

Parable of the Sower.

FEBRUARY 19.

MARK IV : 1-20.

Golden Text, Rev. 2: 29.

COMPARE Matt. 13: 1-23 and Luke 8: 4-18. V. 1. Our Saviour was never idle. If he did retire to the sea-coast for coolness and rest, crowds flocked about him. He was continually doing good. At this time a great multitude gathered on the shore. To free himself from the pressure, as well as that he might see and be seen by his audience, he stepped into the fishing-boat he had ordered to be in readiness, ch. 3: 9, and pushing out from the shore he thus sat on the sea—V. 2. *Many things*—of which the writer only gives a few samples. *By parables*—illustrations taken from natural things to instruct in things spiritual. Here we have only three of these parables; Matthew gives seven. *Doctrine*—teaching. The parable of the sower is designed to teach that the effect of the Word is dependent on the state of the heart. V. 3. *Hearken*—no benefit from teaching without close attention from those who are taught, Acts 16: 14. *Behold*—perhaps, within view, the very process described might be then going on; at all events, our Saviour saw in the vast concourse before him a field in which he himself was about to sow the seed of the Word. Vs. 4-6. *The wayside*—the ordinary roads or paths in the East were often through unenclosed fields, ch. 2: 23. *Stony ground*—much of the surface of Palestine is a rocky formation. We all know what to expect in such a case—rapid spindly growth, wilted at noon with the scorching rays of the sun. Vs. 7, 8, present familiar pictures of good and bad cultivation, not confined to Palestine. The explanation given by Jesus was intended for and would only be understood by those who were sincerely desirous of being instructed in the nature of “the new kingdom.” V. 11. *The mystery*—The things which had been dimly foreshadowed in the old dispensation, Ephes. 3: 3-6. V. 12. *Let them be converted*—Divine truth is not for learned unbelievers—but only for such as shall receive it in simple faith, Matt. 11: 25. Willful sinners place themselves beyond the covenant mercies of God, 2 Cor. 4: 3, 4. Vs. 14-20 convey the meaning of the parable with admirable clearness. *The sower*—every teacher of the Word of God is a sower, responsible for doing his or her work in a workmanlike manner, 2 Tim. 2: 15. Every scholar or hearer is responsible for the results of faithful teaching, Matt. 7: 24-27. *Wayside*—Hard hearts are not fit receptacles for saving truth, Rom. 2: 5. Satan is ever on the alert, 1 Peter 5: 8—persuading men not to believe, Luke 8: 12. *Stony ground*—“Rocky places,” N.V., superficial hearers make a shew of godliness, but are irresolute, Luke 9: 59-62. *Among thorns*—Worldly-minded hearers are unreliable, ch 10: 17-22. As good ground retains moisture and yields increase, Isa. 55: 10, so a good man bringeth forth good things, Matt. 12: 35. *Some thirty-fold*—Some Christians will be more successful than others, but all will be useful in some degree. *Fidelity* is God’s criterion of merit, Luke 19: 22-24, and its reward is a crown of life, Rev. 2: 10. *Faithfulness* is the true test of discipleship, Jn. 15: 8, and has also a promise of reward, 1 Cor. 15: 58. 2 Pet. 1: 8-11.

The growth of the Kingdom.

FEBRUARY 26.

MARK IV : 21-34.

Golden Text, Psalms 72: 16.

COMPARE Matt. 5: 15; 10: 26; 13: 31. Luke 8: 16; 12: 2. The parable of the Sower had special reference to the soil and the seed. These call attention to the development of the seed—the growth of grace in the hearts of those who receive the truth. V. 21. *A candle*—or a lamp, which is only useful when it gives forth light. As the lamp was put on its stand to give light to all in the room, so Christ’s disciples are to be light bearers, Matt. 5: 16. V. 22. *Nothing hid*, etc. The parable being a figurative mode of illustration might not at first be intelligible, but to those who earnestly tried to discover its meaning it would soon become so. God does not lodge the truth in any heart for the purpose of hiding it there but that it may be used for the enlightenment of others. Vs. 23, 24. *Let him hear*—Faith cometh by hearing, Rom. 10: 17. Good listening is often more valuable than good speaking. *What ye hear*—Luke says “how ye hear”—Both are necessary precautions. We are not to believe all we hear, Matt. 7: 15. 1 Jn. 4: 1-3. *With what measure*—Just as we are faithful, will God recompense us, Ps. 18: 24-26. V. 25, is explained by the parable of the pounds, Luke 19: 12-26. God gives us many things, but we really have only so much of them as we use. Vs. 26, 27. This parable is found only in Mark, and beautifully illustrates the imperceptible growth of truth in the heart, from the moment the first germ is implanted, until it brings forth the fruits of righteousness, Gal. 5: 22. The husbandman who has prepared his soil and sown the seed can do no more. He cannot make it grow. If it is long of sprouting, he waits patiently, Jas. 5: 7. He believes in the promise of God—that the seed-time and harvest shall not cease, Gen. 8: 22. So the faithful teacher will not be discouraged if the fruits of his labours and prayers do not immediately appear. He will go on sowing the gospel seed, content to leave results with God, Ecc. 11: 1, 6. V. 28. *Fruit of herself*—not without the rain and the sunshine, which come from God, but independently of man’s agency. *First the blade*—As in natural, so in spiritual growth, as a rule, there is a law of development, Eph. 4: 15. 2 Pet. 3: 18. V. 29. *The harvest*—That joyful time when those who have received the Gospel and have been influenced by it shall be gathered as wheat unto God’s barn, Matt. 13: 30, 38, 39. Vs. 31, 32. Another familiar emblem shews that, however small its beginning, the gospel kingdom is sure to prevail. So we find, first, Christ and the twelve; then the seventy, Luke 10: 1, next, 3,000, Acts 2: 41; thereafter additions daily, Acts 2: 47. At the end of the first century, 500,000 Christians; now, 440,000,000! V. 33. *Many such*—Matthew gives seven such; none of the evangelists pretend to state all, Jn. 21: 25. *As they were able*—He led them on step by step—Light enough for each successive step is enough for us at one time, Ps. 119: 105. *When they were alone*—Those who desire instruction shall be enlightened through the quiet agency of the Holy Spirit, Jn. 16: 13-15.