



How Will You Understand?

Finding Jesus: Gospels





How Will You Understand?

Matthew 13:3-23

Mark 4:3-20

Luke 8:4-15

Parables of Jesus

This lesson is easy to illustrate. You can go outside and visually show the different types of ground where the seed would have fallen.

Jesus taught many parables. Ask if they know what a parable is.

A parable is a simple story, used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson.

Jesus begins his story talking about someone who is sowing seed. This is different than someone digging up the dirt and placing the seed in the ground. This is an illustration of someone scattering seed; walking along, tossing it out by the handfuls.

When the sower, or farmer, sowed, some of the seeds fell on the side of the road. Then the birds came and ate them, or devoured them, meaning they ate them all up and did not leave any.

Discuss: The man was probably walking through the field, and some of it spilled over into the well-traveled roadway. What kind of soil would it be on the side of the road? This dirt would be very hard; it would be packed down from people and animals walking on it. Luke says that the seed was trampled on. If something is walked on, and trampled on, would it seem what people were walking on had any value? Would you pay attention to what you're walking on? No. You would be walking along, probably not even looking down, and not even thinking about what you are walking on because it seems so insignificant and worthless.

Notice that what is being trampled on as completely useless by the feet of people and animals is something that the birds see as life sustaining. To the birds it is of primary importance; this is their daily food. What people are completely disregarding, the birds are swooping down to consume, as this is their meal of the day. To the bird, it is a life source.

Some of the seed fell on stony ground. This would be dirt with a lot of rocks on the surface and just underneath the surface. The seed on this soil grew up quickly. But, the soil was not very deep, so it withered away and became scorched when the sun came up because it did not have any roots.

Some of the seed fell on ground with thorns. It almost looks like the thorns were in the soil, but they weren't growing yet. Maybe you couldn't even tell they were there. But the thorns grew up with the seed, and as they grew together, the good seed was choked and did not yield any fruit. It may have grown for a while, but it did not produce any fruit.

The other seed fell on good ground. It grew and increased, and yielded fruit. Some a hundred times, some sixty times, and some thirty times as much as was planted.

Then Jesus said, "Who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus is not talking about the ears on your head. He is talking about your heart, your spiritual hearing. If you have a good heart, you can listen and understand what this means. (1 Corinthians 2:10-14)

After the disciples were alone with Jesus, they asked him why he spoke to the people in parables, and what this parable meant.





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Jesus told them it was given to the disciples to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but they are not for everyone. The truths of the kingdom are hidden for those who put their faith in Jesus.

In Jesus is where all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. But those who rejected Jesus can not understand these hidden truths and mysteries and do not have "ears to hear." 1 Corinthians 2:7; Colossians 2:2-3; 1 Peter 3:4; Isaiah 45:3

Jesus then told the disciples that whoever has (understanding) more shall be given, and it will be given in abundance. Whoever does not have, it will be taken away even what he has. If we do not use what we are given, then it will be taken away.

Jesus said he spoke to the people in parables because they would look, but not really see. They would hear, but not really listen.

Jesus was fulfilling a prophecy in Isaiah 6:9-10 and Isaiah 44:18 where it speaks of the people saying they will hear, but not understand; they will see but not really perceive. Their heart is hardened, their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes so that they cannot see with their eyes or hear with their ears; because if they did, they would understand with their heart, be converted, and Jesus would heal them.

The disciples believe; they place value on Jesus. He tells them that blessed are their eyes, for they see; and their ears, for they hear. There have been many prophets and righteous men who have wanted to see the things the disciples see and have not seen them, and wanted to hear the things that the disciples hear and did not hear them. The disciples were blessed to be living in that time, and we are blessed to be living in this time where we that believe are able to see and understand the teachings of Jesus.

Then, in Mark 4:13, Jesus says something very interesting. He says,

"Do you not understand this parable? How can you understand any parable?" This parable of the sower is foundational. Understanding this parable is the key to understanding all of the parables and the meanings of the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus begins his explanation:

The sower sows the word. The seed IS the word of God. The seed is NOT the problem. The ground represents the hearts of the people; the word is sown, or planted in their hearts. Every person falls into one of these types of ground.

The seed that is sown on the side of the road are those who hear the word of the kingdom, and do not understand it. These people did not value the word of God. The birds represent Satan, who comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts, otherwise they could have believed and been saved. Notice it says that the birds *devoured* it. What does this mean? It means they quickly ate it all up. This means that Satan doesn't leave any part of the word behind. If he did, perhaps it could settle in a crack in this hard soil and produce at a later time, but there is none left. This ground, or heart, is so hard that the seed just sits on the surface, and Satan comes and takes it ALL away.

The second type of ground is the stony ground. These people hear the word, and receive it with joy. They are excited, at first. Satan could not steal the word from them because they received it. But Satan can bring temptation, or affliction (pressure), and persecution and drive them to offense. These people have no roots, because their soil is shallow, not deep. This is the seed that grew, but it was scorched because it had no roots or water.





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These people had no roots, and they lacked moisture. When the sun came up, the heat, the pressure, the persecution, it scorched the plant. The plant is not getting water, and it doesn't have any root, so when the heat came, it withered away. Talk about withered: this means it shrinks and dries up. What do dried up plants look like? They're shriveled and brittle; they break easily.

We need the word of God to be our source; seeds cannot grow without water. Shallow people look to other people to "water" them. They look to people to encourage them and give them the affirmation and love they should be receiving from the Lord. They have no roots, so all the moisture comes from the surface seeking constant compliments and affirmations from others. When this doesn't happen, or runs out, they dry up because of the "heat" from persecution, troubles, or temptations because they do not have a deep well to draw from; they have the wrong source. The prophet Jeremiah said that if we put our trust in man, we will be cursed. The person who puts his trust in man is like a shrub in the desert where no one lives. Seeking affirmation from people rather than the Lord is putting trust in man.

But blessed is the person who trusts in the Lord. That person is like a tree planted by the water, and spreads out roots by the river and is not affected when heat and drought comes. This tree is in the same environment; it is experiencing the same heat and pressure that the shrub is; but the tree has roots and is getting moisture somewhere else. (Jeremiah 17:5-8; Psalm 1:1-3)

What are the roots? We are to be rooted and grounded in God's love. We are not rooted in our love for others, that would be the fruit that we bear from being rooted in His love for us. When we know and understand how much he loves us, we can be filled with the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:17-19; Ephesians 2:4)

These people got offended. The Greek word used here for offended in Mark 4 is "skandalizō". It means to cause a person to distrust someone they should trust and obey; to see in another something to disapprove of that hinders them from acknowledging authority. Offense is dangerous; it works directly against the Lord. Offense against the word takes the word of God out of a position of authority in your life. (Psalm 119:165)

The third type of ground is the soil with thorns. These people heard the word, and it grew. They received the word, they were rooted and they did not get offended. But, anxiety and care of things in the world (the actual Greek word here means 'distraction'), the deceitfulness of riches, and lusts of other things entered in, choked the word, and made it unfruitful.

The word got in, but other things got in too. We have to guard our hearts. These other things entered in from a lack of understanding God's love. These people did not *know* that he is our source of provision and protection. These people had some roots, but they were not grounded, meaning they had not established a firm foundation. Luke says this seed did not bring any fruit to perfection. The seed may have begun to produce fruit, but these other things choked out the word of God, and the fruit did not mature. (Ephesians 3:17-19)

Discuss: Does unripe fruit taste good? What happens to fruit to make it die before it becomes mature?

The last type of ground is good ground. These are people who hear the word, and understand it. They have an honest and good heart, they hear the word, receive it, and keep it. Then they bring forth fruit. Some thirty times, some sixty times, and some one hundred times as much as was planted.



Jesus in the Story



Most people are like the seed on the roadside.

A smaller group is those that fell on stony ground.

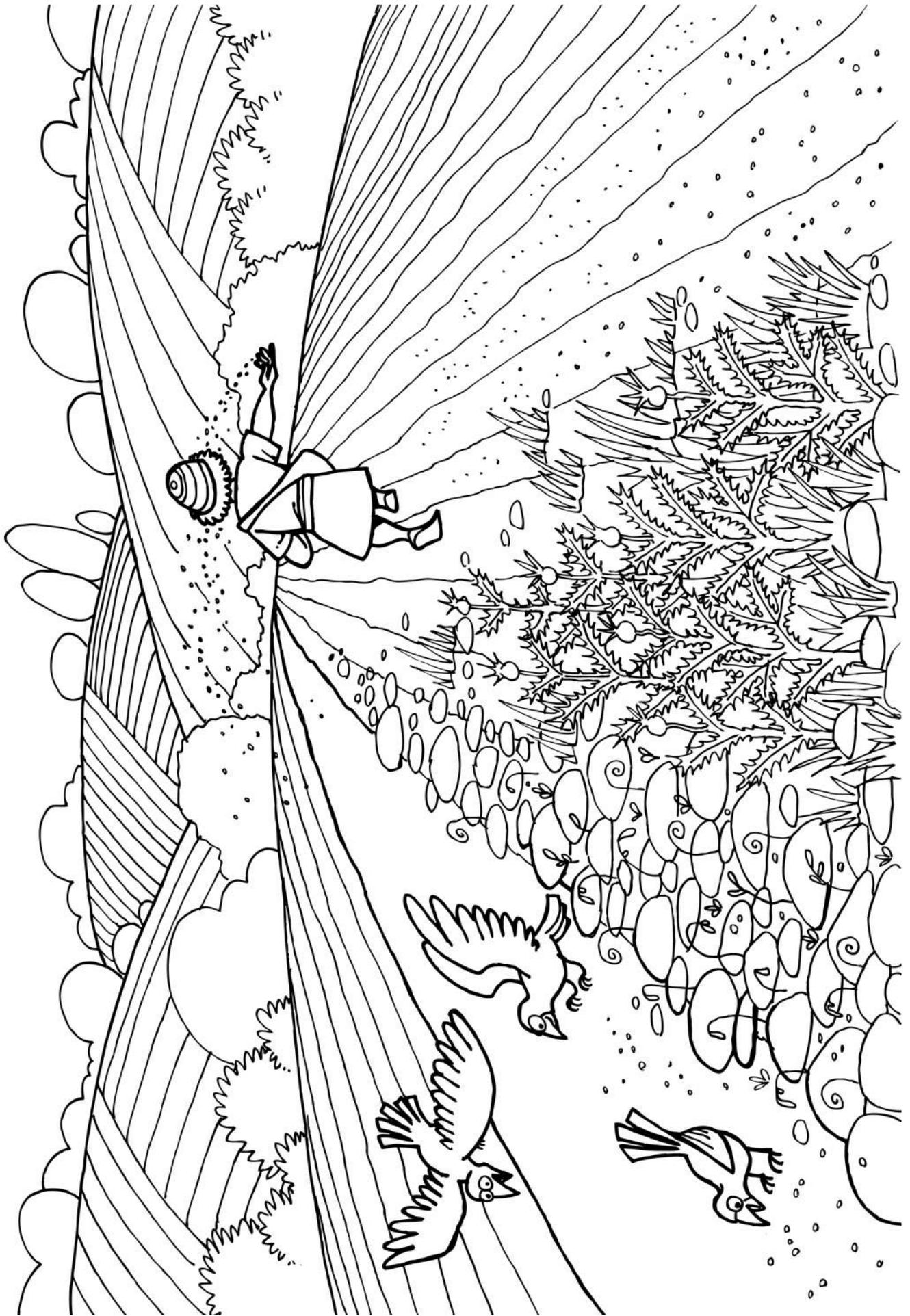
An even smaller group is those whose seed grew up with thorns.

The smallest group are those who bear fruit.

Jesus IS the Word of God. Our hearts are the ground, or the soil. When God created the world, he made the animals from the ground; he made every tree from the ground; he made man out of the ground. When a seed is planted, it pulls what is needed from the ground to grow a plant. Everything needed for that plant is in the soil; the seed determines what type of plant will grow.

In the same way, our hearts are the ground for the seed of the word of God. If we harden our heart so that we do not understand, if we do not have depth, or let the things of the world into our heart, the seed will not produce fruit in our lives. But if we value God's word, have good ground for it to grow, and do not get distracted or offended, we can take the seed of God's word and speak it, believe it, and expect to see it, KNOWING that God's word will always produce fruit. (John 1:1; Genesis 2:9, 19; Isaiah 55:11)





Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

21. Zacchaeus

1. If you seek the Lord your God, will you find him? (Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 29:13)
2. You will find him if you do what?
3. You will find him when you do what?
4. What does Psalm 105:3 say about the hearts of those who seek the Lord?

Jeremiah 29:13

And you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.

22. Forgiven Much

Read John 12:1-11

1. Why did the Jews come to this dinner?
2. What did Judas want to do with the perfume? Why?
3. Why did Jesus say the woman was doing this?
4. What did the priests want to do to Lazarus?
5. Why were they upset with Lazarus?

Luke 7:47

Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.

23. More Than the Others

1. Who was putting money in the treasury, or offering that day?
2. What did the rich people do?
3. How much did this lady put in the offering?
4. Jesus said the other people gave out of what?
5. Why was what she gave more valuable?

Luke 16:15

...You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

24. How Will You Understand?

1. What happened to the seed that fell on the side of the road?
2. What happened to the seed that fell on the rocks?
3. What happened to the seed that fell on thorns?
4. What did Jesus say the birds were like?

Isaiah 55:11

So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

