

THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD

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The parables of our Lord by Marcus Dods

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I.

THE SOWER.

"The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." . . . "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. Whosoever any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which receiveth seed by the way side. But he that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."—MATTE. xiii. 1-9, 18-23

THE SOWER.

MATT. xiii. 1-9, 18-23; LUKE vii. 4-15.

THIS parable had to be spoken. It gave expression to thoughts which burdened the mind of Jesus throughout His ministry. On the day He uttered it, He had left the house and was sitting by the sea-side, "and there were gathered unto Him great multitudes." He had no difficulty in finding an audience. It is one of the greatest pleasures to listen to a good speaker. It is a pleasure which attracts young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated. A good speaker is always sure of an audience, and especially where he has not to encounter the rivalry of books. But as Jesus watched the crowd assembling, and perceived the various dispositions with which the people came, He could not but reflect how much of what He had to say must certainly be lost on many. He knew He had that to tell men which, if received, would change the face of society, and turn the wilderness into a garden. He was conscious of that in His own mind which, could it only be conveyed into the

minds of those pressing around Him, would cause their lives to flourish with righteousness, beauty, love, usefulness, and joy. He had "many things to say" to them, things that never yet had fallen and never again could fall from human lips; and yet who, of the thousands that listened, would believe? They came, some out of curiosity, some saying within themselves, "What will this sower of words say?" some out of hatred, seeking occasion against Him; but all thinking themselves entitled to hold and express an opinion regarding the importance or worthlessness of what He said. They needed to have their critical faculty exercised upon themselves, and to be reminded that in order to benefit by what He had to say, they must bring certain capacities.

The parabolic form of teaching is pleasant to listen to; it is easily retained in the memory; it stimulates thought, each man being left to find an interpretation for himself; and it avoids the offensiveness of direct rebuke. To the crowd Jesus speaks only of the sower in the fields, and makes no explicit reference to Himself or to them.

The object of this parable, then, is to explain the causes of the failure and success of the gospel. Apart from experience, it might have been supposed that our Lord had only to proclaim His kingdom in order to gather all men to His