

## Short Sermon.

### The Parable of the Sower.

BY THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

St. Luke viii. 5.—“*A sower went out to sow his seed.*”



OUR Saviour has in this instance given us the explanation of His own parable; we need but endeavour to amplify and apply it. “*A sower,*” He tells us, “*went out to sow his seed,*” and this “*seed is the word of God.*” The word, no doubt, is so called because, received into the heart, it is the germ which, acted upon by the Spirit of God, produces faith, and love, and holiness—the fair harvest of the Christian character. “*So then,*” as St. Paul writes, “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”\* And St. Peter speaks of Christians as “*being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*”† It possesses, indeed, its active and, if I may so speak, its vegetative power, only by virtue of that blessed Spirit by whom it was originally given; but, under His mighty though gentle influence, it convinces of sin, works repentance, brings sinners to the Cross for pardon, increases faith, implants hope, cultivates charity, tells of righteousness, and peace and joy, and becomes the daily food of those who are really and in earnest journeying toward heaven. And the sower goes out to sow his seed whenever the word of God is read or preached; that is, whenever God speaks to you through the inspired penmen of the Bible, or by us, his accredited, though most unworthy ministers.

It is worth remarking, before we proceed, that our Saviour makes no mention of those unhappy men who altogether reject or neglect the word. All the classes spoken of in the parable received the seed, though in the first it remained lifeless; in the second, had no root; in the third, was choked; and in the fourth only was both rooted and fruitful. Our subject, therefore, does not apply to those who disbelieve or disregard religion entirely, and who look upon the worship of God as an idle ceremony, the remnant of a mistaken and exploded superstition (alas, that there should be such in a Christian country!), but to those who prove by their attendance in the House of God that they are not altogether without a sense of religious duty, and who at least call themselves, and claim the privilege of, Christians.

To proceed then with the parable. “*As he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.*” The explanation is as follows:—“*Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*” We have here a description of a sadly large class of hearers in most congregations. These are the inattentive and careless, who, never reading or listening with a view to their own practice, go away perfectly unchanged; or if an impression be made, it is like characters just traced on sand, which the first breath of wind obliterates.

\* Rom. x. 17.

† 1 Pet. i. 23.