

## **Mark 4:1-20**

### **I. Context**

- a. Jesus teaching crowds by Sea of Galilee; becomes so crowded he gets in the boat away from shore to teach
- b. “Shore” can also be translated as soil; Jesus uses rocky shore as starting point

### **II. The Nature of a Parable**

- a. Story that makes a point which calls for a response from the listener
- b. Common teaching methods for Rabbis
- c. The Sower parable begins a series of parables about the Kingdom of God (v. 11)
- d. These parables have a certain element of mystery that need explaining

### **III. The Parable of the Sower**

- a. The Sower sows God’s word
- b. Main issue: The differing conditions of the soil affects the seed’s ability to grow; represents people’s differing responses to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, which has come in the person of Jesus Christ
  - i. Group One: Satan steals away the word sown in them; there is never even a chance for growth; no response;
  - ii. Group Two: Rocky soil: initial joy, but no foundation; trials cause them to turn away
  - iii. Group Three: Thorns; interested in gospel, but more concerned with what the world offers than following Jesus
  - iv. Group Four: Good soil; hears the word, accepts it; their lives are transformed and they bear fruit
- c. Deeper meaning: The Vineyard (c.f. *Isaiah 5:1-7*)—Jesus is giving a warning to Israel; they had rejected God’s kingdom ways

### **IV. The Response Jesus Calls Forth: The Kingdom of God is at hand in Jesus Christ; how do you respond to it?**

- a. Note the emphasis that faith produces fruit (v.8, 20); there is no such thing as a Christian whose life is not transformed by the gospel
- b. In Jesus’ day, some were looking for God’s kingdom in some spectacular external way; Jesus is indicating that his kingdom has begun with a work inside his true followers

### **V. How do we become (or create) the good soil?**

- a. Own the 2 H Words: Humility & Hunger; Seek him humbly; v. 10 (note it is more than just the twelve); they take the time to inquire of the parable
- b. Analyze your life; set priorities
  - i. Reading scripture (and other good books to supplement scripture); Prayer; Fellowship; Service/Outreach
- c. Reflect, Connect, Inspect
- d. When you proclaim the kingdom of God, by sharing the good news and love of Jesus; help create soil to those whom you reach out
- e. As a church, let’s make sure we are striving to till the soil to help our people to grow