (e.g. tiny seeds and leaven versus triumphal conquest by coercion and violence; upside down values: heroes and antiheroes; depreciation of money and power and status; grace and love trumping justice)

Parables



- Often the means of conveying hard to accept truths (e.g. Nathan and David)
- Luke 8:9-10 citing Isaiah's commission as prophet to Israel (Isaiah 6)

⁹ Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰ He said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but to others I speak in parables, so that 'looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand."

- It's not about hidden messages and obscuring truth; it's about the condition of the heart of the listener (Luke 8:8b):
... *"Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"*

Reveal
Soften



Conceal
Harden

Parable of the soils

⁴ When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: ⁵ “A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶ Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. ⁷ Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. ⁸ Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.” As he said this, he called out, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

Parable of the soils explained

¹¹ “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. ¹⁴ As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵ But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.



4 types of soil = 4 types of heart

It's not about the sower; it's not even about the message *per se*; it's about the listener's response to God's word (or "the Word" – Jesus)

"Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"



Heart Type #1

⁵ “A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up ...

¹² The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

This type of heart (mind) is closed to God. The Word is not able to penetrate. Their self-sufficiency (“you shall be like God”) makes them easy prey for the devil.



Heart Type #2

⁶ Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture ...

¹³ The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away.

This sort of heart receives the word eagerly, but it is too shallow (selfish) to maintain commitment and sustain growth, so a faith that starts out with great enthusiasm and promise quickly wanes and dies once the “romance of religion” passes and the challenges of discipleship become apparent.



Heart Type #3

⁷ Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it ...

¹⁴ As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

Leave a garden alone and it will soon be overrun with weeds.

You cannot serve two (or three or ten) masters!



Heart Type #4

⁸ Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.”

¹⁵ But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.

Leave a garden alone and it will soon be overrun with weeds. Creation mandate: subdue (tame) the earth. Requires patient cultivation, not neglect or exploitation. Be doers of the word and not hearers only (James) ... be wise not foolish (hear and do what I say: Jesus' Sermon on the Mount)

Developmental Cycle of Love

INTER-DEPENDENCE

Freely choosing
Other-centered
Responsibility mine
Vulnerability
Mature unconditional love
agape / good soil
satisfying / overflow
/ choose you, let's dance!

INDEPENDENCE

True self found only
in the Creator God
rather than creation
(Romans 1)

phileo / thistles or roses?

*I need to discover my true self
God alone meets my needs*

DEPENDENCE

Enmeshed
Self-centered
My needs
Responsibility theirs
Denial/hiding
Immature conditional
love *eros / rocky soil*
unsatisfying / addiction

/ need you, can't live without you!

INDEPENDENCE

(differentiation)
Have to find/know
self to give self to
another (imago Dei)

phileo / thistles or roses?

*Who am "I" apart from "us"?
The spiritual journey towards God*

irrelevant:
*ego-centric self-
sufficiency*



brokenness, humility

misdirected *eros*:
selfish consumerism
... lust of the flesh
(pleasure), lust of the
eyes (possessions),
and the pride of life
(power/prestige)



go deeper

misdirected *phileo*:
quid pro quo
(friendship with the
world, idolatry)



undivided loyalty

agape:
selfless service
(God-like-ness)



perfection = *telos*

Hearts change and relationships grow!



What type of soil
are you?