

Parables used to hide some spiritual truths from unbelievers .

The truly sincere who were seeking after truth were led by the parables to question further and thereby learn the hidden truths.

In effect, what Jesus was describing in the parable was exactly what was happening among the people to whom He was speaking: some would dismiss it without another thought; some would be initially enthusiastic, but their interest was shallow; some were interested by the temptations of the world would lure them away; and some were sincere and would follow Him to learn more, thereby feeding the seed that had been sown in them.

I think the vast majority of us who hear or read this parable apply it in the same way Jesus intended the people to whom He first spoke it to apply it: they were to see themselves in one of the four descriptions of soil. The hope was that they would then apply the teaching to themselves and seek to be the good soil.

This is still a valid application of Jesus' parable. We should see which kind of soil we have been with regard to God's Word in our lives, and, if we have not been the good soil which seeks to be a fertile place for God's Word to take root and grow, we should seek to become that.

However, there is another way to view this parable in our time. It begs the obvious to say that we live in a different time than the folks who first heard this parable spoken by Jesus. In purely chronological terms we live about 1984 years after Jesus told this parable.

But I am thinking of a different way of measuring time. We live after Pentecost, after the giving of the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus. We live after the creation of the Church, and after Jesus gave His disciples, and indeed the whole Church on earth, the Great Commission.

That Commission tells each and every one of the followers of Jesus to go and tell the world about Him, and by the telling to make disciples of all nations.

What that does to our understanding and application of the parable is this:

We may still apply it to ourselves as the various kinds of ground on which the seed lands;

But, we may also see ourselves as the farmer!

We are the ones who have received the commission to spread the seed, the Word of God. We are the Word-sowers, the Gospel farmers of God in our time and to the people of our world.

So while we may take from this parable the lesson that we are to do all we can to make sure that God's Word always finds a welcome place to grow in our hearts,

we must also remember that we carry the sacred privilege and responsibility to share that Word with others.

That means with people in our family, in our school, in our workplace and neighborhood, and in the world.

Jesus instructs us through this parable about the sowing we are supposed to do.

1. We are to sow liberally. We might look at the farmer in the parable and think, "Well, why isn't

He more careful where He sows the seed? That would be to ask too much of the farmer and of the parable. The people of this time didn't have seed drills or other high-tech farming implements. They sowed by gathering up the hem of their outer garment, pouring the seed in, and casting it by hand. To a certain extent they did not have a lot of control over where the seed landed.

Perhaps what Jesus is saying to us is, "Spread the Word liberally. Don't try to forecast the success of your sowing of the Word. Just get it out there. It is better to spread it liberally and have it fall in places where it is not welcomed, than to be too selective and perhaps miss some of the fertile ground that is waiting to receive it. So tell others about Jesus and don't be shy about it.

2. A second lesson may be that Jesus doesn't hold us responsible for the success of the sowing process. He only asks us to sow, to share Him with others, to spread the Word. The Holy Spirit will take care of the success of the process. We are no more responsible for the way a person receives the Word than the farmer in the

parable was responsible for the way in which the various kinds of soil receives the seed.

Mother Theresa once said, “God does not call us to be successful. He calls us to try.” Another way to phrase that is: God does not call us to be success. He calls us to obedience.”

3. Finally, we need to remember that something that is implicit in the parable is not true for us. A farmer in Jesus’ time had only so much seed, and his life depended on how well that seed took root and grew and produced. There is no limit to the Word of God. We will never run out. There is an eternal supply. We need not be stingy with it or selective with it. And our life does not depend on the success of the seed. Our life is secure through faith in Jesus.