

The Sower, the Seed, and the Fruit

by P. Schubert

The sermon emphasizes the importance of responding to the word of God and bearing fruit in our lives, which is a sign of life and a result of responding to the seed.

Scripture: Psalm 110:3, Malachi 3:16, Matthew 13:18, 1 Corinthians 15:10, Ephesians 1:4, 1 Timothy 4:10, 2 Timothy 4:7, 1 Peter 4:12, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Gods Word", "Spiritual Fruitfulness"

Description

P. Schubert preaches on the parable of the sower from Matthew 13:18-23, emphasizing the importance of understanding and valuing the word of God to bear fruit. The sower represents God spreading His word abundantly, but the response of the hearers determines the outcome. Those who receive the word with understanding and allow it to take root in good soil bear much fruit, while those hindered by worldly cares, persecution, or hardness of heart fail to produce fruit. The sermon highlights the need for willingness to listen, understand, and apply God's word, striving for a fruitful life that glorifies Him.

Transcript

Matthew 13:18-23.

I have these thoughts before me and they support what we had in the reading. The Lord speaks in parables in this chapter. There are seven parables which He presents to the disciples. He had spoken to a great crowd earlier, but for this teaching he had the disciples in mind. Having come out of the house, He sits down by the sea and speaks to them things which reveal their inner condition.

The sower went out - the word is so richly sown by Him! Like in the olden days, the sower carries a bag full of seeds and with each step he spreads them out, continuously, everywhere. At this moment he is not worried as to what is behind him; he will care for that later. After a time, he will survey the field to see the results of his sowing. The sowing by itself is a perfect matter. All of the seeds which are spread so richly over the field are alike - they are the same. They have their origin in the ear of corn; they shall again yield ears of corn, a process of wonderful divine workmanship. It's a secret - this tiny seed produces a hundredfold!

There would be no life possible on this earth without this divine provision coming into being in this living way. By what would men live, had not these wonderful things (which God had created) been offered to man in this way? It says that He "is preserver of all men, specially of those that believe", 1 Timothy 4:10.

The Lord now begins to show the spiritual side of this. In the first instance, the word of the kingdom comes and he listens, but he doesn't understand - he has no interest. If somebody just ignores it and has not even thought about or prayed about it - just doesn't understand it, it is like someone without hearing. Therefore, the Lord came to heal the deaf. He healed the deaf one, who could then speak properly, whereas he could not before. By hearing, that which is heard will enter the heart, be valued, then come out into expression. That is the divine way. But here is a serious matter: somebody hears and just does not understand. We often find this with souls. They are right away unapproachable about that which has just been spoken to them about God. This hardness of heart is terrible and the results are disastrous.

Alas, how Satan watches all that's going on around us and what's put in our way. Do we accept it rightly or do we reject it? That is the point. If we reject it, then Satan has an advantage. This man gives entrance to the devil by his expressed ignorance. Why don't things change in him? Because he still has his will. We read that the Bereans were willing to listen to the word and to read it and to understand it. This is the process, the willingness of heart, as it says, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power", Psalm 110:3. We all need this. Willingness is the first point which makes the things of God available to us. This is connected with our will, which has to be negated. My own will is always wrong. It is the thing that I have to watch out for the most. And it is what defiles us. We have to let in what is of God. And that is His word - it is a living power, like a seed which lies for a while in the soil and develops with the help of rain and sunshine. Then suddenly comes the green fruit, the good fruit, which then turns into the ear of corn. But this process is described in a sobering lesson: "The wicked one comes and catches away what was sown in his heart: this is he that is sown by the wayside".

"But he that is sown on the rocky places - this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, but has no root in himself, but is for a time only; and when tribulation or persecution happens on account of the word, he is immediately offended". That is the second matter that has to be noticed. With what attitude do I receive the word? Does it go together with the affection of the heart, because we know from Whom the word is coming, and for what reason it is coming to me? It then may bring a certain joy with it, but as we see this also can not bear any fruit, because it is sown on the rocky places. The rocky places don't provide conditions for the seed to grow. It happens that hearts are hard like stone and don't let it become fruitful. Something had taken place, because the tests came - tribulation for the sake of the word, and "he is immediately offended". The valuation of that which God shows to us can cause certain reactions in us which will be proved in the coming tests, that will come with the acceptance of the word. Those tests are just. Peter speaks of the "fire of persecution" (1 Peter 4:12), which brings out the gold. We must not view them as obstacles; they are for our salvation - to make clear to us the true character of this world. Where the acceptance is missing we find the reaction of resistance and we have to oppose this. The Lord speaks of one who is offended. He must have been thinking of a more comfortable path, but this is not the following of the Lord. The blessings and joys are an inward matter. From the outside come tests and persecution, which still occur today in this world, in a terrible way in other countries. We can be thankful that things have become easier for us in the latter days, that we can be in more normal conditions with one another and can go with the Lord in our path of faith. But the rejection, in this world, of what is of God is still there and is felt. "He is immediately offended".

Being offended is, in a way, a certain disappointment. He had expected something else. What do we expect? Let us look on the Lord. What did He have here? What was His path? What is His service? What is here for us? It can not be otherwise. The mind in this world can never be anything but against us. So we do not expect anything else than what is shown to us. As the Lord said: "If they have persecuted me, they

will also persecute you", John 15:20. Having had the same lot as the Lord, many have laid down their lives, their existence, but they remained faithful to Him and so they came into blessing.

Now we have the thorns, which everybody experiences daily, and which want to hinder the growth. "The anxious care of this life, and the deceit of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful". The word was there. The seed sprouted. But then growth should be noticed, but there is something that can choke it. How often we are so occupied with the cares of life, that no word finds room in us anymore! Where do we have to bring our cares? The worries remain. We can't flee from them, even if we are His own. But they are a matter which we can cast on Him. Peter says that we have to cast our cares upon Him, because He cares about us. (1 Peter 5:7). Do we want to hinder Him from caring for us? Can we change anything by our worrying? Not one iota! This is a further hindrance to bearing fruit.

Ah, we are still here. Why does the Lord leave us here? He desires still more fruit. By this everyone is appealed to, as we read in Galatians: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self control", Galatians 6:22-23. It is a nine-fold fruit. The fruit is a sign of life. The seed is everywhere the same and the different effects depend on us. We have to respond to it. Keep in view the value of the seed which has come to us by the word of God and the resulting fruit. This is an essential matter which we can experience in our life.

Then we have a good ending. The Lord says, "But he that is sown upon the good ground - this is he who hears and understands the word, who bears fruit also". One produces a hundredfold. We heard a while ago about these seven brothers with Paul and Luke in Acts 20:4. They were good fruits. Like a bouquet of nice flowers someone puts on the table, each blossom has a different color, another beauty - they are the joy of their beholders. So, with one the fruit is a hundredfold. That is a great result. Paul could say at the end of his life: "I have kept the faith. Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, . . . but not only to me, but also to all who love his appearing", 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

He has a hope laid up. With him there was great fruit to be seen. He said, "but I have labored more abundantly than they all, but not I, but the grace of God which was with me", 1 Corinthians 15:10. But we find the results in the Scripture, which have come by his service and which come out still today. For that which he had sown is of eternal value. Think of his prayers in the letter to the Ephesians - they are still effective today. Do we read them in meekness? Do we apply them? The fruit then is not far. Also the Lord's prayer in John 17, how it is still effective! and He continues in it still. So let us not put up any hindrance in the way of these divine workings. There is great hope in relation to what can be brought out, that which can never end. We put so much effort into that which passes by overnight. And when the Lord comes, all will be over.

So let us bear fruit that remains. We have it described here. It is not all the same. That's how it will be. But may we at least strive for the lowest level, that is, thirty fold. Fruit is a sign of life. Each one should be an expression of it. Thus how precious it is when we are together, when this fruit of the Spirit finds expression. Like here in holy bonds and in affections for one another, encouraging one another, also teaching, admonishing and correcting - we also need that. This will be there with those who bear fruit. That fruit should increase. That is how God considers it.

We mentioned Malachi 3:16, "and a book of remembrance was written before him" for those few "that feared Jehovah" and "spoke often one to another". It refers to those who were united in the Lord's things in a very difficult time. So it is necessary today to lend your ear fully to the word, show full appreciation and

total obedience. May we in these last days consider these vital matters, walking with one another in this way. If there are only two or three, if we find those who heartily desire to be in a definite way something for God, not for men nor the world nor for one another, but to be something for Him. This unites us - the desire to make room for the precious provisions of His word. All through the day it is spread all over the earth. We can pray for this - that God may be glorified and get what is justly due Him. He soon will add the last saved soul through the proclamation of the glad tidings.

You children have a great privilege, growing up in a sphere of blessing, where eternal things are made known to you already now. Yes, young ones can already enter into it and receive blessing that remains for ever. May the Lord grant it.

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