

CHRISTIANS ON CAMPUS

The Parable of the Sower - The Preliminary Work of the King for the Kingdom

Scripture Reading: Matt. 13:3-8, 19-23

Matt. 13:3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went out to sow.

Matt. 13:4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the way, and the birds came and devoured them.

Matt. 13:5 And others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much earth, and immediately they sprang up because they had no depth of earth.

Matt. 13:6 But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered.

Matt. 13:7 And others fell on the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them.

Matt. 13:8 But others fell on the good earth and yielded fruit, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.

Matt. 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand, the evil one comes and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown beside the way.

Matt. 13:20 And the one sown on the rocky places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

Matt. 13:21 Yet he does not have root in himself but lasts only for a time, and when affliction or persecution occurs because of the word, immediately he is stumbled.

Matt. 13:22 And the one sown in the thorns, this is he who hears the word, and the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches utterly choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Matt. 13:23 But the one sown on the good earth, this is he who hears the word and understands, who by all means bears fruit and produces, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.

Today's Reading

Verses 3 and 4 say that a sower went out to sow some seeds. In His preliminary work for the establishment of the kingdom of the heavens, the Lord Jesus came as a sower. Several times the Lord was called a teacher. But here He likens himself not to a teacher, but to a sower. The sower in verse 3 is the Lord Himself (v. 37). Actually, the Lord did not come to teach, but to sow the seed. What is this seed? It is the word of the kingdom with the King in it as life (v. 19). The seed is also the sons, the people, of the kingdom (v. 38). If we check with our experience, we shall realize that the seed sown by the Lord Jesus into our humanity is just Himself as life to make us the seed of the kingdom. Here three things are interrelated: the word of the kingdom, the sons of the kingdom, and Christ Himself as the life within the seed. These three cannot be separated. The word of the kingdom actually is Christ Himself as the word of life. This seed eventually produces the sons of the kingdom,

who are the believers. Therefore, the seed refers to the word of the kingdom, to Christ Himself as life, and to us, the sons of the kingdom. By Christ's being the living word of life sown into our being, we are made the sons of the kingdom.

In this parable we see that Christ establishes the kingdom of the heavens not by fighting or teaching, but by sowing Himself as the seed of life into believing people so that the kingdom of the heavens may grow up. The establishment of the kingdom of the heavens is absolutely a matter of growth in life. To establish the kingdom is to grow the kingdom. The kingdom is not established by outward working, but by inward growing. The church can be produced only by sowing Christ as the seed into humanity. This seed will grow within people and produce the church. The seed of life, Christ Himself in the word, sown into humanity will grow the church. The church is not produced by work; it is altogether produced by the growth in life. Therefore, the kingdom of the heavens is brought into being not by teaching or by working, but by sowing Christ as the living word of life into humanity. This seed will grow, and the life in it will produce the kingdom. The kingdom is absolutely a matter of life which has grown. The source of the kingdom is Christ as the seed of life.

According to this parable and the Lord's own interpretation of it, this seed is sown into our heart (v. 19). When we opened our heart to believe in Him, He came into our spirit. But our spirit is not the soil for growing Christ. The soil is our heart. This parable makes it perfectly clear that our heart is the soil, the earth, the very place where the seed is sown and where it grows.

Verse 4 says, "And as He sowed, some seeds indeed fell beside the way, and the birds came and devoured them." Beside the way is the place close to the way. Because it is hardened by the traffic of the way, it is difficult for the seeds to penetrate it. This kind of wayside signifies the heart that is hardened by the worldly traffic and does not open to understand, to comprehend, the word of the kingdom (v. 19). The birds signify the evil one, Satan, who came and snatched away the word of the kingdom sown in the hardened heart.

If you compare the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens with the parable of the sower, you will see that this parable is based upon the concept of the constitution. The constitution covers the matters of being poor in our spirit and pure in our heart. Those who are the wayside cannot receive the seed because they are neither poor in spirit nor pure in heart. Education, commerce, politics, science, business, and other kinds of worldly traffic go back and forth within their mind, emotion, and will. They are occupied with promotion, position, and ambition. There has been so much traffic in their heart that their heart has been hardened, just like the wayside in the Lord's parable. Although they may hear the gospel of Christ, not a word can penetrate their heart.

5 and 6 say, "And others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much earth, and immediately they sprang up because they did not have depth of earth; but when the sun rose, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they were dried up." The rocky places that do not have much earth signify the heart that is shallow in receiving the word of the kingdom, because deep within are rocks—hidden sins, personal desires, self-seeking, and self-pity—which frustrate the seed

from gaining root in the depth of the heart. The sun with its scorching heat signifies affliction or persecution (v. 21), which dries up the seed that is not rooted. The heat of the sun is for the growth and ripening of the crop once the seed is deeply rooted. But due to the seed's lack of root, the sun's growing and ripening heat becomes a death blow to the seed.

The things signified by the rocks correspond to what is covered by the complemented laws in the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens (5:17-48). The second type of earth corresponds to the temper, lust, self, and flesh—the things hidden in our heart. Perhaps not many among us are part of the wayside, but I am very concerned that a good number may be rocky places. In appearance they are the same as others, for the soil is on the surface. But they have no depth. Rather, they have lust, temper, self, and flesh. All these are rocks hidden beneath the soil.

Verse 7 says, “And others fell on the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them.” The thorns here signify the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches, which choke the word from growing in the heart and cause it to become unfruitful. The thorns, the anxiety of this age and the deceitfulness of riches, match the section in the constitution covering the attitude of the kingdom people toward riches (6:19-34). Several times in that section of the constitution the words “anxious” or “anxiety” are used. The Lord tells us not to be anxious about our living, about what we shall eat, drink, or wear. If the anxiety of this age and the deceitfulness of riches are rooted out of our heart, the seed will grow.

The parable of the sower seems very simple, but it is actually deep and profound. It exposes the real condition of our heart in the presence of the heavenly King. Whatever is in us is exposed. This parable covers the hardness by the worldly traffic; the hidden lust, self, and flesh; and the anxiety of the age and deceitfulness of money. These are the wayside, the rocks, and the thorns. As long as you are either the wayside, the soil with hidden rocks, or the soil with thorns, the kingdom cannot grow in you. In other words, the church cannot grow in those types of soil. In order for the church to grow, the seed must fall on good earth.

Verse 8 says, “And others fell on the good earth and gave fruit, some indeed a hundredfold, and some sixty, and some thirty.” The good earth signifies the good heart that is not hardened by worldly traffic, that is without hidden sins, and that is without the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches. Such a heart gives every inch of its ground to receive the word that the word may grow, bear fruit, and produce even a hundredfold (v. 23). The good heart is a heart which has no worldly traffic, no rocks, and no thorns. It has no hidden sins, selfishness, lust, or flesh and no anxiety of the age or deceitfulness of money. This kind of heart is truly pure to match the spirit. Such a heart is the good soil that grows Christ. Christ as the seed of life can grow only in this kind of heart, this kind of soil. This is the soil that can grow the kingdom.