

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – Parables – 20-26 July 2024

Christ would have us spread the gospel entrusted to us and not shut it to ourselves. “And He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.” (Mark 4:24-25). That was spoken to those to whom God had given talents. He gave them these talents to be used. And the one who received the talents, and did not use them, is the one who did not have them when the end came. The one that received them and used them is the one who in the end had them; and he also got what the other one had and did not use. So, whatever is given in outreach literature, which is brought to the people, it is in order that the people might pass it on to those who have it not. And if it should be that those to whom this work has come should study this for their own sakes, and then shut it in to themselves, and themselves in with it, then there could be no surer token that that people have forfeited all the light and the truth that God ever gave, or ever can give, to that people; and the kingdom of God will be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. This is some of the meaning that lies in the distribution of truth-filled literature.

Sunday: The Parable of the Sower – What is the parable of the Sower, what is the narrative of the parable? “Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 4:3-9).

Monday: Jesus’ Interpretation – What is Jesus’ interpretation of the Sower’s parable? “The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred” (Mark 4:14-20).

Tuesday: The Reason for the Parables – What is the reason for the parable of the Sower, what lessons do we learn from this in general? “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground” (Mark 4:26). Let us think for a little while of some more of the lessons of the kingdom that the seed teaches us. Do you get any flowers in your garden just by wishing they were there? No, you must put in the seed before anything will grow. And then you do not sow any kind of seed that you can get hold of, and expect to get from it the particular flowers that you want. You must sow the right kind of seed, the seed of just the flowers that you want, just where you want them, for everything is sure to spring up “after its kind” (Genesis 1:11). If you should very much want some roses, and should sow poppy seeds, would you get any roses? Oh, no; all your wishes could never make roses grow from weeds, nor from anything but rose trees. You cannot “gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles” (Matthew 7:16). And just so, nothing will grow in your hearts without seed.

Just as you can have in your garden the flowers that you want by putting in the right seed, so you can have your lives just what you wish them to be by having the right kind of seed sown in your hearts. If you want, and I am sure you do, to have the gentleness and kindness of Christ blossom and bring forth fruit in your lives, you must have the good seed of the Word of God sown in your hearts. When God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass,” in that Word He was putting into the ground the seed of all the grass and flowers that have ever

sprung up. When He said, "Let the earth bring forth ... the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind" (Genesis 1:11), that was the seed of all the fruit that there has ever been in the earth.

He has made you from the dust of the ground, and you are His garden where He plants the seed of His Word, that you may bring forth just what He wishes. When He says to you, "Little children, love one another" (1 John 3:18), He is sowing in your hearts the seed of love, from which all loving words and actions will spring forth like sweetest blossoms. And then Jesus says to you, "Be ye kind one to another" (Ephesians 4:32), and that is the seed of kindness that He puts into you. He says also, "Children, obey your parents" (Ephesians 6:1), and this Word of God is the seed of obedience that He sows in your hearts. When you sow seed in the earth you do not have to try to make it grow; neither does the earth try to bring it forth, but it springs up of itself because the life of God is in it. Man cannot produce life in plants. "It is only through the life which God Himself has imparted, that either plant or animal can live" {SC 67.2}. Jesus says, "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). Listen, then, to the precious words of Jesus, and so receive them into your hearts as the earth receives the seed, and you will not have to try to love one another, to be kind and obedient and gentle, but these graces of the Spirit of Jesus will spring forth in your lives as naturally as the flowers spring from the seed that you sow in the ground.

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus shows how important it is that the ground should be prepared to receive the seed. It must sink deep into the soft ground, and then it will spring up and bring forth fruit. Your hearts, which are the garden of the Lord, must be prepared by Him for the seed of the Word which He sows in them. If you ask Him, His Holy Spirit will work in you, and make your heart soft and tender and ready for the good seed. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119:11). As the seed is buried in the soil, the Word must be hidden in our hearts. We shall be among whom He says, "These are they which, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit unto perfection" (Luke 8:15).

Wednesday: Lamp and Measuring Basket – How do we apply these two parables? "Jesus used the light of a candle to represent his doctrines, which illuminate the souls of those who accept them. This light is not to be hidden from the world, but should shine forth to enlighten and bless those who behold it. The instruction received by those who listened to Jesus was to be communicated by them to others, and thus handed down to posterity. He also declared that there was nothing hidden that should not be manifested. Whatever was in the heart would sooner or later be revealed by the actions; and these would determine whether the seed sown had taken root in their minds and borne goodly fruit, or whether the thorns and brambles had won the day. He admonished them to hear and understand him. To improve the blessed privileges then extended to them, would result in their own salvation and through them would benefit others" {2SP 243.1}. "And with what measure of sincere attention they listened to his instructions, they would receive like measure of knowledge in return. All who truly desired to understand his doctrines would be fully satisfied; their Heaven-given privileges would increase; their light would brighten unto the perfect day. But those who did not desire the light of truth would grope in darkness and be overcome by the powerful temptations of Satan. They would lose their dignity and self-control, and the little knowledge of which they had boasted when they declared that they had no need of Christ, and scorned the guidance of Him who left a throne in Heaven to save them" {2SP 243.2}.

Thursday: Parables of Growing Seed – In Mark 4:26-28, what is the meaning of the parable wherein the seed grows automatically once planted in good soil? The seed is the word of God, the soil is the human heart. We take the word of God within the heart, and there it works automatically. We are familiar with the working of an automaton, as a wax figure, for instance, by the power of a concealed mechanism which moves head or limbs in imitation of life. Just so the word of God in the heart of the believer is a power working by him automatically. Not that the believer is a machine, but in this case the automaton is an intelligent one, having the power of choice, willing to be acted upon, and yielding to the power within. The spring of the power is not a mechanism, but Divine life in the word. The working of this life will be the working of God's life, and a man who is willing to have his own life effaced, to be controlled wholly by the life of the word, will know daily that Paul enjoins no impossible things when he says to us, "Be ye, therefore, imitators of God" (Ephesians 5:1).