

Mark 4:14-20

14 The sower sows the word. 15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. 17 But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. 20 And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold" (NRSV).

One of the most frustrating things for me is when I lose something and have a hard time finding it. Sometimes I have to ask for help in finding something that I have lost, especially if it is my glasses. Did you ever notice that whenever you lose something it is always in the last place that you looked? Of course, that's because you quit looking. There was this one time I lost my cell phone. Frustrated and worried that I might be the newest victim of theft and fraud. I get home and dial the number and finally find the phone as it rings. It fell out of my pocket while driving and landed in the back floorboard of the car. There is great relief when you find something valuable that was lost.

Now I would like for you to imagine the grief that God must feel with so many lost children on the earth. God has a serious problem when all of God's children have gone astray. So, God sends Jesus as the ultimate messenger to rescue the children. The beauty of the teaching from Jesus is its never ending relevance. The lessons from Jesus are still relevant 2,000 years later. Time passes by and cultures change but the word spoken by the Lord always remains current and is still relevant to us today. The lesson from Jesus addresses the problem then and now. It is a matter of the individual's response to the word which is a matter of the attitude of the individual. The seeds on the path hear the word but Satan takes the word away. The point is that temptation is always out there. You have to win the battles with Satan and prevent Satan from taking the word away from you. The seeds in the rocky soil receive the word with joy but there is no root so they fall away when trouble arises. Faithful people need to defend their faith and not let trouble pull them away from the faith. The seeds in the thorns hear the word but the traps of wealth and materialism choke it out. The seeds that landed in the good soil hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit. The lesson is one of many on the necessity of being productive. We are all lost people when we are without God and the word of God.

People get offended when you witness today. The number one argument that I hear is the argument of logic over faith. Taking on the logical position of whether or not God is real. My position is that God is alive and real. The position of the opposition is that there is no God. They have their reasons and I have my reasons and they are both strongly debatable. We could get stuck in the debate. Some will argue for their position, others will fight, and some will even go to war over their position of faith. We both are highly charged emotionally and both argue over who is right and you are wrong. For me, the end game of my position is 100% gain or 100% loss. For the denier that denies there is a God the end game of their position of faith zero sum. Using logic, both of us cannot

be right. We could each be right and we could each be wrong. Now to compare the logic of both positions. By my position, if I am right I gain 100% and if I am wrong it is zero. By your position, if you are right you gain is zero and if you are wrong you lose 100%. The base case scenario for the opposition is equal to the worst case scenario for the argument of faith. If you are lapsed or have a friend or loved one that is lapsed and it is because our faith is illogical to them. Show them how those that lack faith are on the losing side of logic. Logic itself proves that it is illogical to deny God.

Instead of engaging in losing battles or arguing your faith with a lost audience of friends and loved ones arguing over which is right or wrong, you can engage in casual conversation about the logic of it all. The path has many obstacles. The path is designed with obstacles that will block those of weaker faith. Jesus teaches that your faith has to be strong. Your path is going to get trampled on. Satan will try to take the word away. The path has trouble. Do not let your troubles knock you off the path. The path is full of thorns. Do not let temptation pull you away. And the path has good soil that it needs for a productive crop. We are here because of the good soil. Our faith needs the good soil. The seeds of faith were passed on to us when the word was passed on to each of us. We can flourish. Listen when we hear the word. Receive the word when it is offered and put the word into action.

Earlier I mentioned that the word is always current and relevant, no matter who, what, where, or when. The beauty of Jesus teaching is its profound wisdom. The sower is Jesus. The location of the seed is within the individual. If the seed lands in the good soil then the individual recipient becomes a new sower. Jesus is building his legacy. Jesus is teaching the people of faith to carry on his job of sowing. The good farmer does not work a job of leisure; he has to sow the seed when it needs to be sown. One obvious lesson for the Christian is that the individual of faith must be a person of action. Jesus follows the parable with a call for action. The seed landed in good soil built this church and brought you here.