

# Study Notes - the Parable of the Sower

by Walter Beuttler

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*Walter Beuttler's sermon explores the Parable of the Sower, emphasizing the importance of heart condition in receiving God's Word and bearing fruit.*

**Scripture:** Luke 8:5

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Heart Condition"

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## Description

Walter Beuttler delves into the parable of the sower, emphasizing the importance of the condition of the heart in receiving and retaining the truth of God's Word. He explores the different types of soil representing various responses to the Gospel message, from curiosity and hardness of heart to distractions and worldly concerns. Beuttler highlights the need for a receptive and fertile heart that values, understands, and holds fast to the Word, ultimately bearing fruit with patience and endurance. Through this parable, he reveals the profound impact of spiritual understanding, humility, and commitment in cultivating a heart that produces lasting spiritual growth.

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## Transcript

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. Of what was Jesus conscious as the great multitudes gathered to hear Him, Mat. 13:1-17?
  - (1) That their seeming enthusiasm was more curiosity than receptiveness for the truth
  - (2) That there existed a diversity of reasons why much of what He had to say would be lost to them
2. The prepositions used in Mat. 13:4-8 supply the key to the diversity of the hearers. Note them:
  - (1) Some fell "by" the wayside
  - (2) Some fell "upon" stony places
  - (3) Some fell "among" thorns
  - (4) Some fell "into" good ground
3. What did Jesus mean in Mat. 13:12?

(1) That if the hearer is to benefit from the word, he must possess a condition of heart suitable for the reception of the truth which will then multiply

(2) If the hearer does not possess such a condition of heart, the truth he hears and "thinketh he hath," Lu. 8:18, margin) will be lost to him

4. What distinction does Jesus make in Mat. 13:13-16? A distinction between those who do not respond to the truth and those who do

5. Why were some unresponsive to the truth?

(1) Because of a lack of spiritual understanding, Mat. 13:13;

2 Cor. 3:14; John 8:43, 47; 1 Cor. 2:12-14 (Moffat, Aramaic, see note 1 and 2) ; Rom. 12:2

(2) Because of a "hardened" (Aramaic) heart, Mat. 13:15; Mk. 6:52, 8:17-21; 2 Cor. 3:14-16

(3) Because of a pre-disposition against the truth, Mat. 13:15; Mk. 7:9; Mat. 23:37

(4) Because they hear with "annoyance," Mat. 13:15 ("unwillingly," margin), (New World Translation)

6. What does Mat. 13:11 show? That truth is deliberately withheld from those who do not want the truth, Mat. 11:25-26

7. Of what does Jesus speak in Mat. 13:16-17? Of the privilege of learning the hitherto secret methods of God's working by His Word which were only now being revealed

8. Make a comparison with the Moffat and Aramaic translations:

(1) Note 1, 1 Cor. 2:13-14 (Moffat) (13) And this is what we discuss, using language taught by no human wisdom but by the Spirit. We interpret what is spiritual in spiritual language. (14) The unspiritual man rejects these truths of the Spirit of God; to him they are 'sheer folly,' he cannot understand them. And the reason is that they must be read with the spiritual eye.

(2) Note 2, 1 Cor. 2:13 (Aramaic) But the things which we discuss are not dependent on the knowledge of words and man's wisdom, but by the teaching of the Spirit; thus explaining spiritual things to the spiritually minded.

## B. THE WAYSIDE

1. Read the accounts of the seed sown "by the wayside," Mat. 13:4,19; Mk. 4:4, 15; Lu. 8:5, 12

2. Note the condition of the wayside

(1) The soil has been trodden down

(2) "It was trampled down," Lu. 8:5 (NWT)

(3) The heart became a "footpath" (Verkuyl)

(4) The soil has a hard surface

(5) The soil is now more useful for traffic than for crops

3. Note how this condition affects the seed

(1) The seed falls only upon the surface

(2) "It is trodden under foot," Lu. 8:5 (R.V.)

(3) "He understandeth it not," Mat. 13:19

(4) He "does not grasp it," Mat. 13:19 (Knox)

(5) He "does not get the sense of it," Mat. 13:19 (NWT)

(6) The fowls of the air came and devoured it up, Mk. 4:4

(7) "The birds pecked it up" Lu. 8:5 (Wey.)

4. Point out Satan's activity in the hearing of the truth:

(1) He is alert - "Satan cometh," Mk. 4:15

(2) He is prompt - "No sooner have they heard than Satan comes," Mk. 4:15 (Knox)

(3) He is active - Satan "catcheth away that which was sown," Mat. 13:19

(4) He is purposeful - "Lest they should believe and be saved," Lu. 8:12

(5) His purposes are evil - "then cometh the wicked one," Mat. 13:19

5. Note God's process in the conditioning of the soil of the heart:

(1) The ground must be broken up, Hos. 10:12

(2) God uses the plow of suffering, Psa. 129:1-3

(3) God plows in hope, 1 Cor. 9:10

(4) God uses discretion, Isa. 28:24-29, (R.V., see note 3 and 4)

a. He plows only to the extent necessary to accomplish His purpose, v. 24 (R.V.)

b. Therefore He does not plow and harrow forever, v. 24 (R.V.)

c. The time of plowing will be followed by a time of sowing, v. 25 (R.V.)

d. God is methodical in His procedure and purpose, v. 25 (R.V.)

e. God does not use any harsher means than necessary, vs. 26-27 (R.V.)

f. In the process God does not crush the grain, v. 28 R.V., margin, Note 4)

g. God's method is of "effectual working," v. 29 (R.V., margin)

(5) God makes a protective enclosure, Isa. 5:5; S. S. 4:12; John 15:25; Lu. 6:22; John 6:60-66; 16:32

#### 6. Make a comparison with the Revised Version

(1) Note 3, Isa. 28:24-29:

(24) Doth he that ploweth to sow plow continually? Does he continually open and harrow his ground? (25) When he hath leveled the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and put in the wheat in rows, and the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in the border thereof? (26) For his God

doth instruct him aright, and doth teach him. (27) For the fitches are not threshed with a sharp threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. (28) Bread grain is ground; for he will not be always threshing it: and though the wheel of his cart and his horses scatter it, he doth not grind it. (29) This also cometh forth from Jehovah of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom

(2) Note 4, Isa. 28:28, margin:

Is bread grain crushed ? Nay, he will not ever be threshing it; and driving his cart wheels and his horses over it; he doth not crush it.

#### 7. Make a comparison with the Hebrew version of:

(1) Isa. 28:24 - Is the plowman never done with plowing to to sow, with the opening and harrowing his ground ?

(2) Isa. 28:28 - And though the roller of his wagon and its sharp edges move noisily, he doth not crush it.

#### C. THE STONY PLACE

1. Read the accounts of the seed sown "upon stony places," Mat. 13:5-6, 20-21; Mk. 4:5-6, 16-17; Lu. 8:6, 13

2. Note the condition of the stony places

(1) "Some fell upon a rock," Lu. 8:6

(2) "Some fell on stony ground," Mk. 4:5

(3) "Where it had not much earth," Mk. 4:5

(4) "Where it found but little earth," Mk. 4:5 (Wey.)

(5) "It had no depth of soil," Mk. 4:5 (Verkuyl)

3. Note how this condition affects the seed:

(1) "They immediately receive it with gladness," Mk. 4:16

(2) "They accept it with enthusiasm," Mk. 4:16 (Moffat)

- (3) "They had not sunk deep into the ground," Mat. 13:5 (Knox)
- (4) "It does not take root," Lu. 8:13 (Muhlheimer)
- (5) "Because it had no root, it withered away," Mk. 4:6
- (6) "After sprouting it dried up," Lu. 8:6 (NWT)
- (7) "It lacked moisture," Lu. 8:6
- (8) "They dried up because they lacked nourishment," Lu. 8:6 (Muhlheimer)
- (9) "For a while believe," Lu. 8:13
- (10) "They do not last," Mk. 4:17 (Moffat)
- (11) "When the sun was up, they were scorched," Mat. 13:6
- (12) "In time of temptation fall away," Lu. 8:13
- (13) "Immediately they are offended," Mk. 4:17
- (14) "Endure for a time," Mk. 4:17
- (15) "But are only temporary," Mk. 4:17 (Worrell)
- (16) "Not root in himself," Mat. 13:21
- (17) "When persecution comes because of the message, they give it up at once," Mk. 4:17 (Goodspeed)
- (18) "His faith is shaken," Mat. 13:21 (Knox)
- (19) "They are stumbled," Mk. 4:17 (Knox)
- (20) "In the time of trial draw back," Lu. 8:13 (Goodspeed)
- (21) "In season of testing fall away," Lu. 8:13 (NWT)

4. What factors contribute to the hardening of the heart in the light of:

- (1) Deut. 15:7-10 - Making excuses
- (2) Heb. 3:7-12 - Unbelief
- (3) Zech. 7:8-12 - Disobedience
- (4) 2 Chron. 36:13 - Refusal to yield
- (5) Heb. 3:13 - Deception of sin
- (6) Dan. 5:20 - Pride, or self-deification
- (7) Acts 19:8-9 - Resistance to the truth

(8) Mk. 3:1-6 - Hatred

(9) Mk. 8:16-17 - Rationalization

5. What do we learn about the stony heart from:

(1) Ezek. 36:26-27 - God is able to change a hardened heart

(2) Zech. 12:10 - He does it by His Spirit

(3) Zech. 12:10 - He does it by a revelation of the meaning of the cross

6. How does God feel toward those with a contrite heart?

(1) 1 Pet. 3:4 - God values it

(2) Psa. 34:18 - God is near to save them

(3) Psa. 51:17 - God accepts their worship

(4) Isa. 66:2 - God looks to them

(5) Isa. 57:15 - God dwells with them

#### D. THE THORNY GROUND

1. Read the accounts of the seed sown "among thorns," Mat. 13:7, 22; Mk. 4:7, 18-19; Lu. 8:7, 14

2. Note the condition of the thorny ground:

(1) The soil is good, but other seed is there already

(2) He hears the word, Mk. 4:18

(3) The seed takes root and sprouts, Lu. 8:14

(4) "The thorns sprang up with it," Lu. 8:7

(5) Two crops are striving for the mastery

3. Note how this condition affects the seed:

(1) The thorns choke the Word, Mk. 4:19

(2) "They are choked with anxieties," Lu. 8:14 (Worrell)

(3) "The briers grew and smothered them," Mk. 4:7 (Knox)

(4) They "get choked with worries and money," Lu. 8:14 (Moffat)

(5) "The thorns stifled it," Mk. 4:19 (Wey.)

(6) "They choke themselves with worries and riches and worldly covetousness," Mk. 4:19 (Aramaic)

- (7) "Other things creep in and choke the message out," Mk. 4:19 (Goodspeed)
- (8) "And it becometh unfruitful," Mk. 4:19
- (9) "And bring no fruit to perfection," Lu. 8:14
- (10) "So that they never ripen," Lu. 8:14 (Moffat)
- (11) They "never reach maturity," Lu. 8:14 (Knox)

4. To what did Jesus liken these thorns?

- (1) "The deceitfulness of riches," Mk. 4:19
- (2) "The cares ("worries," Aramaic) of this world," Mk. 4:19
- (3) "The anxieties of the age," Mk. 4:19 (Montgomery)
- (4) The "pleasures of life stifle them," Lu. 8:14 (Goodspeed)
- (5) "The lusts (covetousness, Aramaic) of other things entering in," Mk. 4:19
- (6) "The pleasures of this life," Lu. 8:14
- (7) "The deceptive power of wealth," Mk. 4:19 (NWT)
- (8) "Absorption in other attractions," Lu. 8:14 (Wey.)
- (9) "Carried away by anxieties and wealth and pleasures," Lu. 8:14 (NWT)
- (10) "Things make inroads and choke the word," Mk. 4:19 (NWT)

5. How may we remedy:

(1) The cares of this life?

- a. By a re-evaluation of spiritual versus material values, Lu. 12:15
- b. By putting first things first, Mat. 6:33
- c. By casting all our cares upon him, 1 Pet. 5:7
- d. By prayer and thanksgiving, Phil. 4:6-7

(2) The riches of life?

- a. By putting the emphasis upon eternal treasures, Mat. 6:19-21
- b. By having our life mastered solely by God - and not by material things, Mat. 6:22-24
- c. By valuing the blessing of the Lord, Prov. 10:22
- d. By making God our riches, Jer. 9:23-24

(3) The pleasures of life?

- a. By recognizing the emptiness of things apart from God, Jer. 2:13; Ecc. 2:4-11
- b. By recognizing the peril of being "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," 2 Tim. 3:1-4
- c. By recognizing that real pleasure comes from the presence of God, Psa. 16:11
- d. By recognizing that God is the only source of true satisfaction, Psa. 87:7

#### E. THE GOOD GROUND

1. Read the accounts of the seed sown "into good ground," Mat. 13:8, 23; Mk. 4:8, 20; Lu. 8:8, 15

2. Note the condition of the good ground:

- (1) It has none of the faults of the other soils
- (2) It is "good and fertile ground," Lu. 8:8 (Aramaic)
- (3) It is "right soil," Lu. 8:15 (NWT)
- (4) This hearer hears and understands, Mat. 13:23.
- (5) He has an "honest and good heart," Lu. 8:15
- (6) "He receives the word," Mk. 4:20
- (7) "Having heard he keeps it," Lu. 8:15
- (8) They "hear the word and welcome it," Mk. 4:20 (Knox)
- (9) They "hold fast the word," Lu. 8:15 (Moffat)
- (10) These hearers have an "open mind and right spirit," Lu. 8:15 (Aramaic)

3. Show how this hearer is qualified for the reception of truth:

(1) He has a "good heart" because:

- a. He trembles at God's word, Isa. 66:2
- b. He values God's word, Job 23:12
- c. He delights in God's word, Jer. 15:16

(2) He is "honest" in that he does not:

- a. Despise His word, 2 Chron. 36:16
- b. Ignore His word, Ezek. 33:30-33
- c. Rebel against His word, Psa. 107:11

(3) He is "honest" in that:

- a. He is open minded, Acts. 17:11
- b. He is willing to commit himself to the truth, John 7:17, margin
- c. Because he does not cling to his own opinions, Mk. 7:13

(4) He hears the word because:

- a. He wants to hear, Lu. 5:1
- b. He has an "opened" ear, Isa. 50:4-5
- c. He can be taught by God, John 6:45

(5) He understands the truth because:

- a. He has intellectual humility, Mat. 11:25-26
- b. He is teachable, Acts. 8:30-31
- c. He seeks the truth, Prov. 2:1-5

(6) He "keeps it" in that:

- a. He does not let it slip, Heb. 2:1 ("slip away from them," margin)
- b. He does not cast it away, Psa. 50:17
- c. He does not forget it, 1 Cor. 15:1-2

4. Note the effect on the seed of the word deposited in "an honest and good heart:"

(1) They "hear the word and receive it," Mk. 4:20 (Wesley)

(2) They "accept it," Mk. 4:20 (Rotherham)

(3) They "welcome it," Mk. 4:20 (Modern English)

(4) "They take it in," Mk. 4:20 (Moffat)

(5) "Having heard the word, hold it fast," Lu. 8:15 (Worrell)

(6) He brings forth fruit, Lu. 8:15

(7) He brings forth fruit with patience, Lu. 8:15

(8) They "bear fruit steadfastly," Lu. 8:15 (Wesley)

(9) They "retain it and bear fruit with endurance," Lu. 8:15 (NWT)

(10) They "bear fruit with patient endurance," Lu. 8:15 (Modern English)

- (11) "And bring forth fruit with perseverance," Lu. 8:15 (Wesley)
- (12) He brings forth fruit in varying degrees, Mat. 13:23, (depending on the fertility of the soil)
5. Point out essential principles of growth from Mk. 4:26-28
- (1) Fruit bearing involves recognition of the sovereignty of God, v. 26
- (2) The seed must be "cast into," not "by," nor "upon," neither "among," v. 26
- (3) The sower may be at rest without any anxiety, v. 27a
- (4) The sower may freely go about his other business, v. 27b
- (5) The actual process of growth remains a mystery, v. 27c
- (6) An environment congenial to the seed will produce fruit without further effort by the sower, v. 28a
- (7) The fruit matures only by a process of growth involving time, v. 28b
- "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

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