

August 2, 2020

"Who do you say that I am?"

"Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say that I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked, "Who do you say that I am?"

Mark 8:27-29

While it is important to recognize that Jesus, the Christ, was, and really still is, a healer, it is also important to recognize Jesus, the teacher. In Mark's Gospel, chapter four, our Lord continues his ministry in the area around Capernaum. At the beginning of the chapter Jesus is teaching near the Sea of Galilee and the crowd is so large along the shore that he gets into a boat to teach.

As a teacher, Jesus often used parables to make his lessons clear to those who wanted to understand them. In this account Jesus is teaching one of the most wellknown of the parables; 'The Sower'. In this parable a farmer went out to sow his crops after the manner common in those days.

In sowing his seed some of it fell along the path and the birds quickly came and ate it. Some of the seed fell on rocky ground without much soil and while it came up quickly it soon died off. Other seed fell among the weeds and even though it came up the weeds quickly choked it out. And finally, some of the seed fell on **"good soil"** that produced a good crop.

Amazingly the Apostles didn't really get the lesson from this parable and indeed that was to some degree why Jesus used parables. **"...they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding..."** In this circumstance Jesus could just be talking about the haphazard way farmers planted their crops or he could be presenting a deep spiritual truth. So, those who wanted to find the spiritual truths found in parables, can.

In his explanation of this parable Jesus helps the twelve to understand the spiritual truths it contains. The farmer in the parable is sowing the Word of God. Among those who receive that Word are some like the seed along the path. As soon as they receive the Word Satan comes and takes it away.

Others are like the seed planted in rocky ground. They receive the Word with joy, but since they never develop deep roots they survive only a short time and when trouble comes they quickly fall away.

Still others are like the seed sown among the weeds. The seed produces but the worries and cares of this life and the pursuit of worldly things leaves them unfruitful. Of course some of those who receive the Word are like seed planted in good soil. These believers will grow and develop and reproduce their faith in others.

There are, as is most often true of parables, many lessons to be gleaned from this simple story. The farmer, Jesus says, goes out to sow the seed. The first obvious lesson is that the seed must be sown. Believers are called to **"...make disciples..."** and to **"...preach the Word..."** We who have chosen to follow Jesus will sow the seed of the Word of God in the lives of those around us, both through how we live and what we teach.

Another lesson from this parable focuses on the nature of the Word. If it is given any chance at all the Word of God will produce in the lives of those who receive it. The only exception to that would be if Satan steals the Word before it can produce.



The Word planted in shallow hearts will produce, the Word planted in distracted hearts will produce, and the Word planted in open hearts will produce. Given any chance at all, the Word of God will always produce.

Of course what it produces depends on the nature of those hearts that receive it. Shallow hearts will grab hold of the Word and experience its saving power, but when trials come those same believers will fail. Distracted hearts will receive the Word and it will produce in them but their pursuit of the things of this world will keep them from being productive.



And, the Word planted in the hearts of those who are really seeking a deep and abiding relationship with the Master will be productive; it will have to be. That is the nature of the Word planted in us.

So, as those who believe, those who have received the Word, what kind of hearts do we have. Is our response shallow and easily overwhelmed? Is our response distracted because we are pursuing the things of this world? Or, is our response productive because our lives have truly been surrendered to the Son of God? What is the Word producing in and through our hearts?