

Sermon – 12/06/2011 am

Parable of the Sower – Weedy and Good Ground

Study Text: Luke 8:4-15

I try to grow a few vegies in the backyard as you may know. Some weeks ago I planted some beetroot seed. They came up and looked fine – small reddish coloured plants. But when I looked this week what do you think I saw? These weeds have taken over. They are smothering the beetroot plants. I think that some have already gone. I must get busy and try to save what I can. I think I will remove the beetroot and replant them in new ground.

We continue looking at the parable of the sower. Jesus told this parable to a great crowd of people. He concluded by saying *he who has ears to hear let him hear* (8:8). It was an interesting story that all could relate to. But it was more than a story. It was a story with a lesson – a number of lessons. What are these lessons? Thankfully his disciples asked Jesus what the parable meant and he told them. We have looked at the seed that fell on hard ground and on rocky ground. Today we will look at the thorny or weedy ground and then the good ground.

1. Weedy ground

When Adam sinned God cursed the ground. He made thorns and thistles, or horrible weeds, to grow in the soil. What a curse weeds are to the farmer! In another parable Jesus used the picture of tares or weeds sown in a wheat crop. They were sown by Satan. Weeds remind us of the wicked one, the angel who rebelled against God. They remind us of the prince of this world. The birds snatching away the seed from the path represented the devil. The devil is also behind the curse of the weeds.

In the scene pictured by Jesus some seed fell among thorns or weeds (8:7). The weeds sprang up, as weeds do, and choked the plants that were sown. The soil was not hard or shallow but was full of weeds. What does this mean?

These are those who *when they have heard go out and are choked with cares, riches and pleasures of life and bring no fruit for maturity* (8:14). Matthew elaborates to the *cares of this world* and the *deceitfulness of riches* (Matthew 13:22). These people heard the word and took it in. They had even established a good root system. Then they fall away, not because of persecution, but because of prosperity.

These people have the potential for spiritual growth but as Leon Morris writes, ‘life will hold just so much, and these people fill their lives with so many things that there is no room for spiritual fruit’. How terribly tragic!

The cares of this world! What threatened to choke the spiritual life out of Martha? Jesus told her she was *distracted with much serving*. She was *worried and troubled about many things* (Luke 10:40f). She was not doing anything wrong. It was a matter of priorities. Are you running around getting into a flap about everything? Listen to what Jesus said to Martha. Mary had chosen what was best. Listen to what Peter says – *cast your cares on the Lord because he cares for you* (I Peter 5:7). This is not just good advice. It is teaching you must heed lest Jesus be choked out of your life.

Are the cares of this world filling your life? If not then you belong to a very small group. Have you found a person lately who does not proudly say ‘I am just so busy’? Martha, remember, came to

Jesus to criticise her sister for not being busy. Being busy is the mantra of our day. Even the children have taken it up. If you cannot say 'I am too busy' you do not belong.

If you are not too busy then the devil will soon make you busy. He will find you a project around the house, a TV show you must watch, a shop you must go to, a club to go to, a game or a party you cannot miss. Anything to stop you sitting at the feet of Jesus to listen to him.

The riches and pleasures of life have choked the spiritual life out of so many in our day. Maybe you are thinking of such a person. They are not in church because they are out working to make more money. They do not trust God to supply their needs. They are not in church because they are out spending the money they made and enjoying life.

Moses was brought up in Pharaoh's palace. He had all the treasures and pleasures the world had to offer. But his mother had taught him well. One day he realised that these things were not enduring. He turned away from the short-lived pleasures of sin. He turned to the Lord. He realised that far greater riches are to be found in Christ than in this world.

Moses looked to heavenly things rather than earthly things, to eternal rewards rather than the brief rewards offered by this world. What rewards are you looking to? Are you looking to the things of this world that are passing away, or to eternal rewards that are found only in Jesus Christ?

Satan tempted Eve with earthly rewards, that fruit that looked good and promised so much. He tempted Jesus with earthly rewards. He will tempt you with earthly rewards. Will you, like millions of others, respond like Eve, or respond like Moses and like Jesus himself? Some seeds grew for a while but were choked out by the deceitful of riches and the pleasures of this world.

2. Good ground

We come to the fourth and final type of ground on which the seed fell, good ground. Seed that fell on this ground *sprang up and yielded a crop/fruit a hundredfold* (8:8). Matthew says *some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty* (Matthew 13:8). Why does Jesus mention these numbers? The commentators I have read pass over this matter, although some indicate the harvest will not be uniform. All the good ground produces a crop but the yield varies.

It is interesting that a head of wheat contains on average thirty grains. If a head can hold only thirty grains how can the plant produce more? It multiplies the number of tillers. It produces another head – sixty – and then another – ninety or a hundred. Amazing! Jesus knew all about the growth of wheat, and every other plant that he created.

Clearly Jesus was thinking about a bountiful harvest with a hundredfold increase. Are we to think of fruit as being one believer proclaiming the gospel such that one hundred others believe? Why not! Jesus said 'go into all the world and make disciples'. Disciples are people!

The good ground represents what sort of heart? It is not a hard heart filled with self and pride. That was the hard soil. It is not a shallow heart which seeks acceptance and popularity. That was the rocky ground. It was not a full heart, a heart so filled with the things of this world that there is no room for Jesus. That was the weedy ground.

The good ground represents those *with a noble/honest and good heart* (8:15). Actually both these words can be translated as 'good'. We speak of someone as having a 'good heart'. We mean they listen and have time for others. They are not full of themselves. 'Noble' is a word we do not hear much these days – why is that! The sense here is of a heart that is listening and is receptive to the word.

The person with a noble and good heart hears the word and holds it fast (8:15). They hear and understand the word (Matthew 13:23). They say ‘this is the most important thing I have ever heard. I know this is the truth. I will cling to it with all my being. I will love the Lord with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind, and all my strength. I will love him all my days’. The word grows deep into their heart and takes control of every aspect of their life.

Jesus spoke of *bearing fruit with patience* or patient endurance (8:15). He told his disciples that he chose them to go and bear fruit, fruit that will remain. What will remain when this world comes to an end? Only redeemed and resurrected human beings will enter the kingdom of God. The things of this world will all pass away.

Some missionaries have done great work in helping people. They have built hospitals and schools and church halls. Later these structures might be named after them. But what fruit will remain. To my family it is a great joy to see a convert from Hinduism going on with the Lord after 25 years. By God’s grace her children are walking with the Lord, and they now have their own children. She continues inviting children to her village home to tell them about Jesus. Is this not the fruit that Jesus looks for?

Other things are included in bearing fruit. Jesus said *he who remains in me and I in him bears much fruit* (John 15:5). That sounds like a commentary on the good soil that we are looking at. The seed, which is the word of God, has grown deeply into the heart to then produce much fruit.

Writing to the Colossians Paul said that the word of the truth of the gospel had come to them and was bringing forth fruit. He prayed that being *filled with knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding* they would walk worthy of the Lord and be fruitful in every good work (Colossians 1:6-10). Being fruitful means to live in the way that is pleasing to the Lord. It means living in the way that brings honour and glory to the Lord.

The believer in Christ is filled with the Holy Spirit. *If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he is not his* (Romans 8:9). Those who have the Holy Spirit belong to Christ. It is through the Holy Spirit that we bring forth fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22). It is when we are walking in the Spirit and displaying these fruits that we will be witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If you are to lead anyone to Christ you must be bearing these fruits of the Spirit. You must be praying for the word of God to touch the heart of those who hear the gospel, praying that their heart will not be hard ground or shallow ground or weedy ground but good ground. You must be praying they will bring forth fruit to the glory of God and Jesus Christ our Lord.

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