

## *Ask Fr James*

### **Please explain the modern day understanding of the parable of the sower - Matthew 13: 1-23**

The parable of the Sower is one of the most famous of the parables of Jesus. This parable is found in all three synoptic Gospels and comes complete with its own interpretation offered by Jesus himself. However, in modern biblical studies, some bible scholars think that the title; "parable of the sower" seems to miss the point, since emphasis lies exclusively on the seeds and what becomes of them. Thus these scholars prefer the title to be: "the parable of the Fortunes of the Seed" or "the parable of the good soil." Their reason being that the parable gives four kinds of soils:

1. The seeds that fell on the path ("way-side") - The first portion of seed fell on the edge of a path. The soil of the path is hard, and the seed could not penetrate it. This first sowing met with almost instant failure. So the seeds were eaten by birds. They did not get the opportunity to germinate. This failure was due to the type of soil, not because of other obstacles.
2. Other seeds fell on rocky ground. They withered away with no depth of soil and no root. The seed germinated but lacked growth due to "no root." The result was that the plants that "immediately" sprang up were immediately "scorched" and consequently "withered."
3. The seeds that fell among thorns. Here the seeds germinated and there was growth but the plant is fighting for survival. They [thorns] choked out the new plants by preventing them from getting the nourishment they needed. The seeds that fell among thorns was choked out by the thorns as they grew and consequently yielded no grain.
4. Finally, the last portion of the seeds fell on good soils - with enough moisture, and free from rocks and thorns. They yielded, bearing fruit in a variety of gains "a hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty."

Apparently, the sower is not the focus neither is his ability or skill. The emphasis is on the seed, which is directly dependent on the kind of soil that received it. This parable is a story about what happens to seeds after they are sown. This parable shows that the kingdom of God has already been sown in this world like seed sown in the field. It is sown everywhere. God moves toward all persons. God sows with cheerful abandon. Seed falls on different soils. The reception of the Word of God makes one fruitful. Reception does not depend upon God, the sower nor on the seed; it depends upon our decision. We are the kind of soil we choose to be.