

Series: Mark — Summer 2020 Series

Title: "How's Your Heart?"

Text: Mark 4:1-9 and 13-20

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Verse 1

In chapter four Mark retells some of Jesus' parables. The gospel writer shares four different parables within the chapter. Mark 4:1-9 and 13-20 contain what is commonly called "the Parable of the Sower." Mark 4:21-25 recounts "the Parable of the Lamp Stand," Mark 4:26-29 gives "the Parable of the Growing Seed," and Mark 4:30-32 shares "the Parable of the Mustard Seed." In Mark 4:10-12 and 33-34 Jesus gives an explanation concerning why He liked to use parables as a teaching method.

Verse one of the chapter reads, "Again he began to teach by the sea, and a very large crowd gathered around him. So he got into a boat on the sea and sat down, while the whole crowd was by the sea on the shore." As the new scene begins, we once again find Jesus by the seaside. He chose the same location for ministering in 3:7. He likely selected the place for purposes related to safety. The Sanhedrin delegation was lined up in opposition against Him (Mark 3:22). The Pharisees and Herodians were plotting to kill Him (Mark 3:6). By being out in the open by the seaside, our Lord wasn't susceptible to a murderous attack.

As Jesus taught, "a very large crowd" thronged to hear Him. A similar frenzy is seen in 1:33; 2:4; 2:15; 3:7; 3:20; and 3:32. In our current text, Mark uses an elative form of the superlative.¹ His language is intended to stress the magnitude of the crowd. Some believe the gospel writer meant to say that this was the biggest crowd yet to witness Jesus' teaching.² The mass of spectators would surely be outraged if the officials tried to apprehend Him.

Seeing the crowd, Jesus took an opportunity to teach. Mark tells us "He got into a boat on the sea and sat down." Jesus adopts the same teaching posture he used back in 3:9. Because of the mass of humanity that pressed upon Him, He chose to teach in an anchored boat that rested in the water, just off of the seashore. Doing so provided a barrier between Himself and the throng of people. It created a better atmosphere for preaching.

There is an interesting word play in our text. The Greek word translated "shore" is the same one used for "ground" in verses eight and twenty. Mark seems to strategically use the word to depict the people on the seashore as the different types of "soils" in the parable.³ Jesus' lesson will focus on the receptivity of hearers to the gospel message. Every man, woman, boy, and girl has a responsibility to listen well to what Jesus says. Poor spiritual hearing can result in great peril. Emotional and spiritual destruction plague those who are deaf to the words of Jesus. Each should read the parable and consider what type of soil he or she may be.

Verse 2

Verse 2 describes Jesus' teaching method, saying, "He taught them many things in parables." The verb translated "taught" appears in the imperfect tense. It depicts a continual action in the past. Apparently Jesus spent a good amount of time teaching many things on this occasion. He undoubtedly used many parables. Our text simply records a few brief snippets from the teaching session.

¹ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 73.

² Schnabel, 100.

³ Garland, 152.

The Greek word for “parables” is a compound word that literally means “to place beside.” It depicts the way in which the teaching method implemented comparisons for the purpose of instruction. Parables were stories “thrown along side” a lesson in order to convey an important point. They were typically brief stories that used a compelling image to impart important spiritual truth.⁴

Some mistakingly confuse parables with allegories. In doing so, they adopt a flawed method of interpretation that seeks to find spiritual meaning in every detail of the story. Parables are different than allegories in that they usually focus on one overall main point. The details of a parable typically aren’t as significant as many think. They are only meant to bolster the narrative that conveys one, big important idea.⁵ Sure, there are often shades of meaning, and rich sub-truths contained within parables, but we should on guard against trying to find profound meaning in each detail. Jesus usually told a parable for one main purpose. The overall point in our current parable is to show why so many Jews rejected Jesus. Remember the way they responded to Him in 3:20-35. Even His own family labelled Him a lunatic. Jesus’ parable of the sower shows that the different responses were based on the heart condition of His hearers.

Amongst evangelical Christians, parables have famously been defined as “earthly stories with heavenly meanings.” That definition, however, seems to fall short.⁶ Parables are often understood amongst professing believers. The stories in Jesus’ parables were indeed designed to help sincere, spiritual seekers understand profound spiritual realities. But they also served another purpose. Jesus’ parables masked Jesus Messianic claims.

Our Lord used the teaching device to mask His true identity, because He knew that He had opponents who wanted to have Him killed (3:6). He used parables with outsiders so that His Messianic claims would not be clearly understood. He purposely muddled the proverbial waters. He didn’t want to give the Pharisees more fodder for their secret plots. As the sovereign God, He aimed to keep things in line with the schedule of Providence. He knew He was destined to die for sins, but He didn’t want His death to be premature. Because of His storytelling method, many of the religious elite likely dismissed Jesus as a cooky, folksy spiritualist.⁷

Verse 3

Verse three introduces the theme of our first parable. It says, ““Listen! Consider the sower who went out to sow.” (Mark 4:3). In the Jewish mind, the sowing of seed was a picture for the work of God in the life of people. This perspective was based on Ezekiel 36:9.⁸ First century Jews were also familiar with the way in which the metaphor of sowing was used in Jeremiah 31:27-28. In that passage it depicted a great eschatological work of God in the midst of His covenant people. Maybe Jesus’ use of the parable in our text shows that the preaching of the gospel was a fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy.⁹

⁴ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 73.

⁵ Brooks, 77.

⁶ Schnabel, 99.

⁷ Ferguson, 53.

⁸ Garland, 156.

⁹ Garland, 156.

Whatever the case, the verb translated “listen” at the beginning of verse four appears thirteen times in chapter four.¹⁰ It is used here to introduce the main point of the parable. Jesus’ story was meant to convey the importance of spiritual attentiveness. With the command, He beckoned His followers to carefully listen to His teaching. Jesus’ opening words surely reminded His Jewish readers of the Shema, a seminal teaching within the Decalogue: “Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Apart from gathering the attention of those in attendance, the call to “listen” also showed that parables can be hard to understand. Their meanings aren’t intended to be self-evident.¹¹ One should carefully pay attention in order to not miss their meaning (see Mark 4:11-12 and 33-34). Indeed, amongst Jesus’ hearers many walked away without grasping the full meaning of the lesson they heard.

After gathering His hearer’s attention, Jesus went on to set the scene for His story. He said, “Consider the sower who went out...”. Sowing seed was a common action in the first century. Our Lord’s listeners were all familiar with the object lesson at hand. The villages surrounding Nazareth were steeped in agrarian culture. In Jesus’ day, seed was placed in an apron worn by the sower. As the sower walked along, he or she used one hand to sling seed. It was assumed that seed would randomly fall on different types of surfaces.¹² The success of sowing would be determined by the receptiveness of the soils upon which the seed fell.

Our parable has often been called “the parable of the sower.” Because of its intended purpose, it might more appropriately be called “the parable of the soils.”¹³ Jesus wanted His readers to be aware of the importance of spiritual receptivity. Religious seekers need to make sure they have good spiritual hearing. All are prone to spiritual dullness. In Jesus’ economy, there is a vast difference between merely hearing and truly listening. Those who hear the words of Scripture or sermons must make sure they are truly receiving God’s Word.

Verse 4

Farming techniques in Jesus’ day were different than those employed in our day. Whereas modern farmers usually till land before sowing, ancient farmers first scattered seed. After seed was thrown upon the earth, one would come behind and plow it into the dirt.¹⁴ In our parable, Jesus will speak of four different types of soil upon which a sower sowed seed. Each represents differing spiritual conditions of human hearts. The “seed” in Jesus’ story represents the Word of God (4:14). It is the message of the gospel, the one proclaimed by Jesus in Mark 1:14-15 – “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

The first soil involves an ancient “path.” Jesus says, “As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it” (Mark 4:4). The “path” seems to represent the act of thoughtlessly listening to God’s Word. Such hearing makes little impact on the life of the listener. In modern jargon, we would say the act involves God’s Word going “in one ear and out the other.” Or, one could refer to it as the “water off a duck’s back” reception. The listener

¹⁰ Garland, 151.

¹¹ Brooks, 79.

¹² Brooks, 79.

¹³ Brooks, 80.

¹⁴ Ferguson, 53.

casually hears and dismisses the message. The claims of Christ have no lasting impression on the soul and mind.¹⁵

The possibility of such a perilous spiritual condition underscores why Jesus' injunctions to "listen" (Mark 4:3) are so desperately needed. Human minds have a tendency to ignore important spiritual truth. It is for this reason that our Lord calls people to listen in the gospels (Matthew 11:15, 13:9, and 13:43; Mark 4:9, 4:23, and 7:16; Luke 8:8 and 14:35). In addition, it is why He charged first-century churches of Asia Minor to hear what He said (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, and 29; 3:6, 13, and 22). Our Lord was well aware that His words often fell on deaf ears.

He also knew that thoughtless listening was dangerous. When one lets the Word of God roll right through his or her mind with little regard for what is said, spiritual catastrophe is imminent. Jesus spoke of this reality by depicting "birds" who "devoured" the seed on the path. The original language of the text uses perfect tense verbiage that means "to eat up completely."¹⁶ This instance represents an occasion in which sown seed never has a chance to germinate.¹⁷ In reference to the hearing of God's Word, it depicts an occasion in which the preaching of the gospel makes no impression on a person. Because the listener doesn't listen well, the gospel has no potential to produce life transformation.

Verses 5 and 6

In verses five and six, Jesus describes a second type of response to the Word of God. He says, "Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn't have much soil, and it grew up quickly, since the soil wasn't deep. When the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away" (Mark 4:5-6). Fields in first century Canaan were notorious for rocks.¹⁸ Farmers who heard Jesus' teaching were well aware of what He was talking about. It was nearly impossible to yield a crop out of rocky ground. In the instance described in our parable, sown seed germinates, but it dies shortly thereafter.¹⁹ Such would be the likely outcome if one was to plant seed in rocky soil. As we will see in verse sixteen, this second soil depicts a person who hears the Word, accepts it, but does not respond with repentance.

Verse 7

The third type of soil is seen in verse 7. Mark records Jesus' words: "Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it didn't produce fruit" (Mark 4:7). Farmers were well accustomed to battling thorns in first-century Canaan. For those who tended to gardens and farms, thistly vines were a common pestilence.²⁰ If not addressed, such undesired growth could strangle crops, cutting off the supply of minerals and water from the ground.²¹

Jesus uses the imagery of a thorny vine to depict the way some respond to the Word of God. When some hear gospel proclamations, the seed of the truth germinates in their heart and produces what appears to be fruit. In time, however, the new growth is choked and killed

¹⁵ Ferguson, 53.

¹⁶ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 73.

¹⁷ Schnabel, 101.

¹⁸ Brooks, 79.

¹⁹ Schnabel, 101.

²⁰ Brooks, 79.

²¹ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 74.

by proverbial weeds and thorns.²² Based on Jesus' interpretation of His parable (Mark 4:19), we knew that the third soil represents the condition of misplaced priorities — the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10) and the love of the world (1 John 2:15-17). The Bible says, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:10). Instead of following after the things of the world, people would be wise to follow after the things of the Lord. Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you" (Matthew 6:33).

Jesus here speaks against what we could call "the Demas Disease" (2 Timothy 4:10). Those who fall into the category of the third soil love the things of the world too much; thus, they neglect the things of the Lord to their own peril. They are like the rich, young ruler of Mark 10:17-31. Due to their inordinate affection for money and material things, they are unwilling to fully embrace Christ. They are like the rich man who foolishly found his strength, security, significance, and satisfaction in his big barns and worldly attainments (Luke 12:13-21).

They stand in need of Jesus' warning from Matthew 6:19-21: "Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." They need to be gripped by the reality of 1 John 2:17: "And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever." They need to be convicted by the realities of James 4:4: "You adulterous people! Don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes the enemy of God." Let it be known that every one will either be defined by what the world says or what the Word says. Don't let the world choke out God's Word in your life!

Verse 8

In verse eight, Jesus describes a fourth and final type of soil. He says, "Still other seed fell on good ground and it grew up, producing fruit that increased thirty, sixty, and a hundred times." The fourth soil is the only one that produces a positive result. We should regard it as being representative of regenerate believers.

Jesus' parable demonstrates that true faith is always accompanied by fruit. There will be a result, an outward demonstration, of repentance when one is really born again. True conversion includes a transformation of soul, mind, and external character (2 Corinthians 5:17). Good works will adorn the life of the one who has real faith (James 2:17). Remember, Jesus said, "A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So you'll recognize them by their fruit" (Matthew 7:18-20). Without a show of fruit, it is doubtful that one is really regenerate. J.C. Ryle has said, "To be without fruit, is to be in the way to hell."²³ Fruit is what matters in our spiritual development.²⁴ Without it, we give witness that we haven't really listened to Jesus.

Verse 9

Jesus closed his first remarks on the Parable of the Sower by saying, "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen" (Mark 4:9). His challenge indicates that the parable must be understood, it must not just be heard. There is a meaning to the parable that is not self-evident to everyone who hears it. Those who want to be blessed by its truth must listen carefully. Spiritual attentiveness is necessary for those who want to experience the abundant life of Christ.

²² Schnabel, 101.

²³ Ryle, 53.

²⁴ Robertson, 285.

Surface-level readings of Scripture and casual participation in worship services won't cut it. The Kingdom belongs to those who put away their religious presuppositions and listen to Jesus intently.

Verse 10

Verse ten contains a transition. Mark says, "When he was alone, those around him with the Twelve, asked him about the parables." Apparently, Jesus and His disciples left the crowd on the seashore (Mark 4:1) and found a secluded place for rest and reflection. Once they were alone, the disciples quizzed Jesus concerning His use of parables. They had never heard a rabbi teach in such a way. The customary method was different. Religious teachers in Judea were known for simply regurgitating quotations of past rabbis. Pupils were taught to quote Scriptures and rabbinical commentaries from rote memory. Consequently, the disciples were curious concerning Jesus' strange style. Jesus took the opportunity to give a deeper explanation concerning His use of parables. Mark depicts a group of disciples (including the Twelve) as sitting around Him. The scene involves the typical teaching posture of a first-century rabbi. We saw Jesus teach in a similar way back in 3:34.

Verse 11

In verse eleven, Jesus begins His explanation concerning His use of parables by saying, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those outside, everything comes in parables." First century Jews were familiar with the concept of a theological "secret." The book of Daniel had popularized the concept in the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:1-49). In Daniel 2:30, the prophet told the king of Babylon that the Lord had given him understanding into Divine mysteries. In using this concept in his gospel, Mark makes reference to the book of Daniel for the second time. Previously, an allusion to the post-exilic prophet can be seen in the application of the title "Son of Man" to Jesus (2:10).

The Greek word translated "secret" is the same word translated "mystery" elsewhere in the New Testament (Romans 16:25 and Ephesians 1:9 and 3:3-4). It refers to something previously unrevealed in God's revelatory process, something that is unknowable apart from divine revelation.²⁵ One has defined the concept, saying, "It does not refer to something unknowable or esoteric but to something that can only be communicated by divine revelation...it refers to heaven truth that is concealed from human understanding but is made known by God."²⁶

According to Jesus, the truth of the kingdom would remain mysterious "to those outside." His words picturesquely remind us of Jesus' family standing outside of the house while He taught the crowd in 3:31. Here, the label refers to all unbelievers who have rejected Jesus. Our Lord means to say that His use of parables was intended to prevent non-regenerate people from understanding gospel truth. His explanation goes against the grain of contemporary evangelical thought. Our Lord did not implement the teaching device for purposes of creativity, or to make His message more easy to understand. His approach was not "seeker sensitive." One commentator has remarked, "The parables are not 'helpful illustrations' that reveal the secret of the kingdom of God to people who have difficulties understanding Jesus' teaching."²⁷ Jesus actually used parables for the exact opposite reason. In keeping with His efforts to conceal His true identity (1:25, 34, and 44; 3:12), He used the device to mask His Messianic nature.

Verse 12

²⁵ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 74.

²⁶ Garland, 157.

²⁷ Schnabel, 103.

Verse twelve contains a quotation of Isaiah 6:9-11. Jesus' citation gives the rationale behind His use of parables. He used the teaching method because there were many in His day who were unwilling to hear truth, just as there were many in Isaiah's day who were unwilling to hear truth. Parables actually served the purpose of increasing the blindness of the unrepentant. They kept the unregenerate from faith and repentance. The device served as a sort of spiritual litmus test that distinguished believers from unbelievers. Only those who had faith would get the point of the story. One has commented, "Parables are more than mere illustrations. They constitute spiritual tests that separate those who understand from those who do not."

Verse 13

In verse thirteen, Jesus rebukes His disciples for their lack of understanding. He says, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand all of the parables?" (Mark 4:13). Others were blinded to the meaning of the story about the sower, but His followers should have gotten it. Their slowness in grasping the mission and ministry of Jesus is an oft-repeated theme in Mark's Gospel (see 4:40; 6:52; 7:18; 8:17-18; 8:32; 9:19; and 9:32).²⁸ Because of their spiritual dim-wittedness, Jesus had to explain the precise meaning of His teaching. As a result, we see a detailed explanation of His parable in verses 14-20.

Verse 14

In verse 14, Jesus flatly tells His disciples, "The sower sows the word" (Mark 4:14). In doing so, He gives the meaning of the seed metaphor. The seed in the parable is the Word of God. James, the half brother of Jesus who initially rejected Jesus' claims (Mark 3:21), would later use this same comparison in James 1:21. Paul would use the same metaphor when writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:5-9). The sown seed represents the proclamation of God's truth. Most likely, Jesus had in mind the message that He Himself preached, the message of the Kingdom He declared back in Mark 1:15 — "Repent and believe."

Verse 15

Jesus gives an explanation for the first type of soil in verse 15: "Some are like the word sown on the path. When they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word sown in them." Our Lord shows that Satan works tirelessly to deceive men and women. A spiritual battle silently grinds behind the veil of what is seen. Mark's Gospel has already commented on this invisible war. It has spoken openly concerning the way in which demonic forces seek to oppress and control people (1:23-26).

Unbeknownst to most of humanity, the devil tirelessly labors to spiritually blind (2 Corinthians 4:4) and ensnare (1 Peter 5:8) people. Despite the power that Satan wields on earth, Mark's Gospel was quick to tell of the way in which Jesus personally defeated Satan (Mark 1:12-13) and exercised power over the demonic realm (1:27 and 34). Those who fall into the lot of the first soil are victims to spiritual deception. Though they hear the word, it never takes root. Before they can respond, Satan snatches the truth from their souls. They remain in an unregenerate and depraved state. Without grace and hope, they await a destiny of eternal doom.

Verses 16 and 17

Verses 16 and 17 give the meaning of the second soil: "And others are like seed sown on rocky ground. When they hear the word, immediately they receive it with joy. But they have no root; they are short-lived. When distress or persecution comes because of the word, they immediately fall away" (Mark 4:16-17). The verb translated "fall away" in verse 17 is a perfect

²⁸ Schnabel, 104

tense verb that means “to stumble” or “to be offended.”²⁹ It is the Greek word from which we get our word “scandal.”

This condition represents individuals who are impressed by the gospel, but quickly fall away when they understand the true nature of Christ’s calling. Such people have faith without repentance. In 1:15, Jesus proclaimed that both responses were needed in order for one to receive the Kingdom of God. Perhaps He used the metaphor of the rocky ground to indict those who had a fascination concerning His ministry while lacking a heart change. There are many individuals today who fall in the rocky ground camp. They attend church, they profess to be Christ-followers, and they often hear the Word of God taught. However, they never bring forth the fruit of real repentance. May we examine our lives to make sure we don’t have hearts that are hard and rocky to gospel truth.

Verses 18 and 19

The next two verses give a summary of the third type of soil: “Others are like seed sown among thorns; these are the ones who hear the word, but the worries of this age, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:18-19). As mentioned earlier, the third soil condition represents a worldly heart. It depicts people who hear God’s truth but turn their back on it because of their preoccupation with worldly endeavors.

Jesus depicts such worldly care with a few different phrases. First, He says it is dominated by “worries of this age.” The word translated “worries” refers to a life-dominating care or concern. It depicts a continual apprehension regarding misfortune. Those who are given over to worldly desire are ones who live with constant distress over their money and material things.³⁰ Their minds are constantly occupied with concern for how to make more money, manage their money, and keep their money.

Second, Jesus says worldly people are overcome by “the deceitfulness of wealth.” The word translated “deceitfulness” is one that refers to an enticement.³¹ Money and material things have a way of deluding people. They can seduce hearts away from God. They trick people into thinking they offer true security and satisfaction.³² It is no wonder the Bible often speaks of sexual sin and greed in parallel fashion (2 Timothy 3:1-6 and 1 John 2:16). The pursuit of prosperity blinds people to heavenly realities. It deceives souls into thinking the material world is what is most important. Later in Mark’s Gospel, we will learn of how a young ruler (10:17-22) and Judas (14:10-11) both fell prey to the seducing power of materialism.³³

Lastly, our Lord says the worldly are dominated by “the desires for other things.” The Greek word translated “desires” is not always a negative one in the New Testament. It simply speaks of a desire or longing.³⁴ In our current text, it speaks of the act of having one’s affection set upon something. However, the context depicts passions or longings that are ungodly, sensual, and worldly.³⁵ Ultimately, it is such passions that prevent the growth of God’s Word in the hearts of worldly people.

²⁹ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 74.

³⁰ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 74.

³¹ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 74.

³² Schnabel, 105.

³³ Garland, 163.

³⁴ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 74.

³⁵ Robertson, 285.

Verse 20

In verse 20, Jesus describes the one good type of soil in His parable. He says, “And those like seed sown on good ground hear the word, welcome it, and produce fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundred times what was sown” (Mark 4:20). The fourth soil is good soil. It represents a person who gladly receives the Word of God. Jesus uses the word “welcome” to describe the reception such individuals give to gospel preaching. The text uses a middle voice verb.³⁶ It depicts a person performing an action upon one’s self. The verb means “to receive” or “to accept.”³⁷ It depicts a favorable reception of a person, place, or thing.³⁸ Jesus’ teaching shows the importance of people having a hospitable acceptance of God’s Word. One can be cold and calloused to the entrance of heavenly light, or one can be warm and receptive. The latter response is the desirable one. Paul encouraged the early church to adopt such a receptivity to revealed truth: “Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (Colossians 3:16).

In the end, such a reception produces a powerful result. Jesus speaks of how faithful hearers “produce fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundred times.” The yield of “a hundred times” may seem like an exaggeration. Canaanite harvests usually brought a seven or eight fold return.³⁹ Jesus uses exaggeration in His parable for the purpose of showing the power of the Word of God. Quite possibly, it contains an allusion to the blessing experienced by Isaac in Genesis 26:12. Because of the patriarch’s experience, the number one hundred was a numerical standard for God’s blessing in the Jewish mind.⁴⁰

The yield of the fourth soil reminds us that God’s Word, though often rejected by most people, will ultimately bring a harvest every time it is proclaimed. Jesus’ parable reminds us of the truth of Isaiah 55:10-11: “For just as rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return there without saturating the earth and making it germinate and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, so my word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do.”⁴¹ Modern Christians shouldn’t be shy, fearful, or bashful in proclaiming God’s Word. If they will only sow the seed of Scripture, there will be some sort of harvest.

³⁶ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 74.

³⁷ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 74.

³⁸ Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 74.

³⁹ Brooks, 79.

⁴⁰ Garland, 154.

⁴¹ Garland, 156.