

The Gospel has been preached around the world for over two thousand years. Many have listened to it and have responded to the good news of Jesus Christ. However, the fruitfulness of the gospel depends on how it is received. For example our own country received the gospel in the year AD 52 but we still have less than 3% as Christians. In other parts of the world people received the gospel with great joy and therefore the numbers multiplied till the whole nation became Christian.

In the Gospel reading we see Jesus teaching his disciples and all of us about the types of response to the gospel through a parable about a certain sower who went out to sow his seeds. Some seed fell on the paths. Paths are usually formed by people walking through in a particular direction. And so here we notice that some of the seeds that the farmer sows actually fall on to the path where there is no way the seed can take root. The birds of the air come and eat them up as soon as they set their eyes on the seed. These are the type of people who do not respond to the gospel. They hear it one ear and they let it go off the other.

Jesus continues saying that some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. The rocky soil did not have much soil – nor did it have depth. So as soon as the seed was sown they sprang up quickly, because there was no depth. As soon as the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. There is impressive upward growth but no depth. The sun coming up is symbolic of intense heat rather than to suggest it survived only one day. Here it refers to people who receive the gospel with a lot of joy when they hear it, but when difficulty comes they are not willing to pay the cost for following Jesus.

Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Progressive failure – The first – no starting- second started, third progressed but no fruit. The third kind of people are like the seed which fell among the thorns. They are choked by the deceitfulness of wealth, the lust of the flesh and the worries of the world. Even though they want to be followers of Christ, they are dragged away by their own evil desires and therefore are not able to do so. In this group we see that these people respond to the word but they are equally attracted to the pleasures of the world and there is the lure of wealth. In short the temptation for making more money and accumulating wealth acts as a hindrance and prevents them from being productive for the kingdom. The issue here is not so much the possession of wealth in itself but the mental attitude which engenders it. The problem is that wealth promises to engender a sense of security but the reality is that it increases anxiety. The worries of the world equally stump the individual from bearing fruit. Wealth threatens to seduce disciples from their true allegiance to Jesus Christ. Materialism can cheat us of our joy in being fruit-bearing disciples. The farmer is interested in fruit/ grain. He is not interested in plants which live off the fat of the land but in return bear no fruit for the kingdom.

Finally, we see the seed that fell on good soil. This is the one who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundred fold, in another sixty. What does it mean to bear fruit? The parable is silent about what this fruit is. It probably refers to an ethical form of life and conduct as mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount. It means the living out of the kingdom of God here and now and practicing kingdom ethics in the present age. It means that we understand Jesus and his claims and we are ready to follow him. We are ready to obey his call to be a disciple that whoever wishes to follow him should deny themselves, take up his cross and follow Jesus. May God help us to be fruit bearing disciples, that we may respond to the good news by personal faith in the Lord Jesus and by being a blessing to many.