

Feb. 19, }  
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## PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

{ Mark 4 :  
1-20. }

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."  
—Rev. 2 : 29.

**PLACE AND TIME.**—By the Sea of Galilee, following close upon the last lesson—same day.

**PARALLEL.**—Matt. 13 : 1-23.

### HINTS TO TEACHERS.

**Dangers.**—There is a rock to the young and inexperienced in vs. 11, 12. Unless you fully understand its meaning do not attempt to explain it, and even then not to the younger scholars ; it is one of those truths that can only be brought out by comparing Scripture with Scripture, truth with truth, and even then, if not in wise hands, might make doubts and trouble instead of removing. You have more truth than you will be able to teach in the parable itself. See notes on those verses.

**Topical Analysis.**—(1) The Parable, vs. 1-9. (2) An explanation asked, 10-13. (3) An explanation given, 14-20.

**What and How to Teach.**—On the *first* topic.—This is the first set parable recorded by Mark. The illustration in ch. 2 : 19-22, and 3 : 22-27, though the word is used with reference to the latter, is scarcely a parable in the sense of this before us. Explain to your class a parable and its use ; show how it differs from a *fable*, in which animals are represented as speaking and acting as men and women ; how also it differs from an *allegory*, which simply dramatises the story, but explains itself. Our Saviour in using parables followed the practice of the Jewish rabbis, which species of teaching the people preferred. Christ's parables, however, stand alone, unapproached in the world's literature—simple, natural, and life-like. Like all the parables of Jesus, there was an element of reality in this that at once struck His hearers. Here—so Stanley tells us—was undulating corn land, descending to water's edge ; the trodden pathway with no fence or hedge ; hard with constant tramp of passers, man and beast ; there—the good rich soil of the plain and the rocky ground of the hill side, cropping up in many places. There—were large bushes of thorn, the "Nabk" springing up in the midst of the waving wheat, and the "birds of the air" were there in countless number—partridges, pigeons, and aquatic birds—hovering over the rich plain. You should be able to picture these points in the machinery of the parable clearly and vividly, that you may bring out the corresponding truths in the close.

On the *second* topic, point out the privileges of companionship with Jesus, and how He meets those who would truly inquire of Him. He does not even rebuke, as some have wrongly supposed His utterance here to be, but He meets the weakness of His people and gives them the light they need, and for which they ask. The saying of verse 13 would indicate that this parable was the foundation of all the others respecting the kingdom of God, and that failing to understand that, they would not be able to understand those that followed.

On the *third* topic keep very close to the interpretation of the Master—in fact, if you attempt to improve you will ruin it. Your business is to apply—point out how it works to-day—your own class will doubtless illustrate how Satan still takes away the word sown in the heart. There are many, alas ! too many instances in churches and communities of the upspringing and speedy withering of the seed sown in stony ground, and even children have their thorns which choke the word—thorns which they themselves might sometimes root up, but fail to do so. Dwell espe-

cially upon what is good ground, and upon the blessedness, for this life and the life to come, of bringing forth fruit to the glory of God.

**Notes and Comments.**—Ver. 1. "Began," after the interruption of last verses. "A very great," lit. "greatest" multitude ; "the Sea," of Galilee ; had to get into a boat to escape from pressure, as on another occasion.

Ver. 2. "Parables," lit. a placing side by side, comparison ; so teaching by parables was by comparison.

Ver. 3. "Hearken," a hush to the noise of the multitude, that they might not lose His words ; the picture is very graphic.

Ver. 4. "Way side," the hard path passing through the field ; "fowls," Old English for "birds," so Rev.

Ver. 5. "Stony," rock slightly covered with soil, so that the roots could not strike down into the earth.

Ver. 6. "Scorched," burnt up ; had the roots gone deeper, the moisture would have prevented this.

Ver. 7. "Thorns," which, we are told, grow abundantly in Palestine. "Choked," being of ranker growth took the space and the nourishment from the good plant.

Ver. 8. "Other," the rest of the seed falling where no hard path, rock or thorns, but good ground, "increased," Rev. "growing up and increasing," and for each seed thirty, sixty, or one hundred more.

Ver. 9. A proverbial saying often following an important utterance.

Ver. 10. "Alone," perhaps they pulled out a little further into the lake ; "they that were about," some of the after seventy, doubtless ; "asked of Him"—see Matt. and Luke more definitely.

Ver. 11. "Unto you," significant to those who sought to know the truth. "Mystery," gospel truths, hidden from those whose minds were darkened. "Without," the careless and unbelievers.

Ver. 12. This verse must be read right through as man's action, not God's. The "not see," "not understand," is wilful—see Isa. 6 : 9, 10.

Ver. 13. "Know ye not," this the first, the foundation parable of the kingdom ; understood, it was the key to all.

Ver. 14. "The sower," Christ ; others sow the same seed and are His servants. Are you sowing it ?

Ver. 15. "By the way side," hardened by the tread of the world. By how many means this is brought about ! Our churches and schools have, alas ! many way side hearers. "Satan," the ever active adversary. "Taketh away," Matt. 13 : 19, catcheth.

Ver. 16. "Stony ground," the second danger—emotion only, shallow, superficial. Christ had such hearers ; no wonder they are found to-day.

Ver. 17. "No root," no fixed principles, strong convictions. "When affliction," Rev. "tribulation," the trying time. "Offended," lit. as in Rev. "stumble," it is a hindrance.

Ver. 18, 19. "Thorns," worldly cares, desires, habits, all making a divided heart, and finally the stronger and ranker choke, kill off, the better.

Ver. 20. "Good ground," honest, true, believing hearts ; they not only "hear" but "receive," still more, practise. "Bring forth," and their fruit is according to their means and opportunities.

**Incidental Lessons.**—That the seed for the soul is God's word of truth.

That the seed is always the same, although the soil may differ much.

That we should sow this seed everywhere, and at all times, though much may fail.