



## WEEKLY STUDY

### WEEK FIVE

This week, we take a look at the first major parable recorded in Luke. It's the parable of the Sower. In many ways, it sets up the other parables that are to come by explaining why parables were used and what condition our hearts must be in if we are to understand them. May you find that the condition of your heart is more and more receptive to the Word of God throughout this week and throughout your life.

Peace of Christ,  
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit [prov.church/smallgroups](http://prov.church/smallgroups).

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt.

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### DAILY STUDY

#### MONDAY: LUKE 8.4-8 (ESV)

*And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, <sup>5</sup>“A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. <sup>6</sup>And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. <sup>7</sup>And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. <sup>8</sup>And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

- The fertile land around Galilee was highly sought after. People would come from other regions to reap abundant harvests. Seed was sown with great hope and expectation. Jesus' listeners knew the importance of sowing seed in good soil, their lives directly or indirectly depended on it. On a practical level, they all had “ears to hear”, but clearly Jesus was giving more than agricultural advice. He was asking them to consider what kind of soil they were. **Are there examples in your life where it seems that good seed is scattered in places it will never grow?**
- *Jesus, thank you for using your gift of storytelling to reveal truths and to challenge me to consider how receptive I am to the Word of God. Amen.*

## TUESDAY: LUKE 8.9-10 (ESV)

*And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant,<sup>10</sup> he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’*

- Jesus was kind to engage with the questions of his disciples. This question was the kind of thing a master would expect from his apprentices. In this case, Jesus revealed to his true disciples that they already had the secret of the Kingdom of God—they already knew the answer. There seems to be an intentional hiddenness or mystery around the parable so that those whose hearts were not ready would not understand. **Do you ever feel like Jesus is speaking a language you do not understand? How do you respond to what appears to be the hiddenness of Christ?**
- *Jesus, reveal to me the secret of the kingdom of God. Remove the scales from my eyes, and help me to fully hear and understand your word. Amen.*

## WEDNESDAY: ISAIAH 6.9-11.13 (NIV)

*“Go and tell this people:*

*“Be ever hearing, but never understanding;  
be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’*

<sup>10</sup>*Make the heart of this people calloused;  
make their ears dull  
and close their eyes.*

*Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts,  
and turn and be healed.”*

<sup>11</sup>*Then I said, “For how long, Lord?”*

*And though a tenth remains in the land,  
it will again be laid waste.*

*But as the terebinth and oak  
leave stumps when they are cut down,  
so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”*

- The prophet had just boldly volunteered to serve as God’s mouthpiece to a people who had fallen away from God’s path. Most of us would hope to be so bold, but we might also hope for an easier assignment. God immediately sent Isaiah to tell the people that they are not able to perceive the things of God. Then Isaiah was tasked with making sure they remained unable to understand. It was a tough gig that would make Isaiah very unpopular! But in the end, there was a promise. Not every promise will feel like good news to the current generation, but the holy seed will remain in the land. **What do you think this holy seed represents? Have you (literally or figuratively) witnessed a wasteland like the one described in Isaiah 6? How does the image of the holy seed bring hope to those situations?**
- *God, I bring before you situations from my personal life and around the world where it seems that everything has been laid to waste. Restore the land and bring new life. Amen.*

## THURSDAY: LUKE 8.11-15 (ESV)

*Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.<sup>12</sup> The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.<sup>13</sup> And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.<sup>14</sup> And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.<sup>15</sup> As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.*

- After explaining the reason for telling a parable (v 9-10), he broke it down in simple terms for this and future audiences. The devil is active even on the surface trying to reduce the odds of God's word germinating in our hearts. On our own, we are easily distracted and unwilling to do the patient work that allows our spiritual roots to grow deep. But we are called to hold fast to the word in our good hearts so that we might bear fruit. Jesus doesn't want us to just hear, but to hear and to do—that is the sign that we are the good soil. **What condition would you say the soil of your heart is in right now? Have you asked God to till the hard places?**
- *Almighty God, would you bust up the hard patches within me and produce good fruit through me? Amen.*

## FRIDAY: COLOSSIANS 3.2-10 (NIV)

*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.<sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.<sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

*<sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.<sup>6</sup> Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.<sup>7</sup> You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.<sup>8</sup> But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.<sup>9</sup> Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices<sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

- Jesus used parables to help us set our sights on things above. Our lives are now hidden in Christ the way the Kingdom is hidden in parables. We are meant to point to the Kingdom of God with the way we respond to God's word. That will require us to "put to death" the ways of this world that lead to destruction. **What is God calling you to put to death in order to set your mind on things above?**
- *God, when Christ appears, I want to appear with him in glory. Today I put to death the temptations and distractions that occupy my mind and keep my sights set low. May I look to things above. Amen.*

## SATURDAY: PSALM 145.13-16 NIV)

*Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,*

*and your dominion endures through all generations.*

*The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises  
and faithful in all he does.*

<sup>14</sup> *The LORD upholds all who fall  
and lifts up all who are bowed down.*

<sup>15</sup> *The eyes of all look to you,  
and you give them their food at the proper time.*

<sup>16</sup> *You open your hand  
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.*

- This life of pursuing God and following Jesus is moving towards the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is bigger than any one generation or nation. It is bigger than you and me. But God also pursues us—we know this most clearly in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. God's promises are trustworthy, He will provide what we need and one day we will live fully in His Kingdom. **How might this promise impact the way you live today?**
- *Lord, you are a faithful God. May my life always point to your coming Kingdom. Reign over me today! Amen.*

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

We shared these 4 responses to God's Word that are laid out in the Parable of the Sower. Which one do you most identify with? Are there moments when you identify with each one of the responses? What steps will you take to cultivate a heart that is ready to receive and respond to God's Word?

1. The resistant response (v. 4). This is us actually saying, I may hear a bit, but it will not have a chance to do anything to my heart.
2. The shallow response (v. 5–6). This is where we truly want to follow Jesus, but back away when it turns out to be costly.
3. The distracted response (v. 7). We can't stay focused...there are just so many shiny things.
4. The productive response (v. 8) Despite all of the obstacles that work to keep the seed from penetrating the soil of our heart, the message achieves its purpose. We have to Cultivate a heart that is ready to receive and respond.