

## **Lessons in Sowing Faithfulness**

Lesson 3

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15

July 31, 2022

### **Planting Among the Thorns and in Good Soil**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Before setting young plants into the earth with hope for robust growth, one must first clear the area of weeds. So it is with God's Word when seeking a soul who has potential to follow Him. Cares and attractions of the world hinder that following. It is easier to obliterate weeds than to persuade someone to abandon a life engineered by Satan.

The above situation contrasts to planting a garden free of unwanted vegetation and in soil that is rich with nutrients. The result is a bounty of flowers, vegetables—or in the language of Jesus' parable, the result is "...one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." (Matthew 13:23)

How do we clear the land for Jesus? How intensely do we plunge the hoe into the earth to eliminate faith-stealing thorns? Christianity offers a gift far superior to man-made objects and diversions; Christians must find a way to open the eyes and hearts of those needing to recognize that superior gift.

***Memory verse: "Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the Word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."—Mark 4:20***

Pray, and read the passages listed above. What questions or observations do you have about them?

**OBSERVATION: What do the passages say?**

1. What causes damage to plants in Luke 8:6-7?
2. To whom was the secret of the kingdom of God given?  
(Mark 4:11)
3. Why did Jesus choose to teach in parables? (Mark 4:12)
4. Matthew 13:23, Mark 4:14, and Luke 8:11 all agree that the “seed” represents what?
5. What does seed represent when thrown upon rocky ground (Matthew 13:20)—and upon healthy soil? (Luke 8:15)

## INTERPRETATION: What do the passages mean?

1. What is required to rid gardens of “thorns” that “choke” (i.e., outcompete the desired plants for resources like moisture and sunshine; a metaphor for the distractions that *try* to block people from following God)? (Isaiah 55:7; Joel 2:12-13; 2 Corinthians 7:10a; Revelation 2:5)
2. God’s words in Isaiah 6:9 are repeated by Jesus in Luke 8:10. What is the difference in circumstances that *might* alter the meaning of the Isaiah verse from that of Luke? (opinion)
3. If the seed that fell among thorns represents those “who hear” (Luke 8:14), what measures can be taken to keep them within “hearing” before they return to a life without Christ? (Acts 11:23, 14:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 John 5:14)

4. One may have a well-tended garden, but weeds seem to sneak in overnight. How can a weedy intrusion be prevented (i.e., how can faith be retained)? (Psalm 95:6; Proverbs 3:11-12; Micah 6:8; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 6:11; James 2:24)

**APPLICATION: How do the passages apply to your life?**

1. Jesus' remark in Luke 8:10 is curious. How much more hopeful and positive it would be if, "*while seeing,*" *people do see*, and "*while hearing,*" *they do understand*? What sort of encouragement can you give to others to make that happen? (Psalm 32:8; Hebrews 3:13; 1 John 1:3)

