

Luke 8:4-15 (NIV)

4 While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: 5 “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. 6 Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.” When he said this, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” 9 His disciples asked him what this parable meant. 10 He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, ”“though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.’ 11 “This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. 14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

One of the things that I’ve learned by living in four different states (California, Wisconsin, Florida, and Minnesota) is that each place has its own unique soil quality. Things that will grow well in California won’t necessarily do well in Wisconsin and vice versa. Even in different parts of the same state, the soil quality varies greatly. On one side of the highway, the soil is rich and black and fertile. On the other side it’s sandy and dry.

The parable of the sower deals with soil quality. You notice that the seed was the same in each different kind of soil. You notice that the seed grew in each kind of soil as well, except where it couldn’t take root. The problem with the growth and maturity wasn’t with the seed, it was with the soil.

The application to Jesus’ parable that he makes himself supports this. The seed is the Word of God. The problem isn’t with the Word. God’s Word is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. God says that his Word will not return to him empty, but will accomplish what God desires and achieve the purpose for which he sent it. That happens in every category of soil. The seed that fell on the path is like the Word that falls on hardened hearts. That word is immediately discarded. It never even has a chance to take root. That word confirms those people in their unbelief. The seed that falls in the rocky soil is the Word that again works. It produces growth, but that growth is short lived because the person falls away in time of trial. In every example the Word works.

May God grant all of us hearts that are like the good soil! May he use his Word to root out the rocks and the thorns that might choke out our faith! May he give us a faith to completely trust in his promises so that we can hear his Word, retain it, and produce a bountiful crop of God pleasing works.