

### Media and Graphics Notes

<b>Sermon Starter Video?</b>	Yes
<b>Sermon Notes?</b>	No
<b>Other Notes</b>	

## Key Questions

### ***What is this sermon about?***

This sermon is about the parable of soils and how to prepare our souls to bear fruit in God's kingdom.

### ***Why is this sermon important?***

It is important because no matter where we are on our discipleship pathway, we can create the opportunity for God to be at work in our life.

### ***What is the context of this sermon?***

This is the second sermon in the Lent worship series moving through the book of Mark.

### ***What are the next action steps?***

Make space for God's work in our life by engaging in the spiritual practices to worship, grow, give, serve and share.

### ***What is the good news (bottom line)?***

The good news is that the Holy Spirit transforms our souls into soil that bears fruit in God's kingdom. God brings an overwhelming harvest.

### ***What are other key takeaways? (140 characters or less)***

- [text here]



## Metadata

### Topic(s)

1. Change Lives
2. Grow
3. Make Disciples

2nd Sunday in Lent  
Mark - Sowing Seeds  
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado  
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1PRbn4l>

February 21, 2016  
Mark 4:1-20  
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,142  
Audio Online at <http://j.mp/21iUH8>

4. Share Christ

### **Sermon Books of the Bible**

1. Galatians
2. Mark

### **Tags**

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, Eldorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, soil, seed, seeds, fruit, good,

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<b>Mark 4:1-20, CEB</b>	<b>5</b>
Response to Scripture	5
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Sermon Starter Video	5
Mark: Eyewitness to the Gospel	6
Sermon Notes and Scripture Study	6
Take Notes	
God Speaking	
Tool for Spiritual Growth	
Prayer	6
<b>Burpee Seed</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>What are Parables?</b>	<b>7</b>
Parables are multi-faceted	7
Soil, Samaritan and Two Sons	
Connection with Everyday Life	7
Cattle, Oil and Relevance	
Power of Parables	8
<b>Four Soils</b>	<b>8</b>
Path	8
Hardened Souls	
Rocky Ground	8
Tragedy Strikes	
Thorny Plants	9
The Good Life	
Good Soil	9
Bearing Fruit	
Our Response	9
<b>Forming the Soil</b>	<b>9</b>
Good News	9
Call to Action	10

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As an Individual

As a Congregation

Invitation	10
Invitation	10
Closing Prayer	10

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## Mark 4:1-20, CEB

Jesus began to teach beside the lake again. Such a large crowd gathered that he climbed into a boat there on the lake. He sat in the boat while the whole crowd was nearby on the shore. He said many things to them in parables. While teaching them, he said, "Listen to this! A farmer went out to scatter seed. As he was scattering seed, some fell on the path; and the birds came and ate it. Other seed fell on rocky ground where the soil was shallow. They sprouted immediately because the soil wasn't deep. When the sun came up, it scorched the plants; and they dried up because they had no roots. Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorny plants grew and choked the seeds, and they produced nothing. Other seed fell into good soil and bore fruit. Upon growing and increasing, the seed produced in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of one hundred to one." He said, "Whoever has ears to listen should pay attention!"

When they were alone, the people around Jesus, along with the Twelve, asked him about the parables. He said to them, "The secret of God's kingdom has been given to you, but to those who are outside everything comes in parables. This is so that they can look and see but have no insight, and they can hear but not understand. Otherwise, they might turn their lives around and be forgiven."

"Don't you understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? The farmer scatters the word. This is the meaning of the seed that fell on the path: When the word is scattered and people hear it, right away Satan comes and steals the word that was planted in them. Here's the meaning of the seed that fell on rocky ground: When people hear the word, they immediately receive it joyfully. Because they have no roots, they last for only a little while. When they experience distress or abuse because of the word, they immediately fall away. Others are like the seed scattered among the thorny plants. These are the ones who have heard the word; but the worries of this life, the false appeal of wealth, and the desire for more things break in and choke the word, and it bears no fruit. The seed scattered on good soil are those who hear the word and embrace it. They bear fruit, in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case sixty to one, and in another case one hundred to one."

### Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

**All: Thanks be to God!**

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## Introduction

### Sermon Starter Video

[Play sermon starter video.](#)

## Mark: Eyewitness to the Gospel

He spent three years with Jesus. He watched Jesus work, heard him teach and walked with him in Galilee. He was there on the night in which Jesus was taken to be crucified. Before this man died, he passed on the testimony of what he had seen and heard. The gospel of Mark is that testimony.

## Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

### Take Notes

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today.

### God Speaking

I pray that you will hear God speaking to you sometime during the service today. Listen for God's word for you – something that helps you live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Whenever you hear it, write it down.

### Tool for Spiritual Growth

Then, take this bulletin home with you so that you can grow in your faith outside of worship by reflecting on what you heard today, praying for others connected with our community and reading scripture.

## Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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## Burpee Seed

This month, we received the 2016 Burpee Seed catalog in the mail. Listen to the description from their website:

.....  
*"For millions of Americans, weary of long winters, nothing signals spring like the arrival of their annual Burpee Catalog in the mailbox. Turning page after page and seeing the brilliant colors of vegetables and plants, perennials and annuals, awakens the imagination as loyal customers begin to plan the contents of their garden each spring."<sup>1</sup>*  
.....



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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.burpee.com/gardenadvicecenter/about/about-us/about-us.html>

It does look great. The vegetables, herbs, fruits, annuals and perennials look beautiful and delicious.

When you place an order, you don't receive what you see in the picture. You receive a packet of seeds, with the promise that the right soil, water, sun and attention will yield the results that you see in the pictures.

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## What are Parables?

The first half of Mark 4 focuses on seeds, soil and how our souls can bear fruit that is even better than what we find in a seed catalog. It is a parable, which is a story that Jesus tells which uses everyday circumstances or objects to teach about God and God's kingdom. They are powerful teaching tools because:

They are multi-faceted.

They connect with everyday life.

### Parables are multi-faceted

Parables are multi-faceted. Their meaning is like a precious stone that looks different depending on the light, the cut of the stone and the perspective of the observer. When we encounter a parable, each one of us may resonate with a different part of the story. This allows us to return to the same parable over and over. We can continue to find new insight about God, people and how we connect with God and God's kingdom.

### *Soil, Samaritan and Two Sons*

In this parable, we might find ourselves connect with the different soils.

When we read the story of the Good Samaritan, we may find ourselves connect with the man who was set upon by thieves and left for dead, the one who walks by on the other side or the samaritan who stops to help.

When we read the story of the man who had two sons, we might connect with the younger son who returns to his father after wasting his inheritance, the father who is waiting for his son to come home or the older brother who is indignant at his brother's welcome back into the family.

Our lives change and the power of parables remain.

### Connection with Everyday Life

Parables are powerful teaching tools because they are not immediately clear and because they connect with the listener. The every day examples and comparisons help the listeners in Jesus' day and they help us, as well. Even if we don't have direct experience planting seeds to grow a crop, it is likely that we have some familiarity with how seeds work – at least enough to make a connection with Jesus' story.

### *Cattle, Oil and Relevance*

I imagine that if Jesus was telling this parable at the edge of El Dorado lake it may not have been about planting seeds. Jesus may have told a story about cattle or oil.

You know that much of the soil in the Flint Hills north and east of here is not much good for planting crops or sowing seeds. Yet, it grows some of the best grass around for raising cattle. Deep below the surface of the ground is oil and you can't miss the refinery in town. Whether or not you work in ranching or the oil and gas industry, you know something about them.

## **Power of Parables**

Parable are stories of Jesus that use everyday circumstances or objects to teach us truth about God and God's kingdom. They are powerful teaching tools because they are multi-faceted and connect with everyday life.

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## **Four Soils**

The soils in this story represent the way our souls respond to the good news of Jesus Christ - God's word.

How do you relate to these four soils?

How has your response to the good news of Jesus Christ changed over time?

What kind of soil is your soul?

## **Path**

We begin with the seed that fell on the path and was eaten by birds. This represents people that hear the good news and it is stolen from them.

## ***Hardened Souls***

Some people who hear the good news of Jesus Christ have souls that are hardened. It may be a choice that they have made to intentionally turn away from God, perhaps the result of circumstances or perhaps no discernible reason. This seed does not have the chance to take root at all.

## **Rocky Ground**

The seed that fell on rock ground with shallow soil sprouts immediately, but is scorched by the sun because it has no roots. This represents people that hear the good news and immediately receive it joyfully. However, when they fall away when they experience distress or challenges because of their faith.

## ***Tragedy Strikes***

Some people who hear the good news of Jesus Christ have souls that are receptive. Their faith sprouts quickly with surface level understanding, yet it does not grow deeper. When tragedy strikes or they find their faith challenged, it is unable to stand up to the stress. People have lost their faith in the face of difficult circumstances because they have not created the opportunity for deep roots to grow.



## Thorny Plants

The seed that fell among thorny plants are choked out and produce nothing. This represents people ones who have receive the good news, but their faith is choked out by worry and greed.

### ***The Good Life***

Some people who hear the good news of Jesus Christ have souls that are receptive. Their faith begins to grow and its roots may even be deeper than those of the seed that fell on rocky soil. For these people, it is not tragedy or challenge that causes their faith to falter. It is the good things of life – a focus on money, power or fame.

## Good Soil

The seed that fell into good soil bears fruit. It represents those who hear the good news and embrace it. They bear fruit, in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case sixty to one, and in another case one hundred to one.

### ***Bearing Fruit***

Some people who hear the good news of Jesus Christ have souls that are receptive. Their faith sprouts grows deep. They seek to engage in spiritual practices to worship, grow, give, serve and share. You see the fruit of the spirit in their life:

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*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*<sup>2</sup>

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## Our Response

How do you relate to these four soils?

How has your response to the good news of Jesus Christ changed over time?

What kind of soil is your soul?

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## Forming the Soil

Parables are multi-faceted and connect with everyday life.

They teach us something about God and God's kingdom.

The parable of the soils examines ways that we might respond to the good news of Jesus Christ. It invites us to ask:

How do I make good soil in my soul for the good news of Jesus to take root?

## Good News

The good news is that the Holy Spirit transforms our souls into soil that bears fruit in God's kingdom. God brings an overwhelming harvest.

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<sup>2</sup> Galatians 5:22-23, CEB.

## Call to Action

### ***As an Individual***

As individuals, we can make space for God's work in our life. It doesn't matter where you have come from, what your history is, or how you feel your relationship with God is right now, engaging in the spiritual practices to worship, grow give, serve and share will help make good soil for God to bear fruit in your life.

### ***As a Congregation***

As a congregation, we create good soil in our life together when we focus all our efforts to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We create opportunities for people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ through our discipleship pathway. For over 146 years, First United Methodist Church has been a witness to God's love for the people of El Dorado and Butler County. People just like you and me.

## Invitation

The opportunity to be good soil for God's word is available today  
All we have to do is ask.

## Invitation

It's a very simple thing to pray – I am sorry. Thank you. Please.

- Turning away from the things that we know are wrong, saying "I am sorry".
- Thanking Jesus for dying and being raised for us; putting our faith in him.
- And finally, 'Please come and fill me with your Spirit.'

I invite you to join me in praying this prayer today: Sorry, thank you, please.  
It may be the very first time in your life to pray something like this.  
It may be the first time in a long time or it may be a prayer that you have prayed every day for a long time.

When we ask in prayer, we receive God's forgiveness.  
When we ask God, we can be good soil for God to bear fruit in our life.

Will you pray with me?

## Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, I'm sorry for the things in my life that have been wrong.

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*And if anything comes to mind, ask God's forgiveness.*

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Today, I turn away from everything that I know is wrong.  
Thank you that you died and rose again for me.  
I trust you with my life.

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Help me receive your forgiveness.  
Please fill me with your Spirit and create good soil in my soul to bear fruit in your kingdom. In your holy name, Amen.