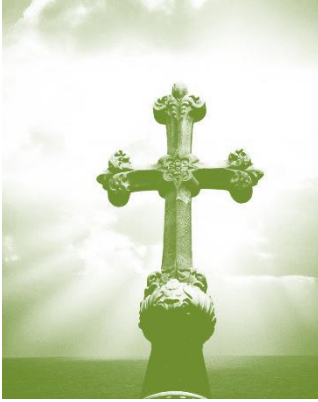


# How Does Your Garden Grow?

## “The Parable of the Sower”



*“Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance.” Matthew 13:12*

The message seemed harsh then and it is still harsh today. But sometimes that is all we understand. There is so much love and comfort available to us. Yet we refuse to listen. God had tried many times to reach the people in their hearts and the prophets and psalmist mention it constantly in the Old Testament, but the people turned their back on the teachings and continued in their own way. The parable is told in three of the Gospels - Luke 8:4-15, Mark 4:3-9 and Matthew 13:3-9.

This story was being told to people who were there. They were the soil. Were they ready to hear what Jesus had to say? Sometimes we are ready to listen and other times we can do it “on our own.” “Rocky places” can refer to us when we have a shut mind and don’t think we need to listen.

“Among thorns” may refer to us when we listen, but soon other things come up and we forget. We are superficial in our hearing; other things creep into our thoughts, and our faith and works are burned up by the more worldly things. We fail to think things through. We lack depth. We’re busy. We don’t have time to pray or study God’s word.

“Good soil” is what we need to be all the time. But we aren’t. When we do listen, we are blessed as the Scripture says “a hundred, sixty or thirty times.” A friend who was down in the dumps one day said another friend had asked him to make a list of all his blessings. The one who was down in the dumps said it wouldn’t take long. Then he started writing and filled the paper on one side and started on the other side when the friend said “I thought you said it wouldn’t take long. You didn’t have many blessings.” He had made his point. Once we start thinking of all the blessings we have they are too numerous to write down. God wants us to hunger for His word. And He will give us strength.

Sometimes we receive the message with great joy and we give real thought to the teachings and seek to do God’s will, but sometimes we allow outside pressures to creep in just as the thorns. Sometimes we don’t even hear and we harden our hearts and so there is no fruit coming from us. At other times we are true disciples. We listen, we yield fruit, and we seek to do the work that is meant for us. Our rewards are great. The

Holy Spirit is with us if we are willing to let it work. God sows the seed; we are the soil. The fruit we produce is the result of how we accept the seed that has been given to us.

Jesus tells them a story. He didn't preach to them with fire and brimstone. He didn't need to. These people understood the soil and seed as we do. The seed is The Message of God. But our response is as varied as the types of soil and the many seeds are too numerous to count just as our blessings are every day. If we accept the seed, we will have a rich harvest.

We all know that the soil needs nutrients. We need nutrients in both physical food and spiritual food. We are fortunate to have both available to us all the time. The reference to plants and trees is often given in the Bible. In the Old Testament, Jeremiah wrote "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit" Jeremiah 17:7-7. The same is referred to in the first Psalm. God provides all the nutrients. How does the plant know what to take from the soil, and we don't know enough to take the nutrients that God gives us so that we can tell others and also receive many blessings?

Prayer: Lord, thank You for Your Word that was given to us with many promises that You will always be with us. Please, open my eyes to Your deeds, and my ears to the sound of Your call, that I may understand Your will for my life and live accordingly. Amen

1. What is our responsibility after we have received the Word of God?
2. How long do we keep reaching out before it is time to quit and move on to something else and enjoy our own ways?
3. It has been said "The evidence of saving faith is a growing spiritual life." How can we do this?
4. How can we see the rewards of telling others about Christ?

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## The Parable of the Sower

*“And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, ‘A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.’ As he said these things, he called out, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’ And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.” Luke 8:4-15 ESV*

