

Book	Psalms – Study 17
Topic	The Sower on Hearing
Reference	Matt 13:1-9; 18-23
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Speaker	Dr. Peter Ng

As we go in through the Word and as we go in through week after week, month after month, year after year of scripture, we can find that the prominence of the word increases, and these two parables tell us something about the nature of the kingdom of God. How the nature of the kingdom of God revolves around the gospel? Now if you look at the first parable;

Matthew 13:1-9 (ESV) **1** That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. **2** And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. **3** And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. **4** And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. **5** Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, **6** but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. **7** Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. **8** Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. **9** He who has ears, let him hear."

This is the interpretation.

Matthew 13:18-23 (ESV) **18** "Hear then the parable of the sower: **19** When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. **20** As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, **21** yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. **22** As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. **23** As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

We are talking about kingdom of God in the kingdom of men. As we can see, it extends by force, its by external. In those days, you have got Alexander the Great, Greek Empire which started 300 years before Christ came and then replaced by the Roman Empire. Each empire comes, Alexander will come to a city and say, you all surrender or die. That's how kingdoms are made, by strength and power. It is all external. Now the kingdom of God is very difficult to understand because it doesn't

come by usual human wisdom. Human wisdom dictates that kingdoms come by power, only by power you can conquer. Now the kingdom of God comes by hearing. That's why he uses the metaphor of a seed and here the context of this particular parable is the fact that Jesus had healed a man with a withered hand and the pharisees were confronting Jesus Christ. Jesus healed the man on Sabbath Day, they say this is wrong, you must not be from God. they were trying to condemn him. Jesus was fighting a running battle with the pharisees.

Matt 12 :13 Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. 14 But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him. 15 Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all 16 and ordered them not to make him known. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

Now Isaiah prophesied how Jesus's ministry would be like and unfortunately a lot of people didn't read this prophecy well. They thought the Jews have in their mind where Jesus come, he will come and wrap up the whole world with a huge kingdom, with the Seven Calvary coming in and wrap everything up. They didn't look at passages like this.

Matthew 12:17-21 (ESV) 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: 18 "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. 19 He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; 20 a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; 21 and in his name the Gentiles will hope.

So, the kind of ministry Jesus was going to be embarking on is completely different from any ministry in any experience of human history. There will not be a political campaign because nobody will hear his office in the streets. Jesus is so gentle that even those fragile things like reed and wick are pictures, that his extraordinary willingness to encourage damaged or vulnerable people, giving them a further opportunity to succeed which a results-oriented society would deny them. The servant will not be quick to condemn and to discard, but will persevere until God's purpose of "justice" has been achieved

The marginalized people Jesus will go to them because they are damaged people. His ministry will be to damaged people. If you look at the metaphor of the seed, the seed is something that revolutionizes something internally, organically and gently. What a seed does is that you put the seed into the ground and it reorganizes the ground. It re-channels the energy, the nutrients into a lifegiving process and transforms everything on the ground into something that comes out of the seed. So, whatever comes out of the seed has the DNA of the seed, but it uses the resources and the energy and everything else that comes from the ground itself. It is a beautiful analogy of the gospel, because the gospel comes into your heart. It is a DNA of God

and if you are the soil, it takes all your aspirations, your energy, your thought processes and it produces something that is actually God like. Because it comes from the seed, it produces fruit which is God like.

There are four seeds. The first one, no yield. Second one, grew a bit. Third one, grew a bit. Fourth seed started to multiplying. There is a progression.

Let's look at the first seed. The first seed

¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

These are the people who hear the gospel and basically they understand it intellectually. It didn't affect them emotionally, doesn't change the way of their thinking. It is like a seed dropped onto the ground, it doesn't organize the energy, it doesn't take everything from the ground, and it doesn't produce anything. It just doesn't do anything. In fact, when the birds come and take it away which is Satan. Satan will come and take the gospel and if you are not bothered with the gospel, Satan will take it away. The birds will eat it up. So therefore, you will have no remembrance of the gospel. So, there are demonic forces at work there.

The other one is the shallow heart, the second seed. It says,

Matthew 13:20-21 (ESV) As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

As you can see, this is somebody who actually receives it for a while and if you look at the whole area of Galilee, you can find there are lots of rocks. You have got to remove all these rocks in order for you to plant very carefully. So, second seed is a guy who is smiling, very excited because he was sick. So, when they are sick they just want to get healed. They want a service provider, they don't want a Lord. So that's the difference. So when you actually share the gospel with people, I think sometimes Christians are tempted to present Jesus Christ as a service provider, because if you present him as Lord that fellow will say no and you have got so little confidence in the gospel that you try to water it down and make it like as if it is a service provider and if you do that then you are not really presenting the real gospel. You have to present the Lord. So, there is no real conviction of sin, nor is there repentance.

The power of the gospel brings people down. That is true conversion as it were. So we have to be careful, sometimes we represent the gospel in such a way to persuade people and that persuasion is not the real gospel, because we force people, we entice people and people like this will take it but when hard times come you can't process it and hard times will turn people away from God.

Charles Finney was a world-famous evangelist. He tells when he accepted Christ *I wept aloud with joy and love*” and *“literally bellowed out unutterable gushings of [his] heart. . . . [W]aves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect, I cried out, ‘I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me.’”*

This is the type of conversion experience I wish I would have but I never had. If you look at Billy Graham when he was converted,

“I didn’t have any tears, I didn’t have any emotions, I didn’t hear any thunder, there was no lightning. But right there, I made my decision for Christ. It was as simple as that, and as conclusive.”

Different. You could accept Christ with a lot of emotion or not much emotion but that really doesn’t matter. The important thing is trial. When 1-Peter talks,

1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESV) In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—**more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire**—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Here the second seed, when they accept Christ, when fire comes, when suffering will inevitably come, they will move away. That’s why you can see in church after a while people go away. It is like people are cycling through. Because this is the fact of the kingdom of God. When suffering comes, they move away. This is a testimony of a young lady who was a youth leader in United States and she took an invitation from a Christian friend to visit in Canada and she stayed in the Christian friend’s house who was a boy and he raped her. As a result of that, she turned away from Christ. It was a hardship. She wrote these words,

I no longer want to feel like I’m incapable, or inherently flawed, or unable to do things without God. It feels more empowering, great, and wonderful to believe in myself, and know I can do things because I can. And that I’m not a product of sin, but a human being with wishes, hopes and dreams. I have infinite possibilities, not because a god allows it to be so

Here she has rejected the fact that she is a sinner. She has rejected the fact that she needs God. She thinks I can do it alone. After all, when I trust God, he let me down. That’s what happens when suffering comes, and suffering will come and it will make and break and it broke this particular lady.

So, the third one is a divided heart,

Matthew 13:22 (ESV) As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Now this is the most dangerous seed. Looks like a Christian, he has got all his worries and all these desires, and it chokes the word and it becomes unfruitful. This is hard to tell because it has got leaves and roots, looks good. The trouble is that you worship God and things. This person has divided attention. So, you either worship God or you worship things, but this person does both. He is anxious about losing things. Whatever wealth you have, you spend your whole day worrying about keeping the wealth. Whatever wealth you don't have, you spend the whole day wishing you had the wealth.

Pastor Chris Oyakhilome writes,

The economy of the world or of the country where you live may be in shambles, but you're unmoved, because you've learnt how to enjoy your prosperity and turn it on from within you. Learn to see from your heart. What you see with your heart is more real than what you see with your physical eyes. 2 Corinthians 4:18 says, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Seeing with your heart means envisioning and apprehending the realities of the Gospel and of our Kingdom-life with your spirit.

This is his prayer,

Blessed Lord, in you I put my trust, living the higher life, which you preordained for me to live, following the light and guidance of your Spirit from within me. I'm making progress with giant strides, triumphing all the way, because you've set me on high, and established my path in glory, and prosperity, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

What is wrong with emphasizing prosperity in the light of the third seed?

There were two masters inside that seed. So, you actually have a Christian agenda. Many churches are transformed by this. He is actually asking the people to be the third seed. He is telling people that you can have your cake and you can eat it also, but if you actually focus on that when you are praying you are asking for money for living, but that's the time when devil can also come in. It produces the kind of tension in your life that says this is never enough. That's how dangerous this kind of gospel is. Then they mix it up with very spiritual language. So that's the problem. You are producing more third seed people. Spurgeon actually said these things,

If you profess to be a Christian, yet find full satisfaction in worldly pleasures and pursuits, your profession is false.

He is asking a question about what makes you happy today? What makes you contented? You wake up in the morning and this is a good day. I am going to ask you, why is it a good day? It is a good day because today my paycheck is coming in. It is a good day because my share price went up. Nothing wrong with it. But if your contentment solely rests on these things, then Spurgeon is warning you that you are resting on the wrong things in life and one day those things are going to be shattered and if those are the only things that make you happy, you will be shattered. You need to wake up in the morning and learn to focus that, you know I am alive today, I have got one more day in which to serve Jesus Christ, who gave his life to die for me and I am reciprocating. One more day to preach the gospel, one more day to minister to somebody else and if you manage to minister the gospel with somebody else and maybe he responded to Christ or maybe he thanked you and all that and you are happy because of that then I think you maybe the fourth seed, but if you are only happy because of all the other things that are basically not necessarily spiritual then I think you maybe the third seed. The third seed is the most dangerous and we see the most third seed people in any church in this world. So, I think that is fair warning to us.

Kevin DeYoung says, *Worldliness is whatever make sin look normal and righteousness look strange.*

That's true and that's the third seed. Jesus attitude towards the third seed,

Mark 11:12-14 (ESV) On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 And seeing in the distance a **fig tree in leaf**, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.

So, this is late spring, not in season. So, when you go, you don't expect fruit but this tree had a lot of leaves. When you have got a lot of leaves, you expect a lot of fruit and this is normal. The warning is that, if you are a Christian, looks like a Christian, smells like a Christian, walks like a Christians, quacks like a Christian but no fruit, never lay egg. This kind is useless. So that's the problem. You have bottom-line, these are the most dangerous ones. A significant percent of church people are like that and this is the danger. It looks like a lot of leaves but actually there is no fruit at all.

Isaiah 5:4-6 (ESV) When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? 5 And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. 6 I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up;

That's means God will judge this.

John 15:1-2 (ESV) I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

If you do bear fruit then you will experience pruning and pruning is suffering. So, either way. The fourth seed is

Matthew 13:23 (ESV) As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.

So, the issue here is the fourth seed and the fourth seed is the one that hears, understands and bears. This is a triple process. You hear, you understand, and you grow. The 30, 60 and 100-fold indicates that the person is not the same. God doesn't produce cookie cutter kind of Christians. Everybody produces different amounts of fruit, but they do produce fruit. That's the difference. You cannot have a Christian without fruit. The only valid hearing is one that produces fruit. Anything else falls under judgement. This is the interpretive key which is what Jesus says

Matthew 13:10-17 (ESV) Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" 11 And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." 15 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' 16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

So, the interpretive key here is that parables are God's tools for two things. They are either instruct to save or they judge. Now if you don't accept the parable,

V 11b For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

That means when gospel comes, and you hear and then God gives you understanding, and you hear a little bit more and you grow. If you do not hear what you have that also God will take it away. So, parables are like the gospel. They are the presentation of gospel in such a way that for some of you, you will understand and grow and some of you it will be rubbish and that you judge yourself. That's why parables are

dangerous things. The gospel is a very-very-very dangerous thing. It is all or none phenomenon. You either respond or you don't respond. If you don't respond, then you will find the less and less likely to respond.

John Bunyan was a very hardhearted man, cruel, gangster type person and he wrote Pilgrim's Progress and when he heard the parable of the sower, the Holy Spirit moved his heart. He received the gospel. He became a Christian and he wrote this book which has a fantastic influence on the Christian world. The reason why Jesus preach the parable is to tell you that there are different responses and the only response that matters is the last seed and the last of the three, you just sow the gospel as widely as possible.

Wheat and Weeds

Matthew 13:24-30 (ESV) He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, **25** but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. **26** So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. **27** And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' **28** He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' **29** But he said, No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."""

So, if you are growing wheat, there are certain plants like the wild wheat (darnel) that look exactly like wheat and they bear dark grain while the edible wheat has light brown grain. They are almost indistinguishable and they come and confuse the wheat field as it were.

Matthew 13:36-43 (ESV) Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." **37** He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. **38** The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, **39** and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. **40** Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. **41** The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, **42** and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

So he is basically saying this is open for everybody. You all can hear and understand. Five characters of weed,

- Weeds confuse the appearance of who is a believer and who is not
- Weeds tangle the roots of real plants and impede growth
- Weeds rob the soil of nutrients
- Weeds produce no fruit but plenty of seeds
- Weeds dry up quickly but are always present and return perennially

There is a difference between the seed and the weeds in the parable of sower and parable of weeds. In the parable of the sower the seed is gospel. In the parable of the wheat and the weeds, the seeds are sons of the kingdom. There is a difference. So, the context of parable tells you the answer. The other one is the weeds. In the parable of sower, the weeds are the one who choke the seed. In wheat and weeds, they are false believers. So, if you actually take, seed is the same thing in every parable then big problem for you. If you look at the scripture very carefully.

28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So, the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' **29** But he said, No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned but gather the wheat into my barn."
40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. **41** The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers,

Why doesn't Jesus tell them to pull up the weeds? You might end up in pulling up the wheat also. Jesus was not concerned about the weed. The true sons of God will remain in the end, you don't have to do anything to protect them. That has been the history of the Christian church. Whenever there is persecution, Christians grow stronger. Whenever there is the third seed, when there is more prosperity, Christians grow weaker. Because it is a supernatural thing. Becoming a Christian is a supernatural thing. You either a seed, which is the son of the kingdom or you are a weed. There is no hybrid inside. The weed cannot become wheat and wheat cannot be weed. They are actually different kind of species. You are either a born again Christian or you are not. So, the victory of the kingdom ensure us.

So, the idea is to be sow more seeds, not pull out more weeds, because you have accepted that in the church there are two kingdoms side by side. The most important thing is to know the difference between the two and which one you belong. Are you a wheat or a weed? You are in church and you have to accept that the church is full of weeds and wheat. It is hard to differentiate between them. The fact is, we are going to have two kingdoms side by side and a lot of people judge the Christian church because they saw a couple of weeds and they thought they were weed. The real problem is that the two kingdoms are side by side.

The main strategy of the evil one is weeds

- They are everywhere grow spontaneously

- Weeds confuse the appearance of who is a believer and who is not.
- People falsely believe they are Christians
 - Birth
 - Life style
 - Joining a church
 - Sinners prayer, fruitless life
 - The other three seeds

It will take time. So, in church

- We avoid zealotry and passivity.
- Delayed justice in church
- Share gospel little response
- Difficult committee
- Need stability and long view
- You don't condemn anyone who is not perfect...
- If you don't understand -bitter and given up you are forgetting about the harvest

You don't condemn and you don't give up.

- Real Fruit
- Character change
- Stability, content in Him
- Humbled by increasing awareness of sin and yet feel loved by His grace
- Desire to serve

That is the true evidence of wheat. So, the question is, are you a wheat or you are weeds and strange enough there is nothing in between.

What comes across in these two parables is that. The most important ingredient in church is the word of God. If you don't have the Word of God, you are nothing, because only the Word of God is supernatural. It will produce fruit. So, as we are in this church as leaders, we preach the gospel all the time. The wheats will respond, and the weeds will be there. So, each of us have to keep on sowing the seeds and in the end, there will be victory because we serve a living God.