

## Parable of the Sower

God wants to speak to you!

Yes, that's right God, the one who created the heavens and the earth, God, the one who is in charge of everything, God the most important person in this or any other world wants to speak to you!

So what does he want to say to me then? Well, one of the things that he wants to tell you is how much he loves you. He wants you to know how important you are to him and how much he values you.

The next thing he wants you to know is that he longs to spend time with you. He wants you to pray to him, to spend time reading or listening to his word the Bible and finding out all about his plans for your life. Not only that but God longs to break down the barriers of his sin that we have built up in a pointless attempt to keep him out of our lives.

So how do we respond then to this God who longs to talk to us and get to know us? Well, according to this parable people can respond in at least 4 different ways and I want us to look at those four ways of responding to God this morning. While we are thinking about them ask yourself this, "Which one of these ways of responding to God best describes me?"

The first way of responding to God is represented by the path. The path is ground that has become so hard that the seed doesn't have the first chance whatsoever of getting a chance to grow. Are you a path person? Do you just let God's word bounce off you?

You get different types of path people. Some path people can be openly hostile to God's word. They make it clear to anyone who tries to tell them about Jesus and his love for them. I'm sure you will know people like that. They simply refuse to listen. Speak to the hand because the face isn't listening. Maybe you are that type of path person, but then again, unless someone has pushed you into it then you are fairly unlikely to be in the walls of a church.

Another type of path person though is harder to spot. They are the people who are good at pretending to listen. Are you this type of path person? You can sit through all manner of sermons and practical demonstrations of God's love for you but none of it sinks in. Be very careful if you are this type of path person because you might be quietly kidding yourself that you don't need God when in reality we all need God in our lives.

So if you are a path person face up to it! Admit that you really do need God in your life and allow his word to sink in through that hard shell that you have built up around your life and around your heart!

The next type of person spoken about in the parable is a shallow person. Now that doesn't mean someone who is shallow because they have got no personality or no morals but what it means is someone who is shallow in their faith. This is someone who accepts God's message to them and they accept it well at first. It sounds great to them. God loves me, God wants to be part of my life, Great, Super, Smashing, Brilliant!

All that's OK as long as life is easy, here among Christians they can sing all of the right songs and say and do all of the right things but when you take them out of the nice safe environment of the church and into their school or their workplace then things become very different. The last thing in the world they would want to do is stand up and be counted as a Christian.

Faith that is only faith within these four walls is shallow faith that will burn up and turn out to be nothing. Of course faith matters in here as much as does out there but it does matter out there, in school or at home or at work. When opposition comes what happens to your faith? Do you shrivel up in the glare of people's disapproval or do you stick to your faith relying on God saying, "Look Lord, you got me into this mess, I'm your person now, only you can help me out of this with my faith intact."

It can be very, very hard to stand up for your faith in a place where people ridicule you or make fun of your faith. I use to work in a company where the chief designer discovered quite early on that I was a Christian and throughout the time that I worked there he would constantly ridicule me for my faith. It was very hard not to swear at him or tell him in no uncertain terms what I thought of his constant bullying and I would love to say that before I left that company he came to know the Lord through my witness and faithfulness but he was still as rude as ever even on the day that I was made redundant.

It can be hard to be a Christian when people around you do not share your faith or even pick on you for what you believe. It can be hard but it is not impossible. It is at those times when we are at our most weak that God helps us the most. Being a Christian is not something that we do on our own or in our own strength. It is at those times when we are most weak that God helps us the most.

That is a very important thing to remember, just as you were singing earlier on, “My God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there’s nothing he cannot do!” He can help you get through rough times and hard times when people pick on you or make your life hard for what you believe. There is nothing that he cannot do. So don’t be a shallow person. Let God’s word sink deep into your life, so deep that no one and nobody pluck it back out.

So we have looked at path people, we have looked at shallow people and we are now going to look at the third type of person and they are weedy people. Now I don’t mean weedy people like the man off the Mr. Muscle advert with a physique like me. When this parable talks about weedy people it means someone who has listened to God’s word and started to put it into practice but then they let all the distractions of this life build up around them and choke their faith.

What kind of things act as distractions? Well, think of the sorts of things that you have in your own life that take up all of your time, the likes of computer games, daydreaming, mindlessly watching TV or surfing on the Internet or spending time worrying about tomorrow or fretting about the past. Now some of those things like watching TV or playing computer games can be good in small measures but when they waste our time away then they are like weeds that choke the life out of us.

Some people become weedy people because they are so taken up with wanting things. They want this and they want that. They want more money or they want power or friends and in the end these *things* become more important to them than God. The things, rather than being something good for them end up becoming weeds that choke the life out the weedy people.

Jesus warned his listeners about this kind of thing in another parable when he told them, “So don’t worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘what shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ... But seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. When God’s word comes to live in our hearts it has to have first priority over everything. Not because God is greedy or selfish for our time and energy but because he knows what is best for us.

What is best for us is to put God first and when God is the first and most important thing in our lives then we can do all of those other things like making money or playing games or making friends as long as we know that in the end God is more important than any of these things and we should never allow them to become so big that they block out our view of God or get in the way of him feeding us with his word.

Now so far there hasn’t been much that is good to say about the different types of people, we have had path people who refuse to listen to God’s word and we have had shallow people who let God’s word sink in a little bit but give up if it causes them any trouble or hardship and we have also had weedy people who again let God’s word into their lives a little bit but then they allow all sorts of things get in the road of God and choke his word.

The final group of people we want to look at this morning are fruitful people. These are people who let God's word fully into their lives and allow it to do its work; changing them into the kind of people God wants them to be. You see God's word doesn't just come into our lives and then we know a wee bit more about God and that's OK. God's word comes in to change us. It comes in to our hearts with the sole aim of making us more like Jesus.

I said at the beginning of this sermon that God loves you and cares for you, as well as that he wants to make *you* more loving and caring too. In other words he wants to make you more like Jesus. Jesus loved us so much that he died for us, he gave up his life so that we might be able to have our sins taken away and no longer be God's enemies.

Jesus rose again from the dead and he now wants to live in our hearts through God's word, he wants to live with us, changing us into the kind of people God wants us to be. God's word might start off as a tiny seed in our hearts but, if we let it, it soon grows out to change us as its roots take hold upon our lives. Then pretty soon, just like in a plant, there is nowhere else for it to grow but outwards and it starts to affect other people through us. God longs to bless you and through you to bless other people. This is one of the things that this parable means when it talks about bearing fruit.

There are times in all of our lives when we can be like any of those four types of people. Sometimes, like Path People, we refuse to hear God's word. Sometimes, like Shallow People, we can give up when our faith causes us trouble or hardship and sometimes like weedy people we allow all sorts of things get in the road of God and choke his word but let us pray that we will be fruitful people who let God's word deep into our lives to change us and make us more like Jesus.