

MATTHEW 13.1-24

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: “[Behold!] A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him **hear**.”

10 Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” 11 And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and **hearing** they do not **hear**, nor do they **understand**.

14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

“You will indeed **hear** but never **understand**, and you will indeed see but never perceive.

15 For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely **hear**, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and **hear** with their ears and **understand** with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they **hear**. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to **hear** what you **hear**, and did not **hear** it.

18 “**Hear** then the parable of the sower:

MARK 4.1-25

Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. 2 And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 3 “**Listen!** A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” 9 And he said, “He who has ears to **hear**, let him **hear**.”

10 And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. 11 And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, 12 so that

“they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed **hear** but not **understand** [heed/listen], lest they should turn and be forgiven.”

13 And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they **hear**, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they **hear** the word, immediately receive it with joy. 17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who **hear** the word, 19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word,

LUKE 8.4-18

4 And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: 5 “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. 6 And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. 8 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**.”

9 And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, 10 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**.’

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12 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. 13 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. 14 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. 15 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.



19 When anyone **hears** the word of the kingdom and does not **understand** it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. 20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who **hears** the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who **hears** the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who **hears** the word and **understands** it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

and it proves unfruitful. 20 But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who **hear** the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

21 And he said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? 22 For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. 23 If anyone has ears to **hear**, let him **hear**.”

24 And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you **hear**: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. 25 For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”

16 “No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. 17 For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. 18 Take care then how you **hear**, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.”

How does Jesus’ allusion to Isaiah’s prophecy shed light on the meaning of the parable? What variable affects the fruitfulness of the seed? What sort of soil am I? How do I become good soil? (Why repetition of “hear”?) Tribulation v. Persecution? For original audience? For us? How are riches deceitful?

1. path > (birds) *hear*? > Satan
2. rocky ground > tribulation, persecution > fall away
3. among thorns > cares of the world, deceitfulness of riches, desire for other things > unfruitful
4. good soil > hear the word and accept it > bear fruit

ULRICH LUZ

Along with others, I assume that the fourfold parable of the seed was meant exactly as it is interpreted in Mark 4.13-20. From the beginning it was “a parable about parables,” or a *meditation about the various hearers of Jesus’ proclamation*.”

KLYNE SNODGRASS

Whether we call Is 6.9-10 irony, an attempt to shock into repentance, or reverse psychology, these words are not literalistic. Their illocutionary effect is to *urge hearing in a context where judgment is assured* and there are promises that a remnant will return and blessing will come from [the LORD].

The key to spiritual formation is the willingness to listen, the practice of the discipline of listening, and responding appropriately to the received word...

The parable emphasizes both receptivity and bearing fruit. Two of the three sowings that fail describe people who respond *positively* to the message. The even hear the message with joy, but their hearing is still superficial. Receiving the message with joy is not enough—a message the modern church desperately needs to hear. Faith that is temporary and unproductive is not true faith... This parable asserts that people can receive the word with joy and still be guilty of hardness of heart.

CRAIG KEENER

The only conversions that count in the kingdom are those confirmed by a life of discipleship.

N.T. WRIGHT

Like the crowds on the lakeshore that day, our task, again and again as we read scripture and think about God’s work in our own day, is to think it through and figure it out. [The Gospels] are designed to help us do that. It won’t be easy. Christianity isn’t about cozy little lessons to make us feel better. It’s about what God is doing in the world—what he’s already done in Jesus and what he wants to do through us today.

