

# Puzzling Parables

## *Sow & Sow ... and Sow*

Part 7 – October 30, 2016

Welcome to where we're learning what it means to be God's fellow workers.

**Do you see yourself as a co-worker with Christ?** Or, is God more like the Big Boss you occasionally plead with for better benefits? **How would your world change – your attitude, interactions, and manner – if you really truly saw yourself as the official partner you are?**



Two years into ministry, Jesus is at His home office in Capernaum, in a boat, telling nine parables to a massive crowd along the shore. **His parables are *not* as independent as they may seem.** In fact, when He explains His first one, “*The Sower and the Soils*”, He warns:



If you can't understand **this story**, how will you understand **all the others** I am going to tell? – Mark 4:13 NLT

Then, He dovetails “*The Sower and the Soils*” into parable #2: “*The Hidden Lamp*”, which He concludes by saying to His listeners ...



... there is nothing **hidden** that will not be **disclosed** [And, between telling and explaining “*The Sower*”, Jesus says: “*The secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you*” (Mat 13:11); yet, “*He did not say anything to them without using a parable,*” (Mat 13:34) which fulfills Psalm 78:2: “*I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden*” (Mat 13:35)] ...



**Therefore consider carefully how you listen** [to His parables]. Whoever **has** will be given **more** [Has what? “*Good soil is the man who hears the word and understands*” (Mat 13:23). *More what? Understanding* (Mark 4:13)]; whoever **does not have** [a desire to understand], even what he thinks he has will be taken from him.” – Luke 8:17-18 NIV



Hard soil. Shallow soil. Entangled soil. Good soil. **One seed.** One Word. **Four separate responses from so-called seekers.** But, there's *more* to this story. In Genesis God says to the serpent, “***I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed.***” (Gen 3:15)

And, in episode three: “*The Wheat and the Weeds*”, Jesus warns of the *enemy's* seed.

Today's episode is “*Sow & Sow ... and Sow*”. *Having* cautioned us to *listen carefully*, and to *compare the parables*, Jesus ratchets up the difficulty, and the challenge, and provides *no translation*.



He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. **A man scatters seed on the ground.** [Is he Jesus? The enemy? Just a man?] Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though **he does not know how.** [That rules out Jesus] **All by itself the soil produces grain** [Aren’t we the soil?]—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, **he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.**” [So, it is Jesus?] – Mark 4:26-29 NIV

Let’s start with the first word ...

**A man** [*anthrōpos*: mankind] scatters seed on the ground.

He’s not called a farmer or a sower; he’s simply “man”; whereas, in “The Sower”, “the **Sower** [*speirō*] **sows** [*speirō*] the Word”. (Mark 4:14)

In “The Wheat and the Weeds”: “the enemy who **sows** [*speirō*] the **weeds** is the **devil**” (Mat 13:39); and, “the One who **sows** [*speirō*] the **good seed** [shorthand for “the seed on good soil” from “The Sower” (Luke 8:15)] is the **Son of Man**”. (Mat 13:37)

Both are sowers, very serious about their sowing. But, *man* ...

... **scatters seed** [*ballō*: to throw or let go without care where it falls; casting; chucking; flinging; a term not used in regard to sowing] **on the ground.** [*gē*: a feminine gendered noun: Mrs. Earth; as opposed to the masculine gendered “Mr. Universe” (*kosmos*) where Jesus sows (Mat 13:38)]

So, here’s a simple progression of these three seed parables:

1. **Jesus sows the Word**, intentionally, generously, and graciously, on good soil, hard soil, shallow, and thorny.
2. **Satan sows the weeds**, deliberately, to corrupt the wheat.
3. **Mankind scatters both Word and weed** mostly without any understanding, in the same way wheat and weeds cast off their seed.

**Night and day.** [Strong symbols of the two seeds: “You are ... sons of the day. We do not belong to the night ... like others, who are asleep ... For those who sleep, sleep at night ... But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love ... and the hope of salvation” (1 Thes 5:5-8)] **whether he** [mankind] **sleeps** [*katheudō*: a term often applied to those **dead in sin**: “let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled” (1 Thes 5:6); **or dead-dead**: “He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him” (1 Thes 5:10)] **or gets up,** [*egeirō*: **risers; rouses; returns to life**; “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Eph 5:14)] **... the seed** [whether Word or weed] **sprouts and grows,** [“Let both grow together (the Son of Man said in *The Wheat and The Weeds*) until the harvest” (Mat 13:30) at, “the end of the age” (Mat 13:39)]

... though **he** [*man*] **does not know how** [which is why we're not allowed to pull the weeds]. **All by itself** [KJV: *of herself*] the **soil** [*gē: Mrs. Earth*] **produces grain**— [*karpophoreō: bears or brings forth fruit*]

Isaiah uses the equivalent Hebrew feminine noun for earth, when he says, “The earth [*erets*] will give birth to her dead.” (Is 26:19) Jesus’ point isn’t that Mrs. Earth has powers; but, that **man has no part in the unseen power that produces spiritual growth, and no way to judge God’s Kingdom purpose under the surface.**

**We’re part of something grand that we barely understand.**

Don’t be discouraged by apparent rejections, failures, or any self-perceived faults and flaws. *It’s all been baked into the wheat cakes!* He’s the all-knowing *Sower* and we’re the *scatterbrains!*

**So spread His Word even though you’ll likely scatter more than sow.**

Are you God’s fellow worker? As “*the seed in good soil*”, in “The Sower”, **it’s your job to hear His Word, understand it, accept it, retain it, and persevere and produce a crop.** (Mat 13:23; Mark 4:20; Luke 8:15) As the wheat, in “The Wheat and the Weeds”, **it’s your job to grow in faith and love with self-control alongside those weeds.**

As man, in “Sow & Sow ... and Sow”, **it’s your job to spread God’s Word. It’s not your job to force it to take root or grow; but, it is your job to trust that Jesus is co-working beneath the surface.**

... first the **stalk**, [*chortos: grass; blade; growing crop*]



Wheat comes up as grass. And, Isaiah says:

All men are like grass ... The grass withers and the flowers [*tseyts: bloom*] fall ... Surely the people are grass. – Isaiah 40:6-7 NIV

... then the **head**,



Seeds are formed and united in the head.

He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead ... [Paul also calls Him, “*the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*” (1 Cor 15:20)] – Colossians 1:18a NIV

... then the **full** [*plērēs: filled up; complete, lacking nothing, perfect*] **kernel** [*sitos: wheat; grain*] **in the head.** [The Apostle Paul says, “*and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority*” (Col 2:10)]

Solomon, the smartest guy ever, *pre-Jesus*, posed the following riddle ...

There is one who **scatters**, yet **increases** more [Who is it? The generous soul, who scatters truth, hope, and love] ... The **generous soul** [who lives to give of their time, talent, and treasure] will be made rich, and [added bonus:] he who waters will also be watered himself. – Proverbs 11:24-25 NKJ

I love that Jesus pictures us as *scattering* His Word. **It takes the pressure off, and makes it more realistic, and more doable.** And, **if and when it buds, if you're watching, you can water it ... if you're the nurturing type**, which the Apostle Paul *wasn't*.

I [Paul] planted the seed, Apollos [his buddy] watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is **anything** [concerning the power to produce life], but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have **one purpose**, [to be true: to God; to our calling and created purpose; and, to the world, wheat and weed alike] and **each will be rewarded according to his own labor.** [So don't compare] For we are **God's fellow workers** [like in "The Wheat and the Weeds" and "Sow & Sow ... and Sow", and]; you are **God's field** [like in "The Sower and the Soil"] ... – 1 Corinthians 3:6-9a NIV



As soon as the **grain** [karpos: **fruit** (of one's tree, vine, field, or loins)] is **ripe**, [paradidōmi: **delivered** (the Greek word for "ripen" isn't used)] **he** [man] **puts** [apostellō: **sends forth**] **the sickle to it**, because the harvest has come."

Wait. **Man sends forth the sickle? Yep!**



The disciples saw this harvest of the firstfruits firsthand, when the tombs opened and Mrs. Earth gave birth, and a cloud of witnesses carried Jesus to His throne.<sup>1</sup>

It's described in more detail in Revelation.

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and **seated on the cloud** [as the **Head**] was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and **a sharp sickle in his hand**. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the **earth** [gē: **Mrs. Earth**] is ripe." So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth ["gave birth", and] was harvested. – Revelation 14:14-16 NIV

**And, to think He still chooses and uses scatterbrains like us!**

**Wow.**

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<sup>1</sup> The cloud at Jesus' ascension is explained in: Law & Order, part XI, Ascending in a Cloud, July 10, 2016