

this world ; not "riches," but the deceitfulness of riches. The only way to get a crop in thorny ground is to get it in early. By the time the thorns show themselves the grain is almost safe. Let parents and Sabbath School teachers lay this to heart.

Into good ground, v. 7. The qualities which such hearts bring to the hearing of the gospel are these : Attention : they "hear" ; meditation : they "keep" ; obedience : they "bring forth fruit with patience." (See Luke 8 : 15.)

Hear ye therefore, v. 18. It is close and personal hearing, even more than the excel-

lence of the sermon, that produces good results. Said the Puritan, Henry Smith : "As little birds perk up their heads when their dam comes with meat, and prepare their beaks to take it, striving who shall catch most, so you are here like birds and we the dam, and the word the food. They which are hungry for the word will strive for the bread cast among them and think, 'This is spoken to me, I have need of this. Comfort, go thou to my fear ; promise, go thou to my distrust ; threatening, go thou to my security, and the word shall be like a perfume, which hath odor for everyone.'"

POINTS AND PARAGRAPHS

✓ Each day brings us the opportunity of receiving of doing some good. vs. 1, 2.

The most skilful of all teachers, Jesus adapted His methods to His audience. v. 3.

Satan always has some agent ready to snatch the good seed from our hearts. vs. 4, 19.

Many a fair appearance will not endure the testing time. vs. 5, 6, 20, 21.

Thorns spring up, but the good seed must be sown nevertheless. vs. 7, 22.

Good hearing is as needful as good preaching. vs. 8, 23.

Constant hearing of the gospel without obeying it hardens the heart as constant traffic the pathway. v. 19.

Persecution is the test that distinguishes between true joy and false joy. v. 21.

The word and the world cannot dwell in the same heart. v. 22.

The good ground is needed as well as the good seed, if there is to be fruit. v. 23.

One has said of the parables of Jesus : "The more frequently and attentively we apply ourselves to consider them, whether as a whole or in their separate parts, the more are we filled with astonishment at the perfection of their form and matter. They always appear to me like a lovely casket made in the handsomest style, of the most attractive ornaments ; but when the key is put into our hands and we open it, and see

the jewels it contains, these appear to surpass all worth, and make it difficult for us to be satisfied with their glory. However attractive in form may be the parables of Jesus, and however inviting, when considered only as specimens of poetic beauty, the truth contained in them is still more glorious, for it is the truth which makes blessed, truth leading to divine felicity through the hope of eternal life. What Luther said of Scripture in general, that it is a garden of God, with many beautiful trees full of the most precious fruit, and though he had often knocked upon the boughs and got much fruit into his lap, yet did he continually find new fruit, as often as he sought and knocked again—this may be said more especially of its parables, in which is treasured up an inexhaustible store of instruction, consolation, warning and admonition. Their meaning is richer than the sea ; no one has ever drunk out its fulness. Every new consideration of them discovers to us new relations, gives new solutions, spreads new light over the affairs of the heavenly Kingdom."

The Germans call this parable, "The four kinds of soil," an excellent title for it. The stress is laid, not on the character of the sower, or the quality of the seed, but upon the fitness or unfitness of the soil to yield a harvest. The Jewish rabbis, like our Lord, used to divide their hearers into four classes. "Four characteristics," said one of them, "distinguish those who sit in the presence