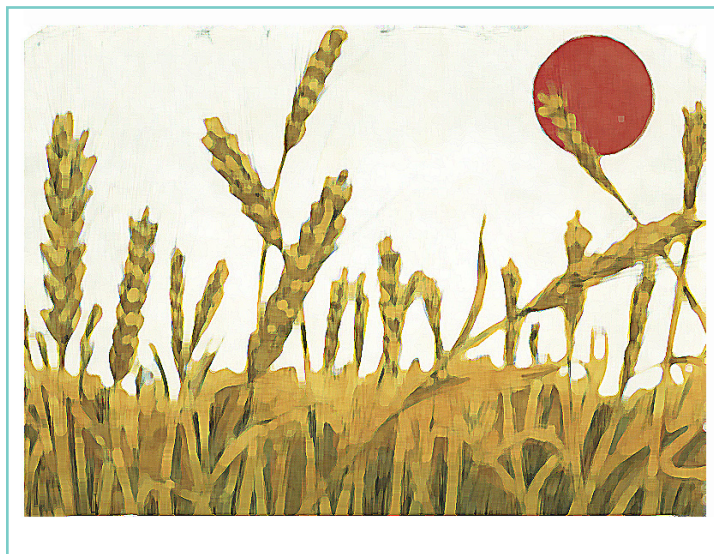


Lesson 3: Adversity


Old Testament
New Testament
Where in the Bible?

The New Testament begins about 3/4 of the way through the Bible.

Introduction

Jesus told a parable of a man who scattered seeds that fell on various types of soil. Because of the conditions, some did not take root and grow, while others produced abundantly. That's what it is like when God's Word goes out to create the fruit of faith.

Read: Matthew 13:1-23

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The New Testament: Parables

Wherever Jesus went, crowds would follow. Jesus taught the people as they gathered, often using simple picture-stories called parables. Jesus used everyday examples to explain to his disciples the secrets of the Kingdom of God.

Biblical Background

Some of the best-known instances of Jesus' teaching come in what we know as his parables. The term comes from the Greek word *parabolé* (*pah-RAH-bow-lay*), meaning "figure" or "comparison." Parables make up approximately 35 percent of his teachings.

Some parables are short metaphorical images; others, like this one, are extended stories used to illustrate the nature of God. In this story, Jesus uses the image of a sower spreading seeds as a way to describe his own work in spreading the Word of God to all people. He shows us what it is like to take up this same mission.

In his parables, Jesus used as examples many everyday things that were familiar to his listeners.

Plants

Mustard Seed
Seeds and Soils
Wheat and Weeds
Lilies of the Field
Vineyard
Fig Tree

Animals

Sheep and Wolves
Lost Sheep
Sparrows
Sheep and Goats
Birds of the Air
Snake, Scorpion

Objects

Lost Coin
Valuable Pearl
Lamp on a Stand
Cloth, Wineskins
Net of Fish
Pasture Gate

People

Good Samaritan
Prodigal Son
Ten Maidens
Good Shepherd
Shrewd Manager
King and his Banquet

Discuss: Matthew 13:1-23

1. What is a “sower”? What does it mean to “sow” seeds? According to verses 18-23, what deeper meaning does the metaphor of sowing seeds represent in our lives? Who does God get to sow his seeds?
2. In the real world, when people hear God’s Word what are the different kind of results that Jesus says we can expect? List the four examples he gives:
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
3. What is a “parable”? Why do you think Jesus used parables to teach and answer people’s questions? What were Jesus’ followers given that the crowds were not (v. 11)?
4. Martin Luther wrote: “God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and live a godly life now and in eternity.” In what way are we already part of God’s Kingdom by faith in his Word?
5. What does Jesus tell his disciples in verses 16-17? Do you count yourself fortunate to be able to hear and study the Word of God?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 3:4-9. If the growth referred to here is growth in *faith*, how does Jesus’ parable show that God is the true giver of faith?
7. In what ways does God use us as his “tools” to plant and water the seed of his Word? Do we always know what positive effect our faith may have on the faith of others? What is God’s promise to us in all this?

Where in the World?

The map below shows the three major areas of the Holy Land referred to in the Gospels: **Judea** in the south, **Galilee** in the north, and **Samaria** in between. Jesus traveled and taught in all three of these areas.

While there are many valleys with fertile fields and orchards within this region, there are also many areas with rocky highlands and deserts.

1. In the ovals on the map to the right, label the major bodies of water with the names they are called in the New Testament. (If you need to, use the map in the back of your Bible.)

The Great Sea**The Dead Sea****The Sea of Galilee****The Jordan River**

2. Consult a Bible map to see if you can pinpoint the location of Jerusalem, and mark it with a star (★). This capital city was located in the region of _____.

