

Scripture - Mark 4:1-20 Parable of the Sower
Part 4 - The One Story: Is the Bible True for Everybody?
(Metanarrative)

This fall for our Bible study we're asking - what is the Bible? So we're asking all these fun, hard questions about the Bible that the Bible asks and answers about itself. The question today is about the one story of the Bible: **Is the Bible true for everybody?**

Problem: *The Bible may work for Christians but it doesn't work for everybody who's ever lived. So don't say it's for everybody.*

[Parable of the Sower] Let's jump in and read the parable of the sower in Mark 4:1-20.

Parables are like riddles. What do you do when you can't get the answer to a riddle? Ask the riddler. You have to go to the riddler and ask them to give you the answer and explain the riddle. The parable: Jesus says the seed that the sower sows is the word of God. The sower is Jesus. The four different kinds of soils are the different ways we could respond to Jesus and his word.

[1st Response] What's the first kind of response some people have to Jesus and his Word?

V.4: the hard path. The sower throws some seed and it falls on the path and birds come along and eat the seed up. Gotta know a little basic agriculture here that everyone back in the day would have known. You don't throw seed on a path that everybody walks on - why? It's a road, it's so hard and compact. That's like throwing seed in the middle of your street and thinking a plant is going to grow up. The road is so hard that you can't grow anything on it. This is a NO response to Jesus.

The word of Jesus does not get into your heart because your heart is too hard. These are people who hear the gospel and their

immediate response is: *"I can't believe people still believe this ridiculous stuff. It's offensive. It's just myths."* Or they say, *"Yeah yeah I've heard all this before, not for me."*

The bird that comes along and eats up that seed is the devil. But the devil is not making people NOT believe in Jesus. The devil just plays off the hardness of their heart. If your heart is full of pride the devil comes along and agrees with your pride, "This word about Jesus is weak and for weak people, you don't need this Word about Jesus." If your heart is full of fear the devil comes along and agrees with your fear, "This word about Jesus is scary, hateful, no good, too costly, you don't need this Word about Jesus."

[2nd Response] What's the second kind of response some people have to Jesus and his Word?

V.7: the rocky soil. So seed goes in, little sprout springs up but then the sun comes and scorches the little sprout because it's got no roots so it can't get any water to survive the heat. This is a SURFACE response to Jesus.

The rocky soil are people who receive the Word with joy which sounds great but clearly that's not enough. The scary thing is that Jesus says some people respond to his Word with all sorts of passion but then...life gets hard and these people ditch Jesus. Some people follow Jesus because they think he will make them wealthy, healthy, happy but then suffering comes or the church gets persecuted and they decide they don't want Jesus or his Word.

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[3rd Response] What's the third kind of response some people have to Jesus and his Word?

V.5: the soil with weeds. The seed starts growing but it's in this place surrounded by weeds and the weeds start growing up with the seed and grow around it and start choking it and end up killing the plant. This is a **WORLDLY** response to Jesus.

Jesus says these are people who say and act like they follow Jesus but ultimately they care about what the world cares about not what Jesus cares about. They want the world, not Jesus. If there are things in your life that are more important than Jesus - whatever those things are they will slowly suffocate and kill your spiritual life.

[4th Response] What's the fourth kind of response some people have to Jesus and his Word?

V.8: the good soil. The seed falls on good soil and produces tons of fruit. This is the one **FAITHFUL** response to Jesus.

Jesus says in v.20 that these are people who hear Jesus, accept him and produce fruit.

Well, how do you know if you're good soil and respond to Jesus in the only appropriate way there is?

One, you can know you're good soil if you know you're not bad soil. And, when you respond to Jesus like this you're going to see this fruit in your life. You'll believe in Jesus and love his church! You'll grow all your life to look more and more like his character. And you'll see out of that Christian character flowing good deeds, good works = acts of love toward God and toward others.

Back to the Problem: *The Bible may work for you but it doesn't work for everybody who's ever lived.*

Is the Bible true? Yes

So is it true for everybody? Yes

BUT, does that mean everybody will believe it is true? No, but just because some people don't believe the Bible is true doesn't mean it's not still true.

[World Narratives] **BUT** the world disagrees. The world tells all these other stories and the world expects you to believe these stories are true for everybody. You hear these stories all the time everyday everywhere:

Identity - *You decide who you are. Be true to yourself. And then demand everyone else accept whoever you say you are.*

Happiness - *Do whatever makes you happy. Do whatever you have to do to be happy and don't sacrifice it for anyone.*

Freedom - *You should be free to live however you want. No one has the right to tell anyone else how to live their life.*

Morality - *Decide for yourself what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil.*

Technology - *We don't need God because technology is the answer to all our problems.*

Truth/History - *There is no such thing as "truth." Just stories. This is just the way things are so accept it.*

How do We Respond?

The Bible out stories the world's stories. The Bible out narrates the world's narratives.

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[Metanarrative] Whose story is the Bible?

It's God's story. It's Jesus' story. And, it's our story. The Bible is the metanarrative - the divine story and human story woven together and the threads are intertwined and cannot be pulled apart.

Identity - modern identity is too fragile, smothering, and exclusive because these identities are always at the expense of other people. Only the Bible offers a received identity = Christian, in Christ; that's received, not achieved.

Happiness - modern happiness is an illusion. No one is really happy. The Bible offers contentment, to be blessed with whatever you have right now, whether plenty or want, because you have Jesus right now, and you're more concerned about other people, not yourself, and in heaven you will have absolute glory.

Freedom - modern freedom is unloving. The Bible offers love but loving others will cost independence because you're not just living for yourself. And the Bible offers real freedom from sin, death, and condemnation and instead to be a slave of Jesus and righteousness.

Morality - modern morality is a joke. If everyone gets to decide right and wrong then why does everyone get mad about "injustice". And if only the people in charge of the world get to decide right and wrong then they are oppressors. The Bible offers the doctrine of sin and righteousness to understand how people are broken and headed for judgment and ultimate justice.

Technology - modern technology can tell you about efficiency but now whether or not you

should do something. The Bible offers hope in the face of death.

Truth/History - modern truth/history are not just bare facts to be accepted. All these stories are beliefs that have to be explained and defended not just blindly accepted. The Bible offers history as crucial to understanding everything. The truth of history is not important to modernity or any other religion. The truth of history and the history of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and the hope of the future of his coming again is everything in the Bible.

[Historia] This parable is about receiving the Word of God, and if the Word of God climaxes at the cross then this parable is really about receiving the word about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus; and receiving this Word for salvation. Will you and I receive it and accept it like good soil today and let it have its way with us? And if you respond: "How much must I respond? How much must I come in? How much fruit must I produce?" then you're still outside looking in. Another pastor said, "You must receive and respond to the word of Jesus that says 'I give you my all. And I take...all of you for myself.'"