

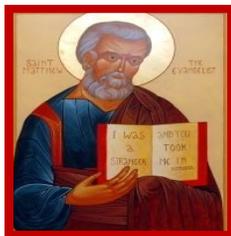
and endurance, because he brings forth fruit with patience.

*And brings forth some an hundredfold, &c.* “We must observe,” says S. Jerome, “that like as in the bad ground there were three different sorts—namely, by the wayside, the rocky, and the thorny places—so in the good ground there is a threefold diversity. And in the one as well as in the other, it is not the substance which is changed, but the will; and so it is the heart of the unbelieving as well as of the believing which receives the seed.”

Moreover, the greatest fruit of God’s Word, as it were the greatest fruit of seed is a hundredfold, as if from a single grain a harvest of a hundred grains were gathered, as was Isaac’s case (Gen. xxvi. 12). The medium fruit is called sixtyfold; the lowest thirtyfold. A definite number is put for an indefinite; otherwise He might have added, *brings forth some fortyfold, some twenty fold*, and so on. Whence, in opposition to Jovinian and Calvin, the inequality of merit and consequently of the reward, of good works in Heaven is rightly proved. So S. Chrysostom (*Hom. 45*), S. Augustine (*de S. Virgin. c. 46*), Nazianzen (*Orat. 28*), and others. For the Fathers, however Calvin may deride and exclaim, apply these words especially to diverse states. 1. S. Jerome, on this passage (*lib. 1, contra Jovin*), and S. Athanasius (*Epist. ad Ammon.*), and others assign the hundredfold fruit to virgins; the sixtyfold to widows; the thirtyfold to those who live in honest and holy wedlock.

2. S. Cyprian (*l. de Hab. Virg.*) and S. Augustine (*l. 1, de quest. Evang. quest. 9, tom 4*) assign the hundredfold to martyrs, the sixty to virgins, the thirtyfold to those who are married. Hear what S. Augustine says: “I assert that the hundredfold belongs to martyrs, on account of their holiness of life, or contempt of death; the sixty fold to virgins, on account of interior quiet, because they do not need to fight against fleshly habits—for rest is wont to be granted to soldiers who are past sixty years of age; the thirtyfold to the married, because thirty is the age of warriors—for those have a sharper conflict, that they may not be overcome of lust.”

3. Euthymius and Theophylact assign the thirtyfold to beginners, the sixty to those who have made some progress, the hundredfold to the perfect. So also Nazianzen (*Orat. 28.*) When a man proceeds, saith he, from thirty to sixty, he finishes with a hundred, as Isaac did (Gen. xxvi.) And he sings the Psalms of Degrees, going from strength to strength, and placing the Ascensions in his heart (Ps. 84.)



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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

## Matthew 13: 1-23

Douay Rheims Version

*The parables of the sower and the cockle: of the mustardseed, etc.*

1. The same day Jesus going out of the house, sat by the sea side.
2. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went up into a boat and sat: and all the multitude stood on the shore.
3. And he spoke to them many things in parables, saying: Behold the sower went forth to sow.
4. And whilst he soweth some fell by the way side, and the birds of the air came and ate them up.
5. And other some fell upon stony ground, where they had not much earth: and they sprung up immediately, because they had no deepness of earth.

care of salvation and of things divine causes the mind to be collected, calm, sound and flourishing. Hear S. Gregory, The cares of the world choke, because they strangle the throat of the mind with importunate thoughts: and because they will not suffer good desires to enter the mind, they as it were cut off the breath of life. We must observe also that there are two things which Christ joins to riches, namely cares and pleasures: because in truth the mind is oppressed by care, and by abundance it becomes dissolute.

*Deceitfulness, i.e.* the seduction of riches. Riches are deceitful, because they draw away the mind from God and salvation, to vain and hurtful wealth, which is often a cause of many sins and of damnation, when it is acquired by all sorts of means. They are deceitful therefore, because they promise and perform not. They promise joy and pleasure, but instead they often hurry men into the eternal pains of hell.

Hear what S. Gregory says, "riches are deceitful because they cannot long abide with us, and because they do not drive out the poverty of our souls. Those only are the true riches which enrich us with virtues. If therefore, brethren beloved, ye desire to be rich, strive for the heavenly kingdom. If ye love the glory of dignities, hasten to be enrolled in the senate of the Angels, which is above."

**Verse 23-** *That which is sown in the good ground, &c.* "The good ground," says S. Thomas (*in Catena ex Remigio*): "The good ground is the faithful conscience of the elect, or the mind of the saints, which receives the Word of God with joy and desire and devotion of heart, and manfully keeps it in prosperity and adversity, and leads it on to the future, whence it follows, 'and brings forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirtyfold.'"

*Understandeth it, &c. i.e.,* considers it in his mind, ruminates upon it, penetrates it, proves, tastes, retains it. The fruit is that both of good works as well as of their corresponding reward and glory in Heaven. Whence Luke adds, *with patience*, Gr. *ἐν ὑπομονῇ*, *i.e.* with long-suffering, after the manner of a husbandman patiently awaiting, after his sowing, the fruit and heavenly harvest of his labours and good works. "The good ground," says S. Gregory, "brings forth fruit through patience. The grapes are trodden by the heels of men, and flow into wine-juice; olives are expressed by beatings, and leave their lees, and produce the fatness of olive oil; by the threshing of the floor the grain is separated from the chaff, and when winnowed is carried into the granary, and so on." Hence S. Bonaventura says, that a good hearer of God's Word gives himself up entirely to it, together with all the faculties of his soul namely, his understanding, his will or affection, and his memory. He serves the Word of God with his understanding and will, because he receives it in an honest and good heart: with his memory, because he retains the word: with his powers of working

springs up, that is, in pious affection for the faith, and other works of religion. But because there is only little earth in the heart, and much rock—that is, because there is more of a depraved habit in a heart that has become hardened by pleasures than of a disposition to piety—this seed of God’s Word is unable to take deep root in such a heart. It is temporary, *i.e.*, it is not constant in the faith, but only believes for a little time, as the Arabic translates. It perceives the Word of God to be opposed to its lusts and vices; so that, like hard and rocky ground, it rejects it. Whence Luke says (viii. 14), *These are they who for a time believe, and in time of temptation fall away; i.e.*, from the Word and faith of God, or, certainly, from His law, which faith declares is to be followed. Wherefore, when tribulation arises from private persons, or public persecutions which tend to deprive them of life, or the riches and pleasures which they love; and when this is in consequence of the Word and faith of God, *immediately they are scandalized*, or as the Syriac translates, *they are offended*, and fall away, or apostatize from the profession of the faith. S. Gregory gives an example (*Hom. 15 in Evang.*): “The rocky ground had no moisture, because it did not bring what it had caused to sprout to the fruit of perseverance. For many persons, when they hear the Word against avarice, hate the same avarice, and praise contempt of all things; but by-and-by, when the mind sees what it desires, it forgets what it praised. Many, when they hear the Word against luxury, not only do not desire to perpetrate fleshly pollutions, but are even ashamed of what they have perpetrated; but as soon as the fair appearance of the flesh is present to their eyes, the mind is carried away, and they are as though they had never made resolutions against those desires. For often we have compunction for our faults, and yet, after weeping, return to the same faults.”

**Verse 22-** *But that which is sown among thorns, &c.* This is the third sort or condition of ground receiving seed, far better than the second condition, in as much as thorns offer less hindrance than rocks to seeds to germinate. This ground then denotes the heart of a hearer, which is beset with riches and worldly cares, as it were thorns. These destroy and choke the growing, seed of the word of God, before it can bring forth the ripe fruit of virtue. Observe: riches are aptly compared to thorns, because like thorns they distract, prick, and torment the mind so that it is not pleasing to a rich man to think often of Divine things.

Hear S. Jerome: “To me it seems that the words spoken literally to Adam, Among thorns and thistles thou shalt eat thy bread, signify mystically, that whosoever shall give himself up to the pleasures and cares of this world, shall eat heavenly bread and the true food, among thorns.”

And S. Gregory (*Hom. 15. in Evang.*): “Who would ever believe me if I wished to interpret thorns to mean riches, especially since the former prick, the latter give pleasure? And yet riches are thorns, because they lacerate the mind with the punctures of their thoughts, and when they draw to sin they inflict as it were a bloody wound.”

*Care of the world*, *i.e.*, of things temporal, such as the care of a wife or family. Such things tear the mind, *i.e.*, distract, trouble, and wound it. But on the other hand the

6. And when the sun was up they were scorched: and because they had not root, they withered away.
7. And others fell among thorns: and the thorns grew up and choked them.
8. And others fell upon good ground: and they brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, and some thirty fold.
9. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.
10. And his disciples came and said to him: Why speakest thou to them in parables?
11. Who answered and said to them: Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven: but to them it is not given.
12. For he that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound: but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath.
13. Therefore do I speak to them in parables: because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.
14. And the prophecy of Isaias is fulfilled in them, who saith: By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand: and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive.
15. For the heart of this people is grown gross, and with their ears they have been dull of hearing, and their eyes they have shut: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.
16. But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear.
17. For, amen, I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them: and to hear the things that you hear and have not heard them.
18. Hear you therefore the parable of the sower.
19. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, there cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he that received the seed by the way side.
20. And he that received the seed upon stony ground, is he that heareth the word, and immediately receiveth it with joy.
21. Yet hath he not root in himself, but is only for a time: and when there ariseth tribulation and persecution because of the word, he is presently scandalized.
22. And he that received the seed among thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choketh up the word, and he becometh fruitless.
23. But he that received the seed upon good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth, and beareth fruit, and yieldeth the one an hundredfold, and another sixty, and another thirty.
24. Another parable he proposed to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field.
25. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat and went his way.
26. And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle.

27. And the servants of the good man of the house coming said to him. Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it cockle?  
28. And he said to them: An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him: Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?  
29. And he said: No, lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it.  
30. Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.  
31. Another parable he proposed unto them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field.  
32. Which is the least indeed of all seeds; but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come, and dwell in the branches thereof.  
33. Another parable he spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened.  
34. All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes: and without parables he did not speak to them.  
35. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.  
36. Then having sent away the multitudes, he came into the house, and his disciples came to him, saying: Expound to us the parable of the cockle of the field.  
37. Who made answer and said to them: He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man.  
38. And the field is the world. And the good seed are the children of the kingdom. And the cockle are the children of the wicked one.  
39. And the enemy that sowed them, is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world. And the reapers are the angels.  
40. Even as cockle therefore is gathered up, and burnt with fire: so shall it be at the end of the world.  
41. The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity.  
42. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.  
43. Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.  
44. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field. Which a man having found, hid it, and for joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.  
45. Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls.  
46. Who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it.  
47. Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kinds of fishes.  
48. Which, when it was filled, they drew out, and sitting by the shore, they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth.

In fine, as from the better seed, and the more excellent land is produced better fruit, for example, better wheat, better barley, so in like manner from the more powerful preaching, and the grace of God, and the more fervent co-operation of free will are produced more excellent acts of virtue, and more heroic works. Hear what Pliny says (1. 24. 18.) He prescribes the following rules for sowing. 1. Let the sowing in moist places be performed quickly, the reason is that the seed may not putrefy with the wet: more slowly in dry ground, that the rain may follow, lest it should lie too long, and not be able to germinate. 2. It is part of the art of sowing to scatter the seed evenly. The hand ought to correspond with the step, and always with the right foot. 3. The seed must not be transferred from cold places to warm, not from ground where it ripens quickly to ground where it ripens late. 4. Sow abundantly in rich soil, more sparingly in poor soil. 5. This precept should be observed, do not exhaust your crops; for as Columella says, it is evident that crops will become exhausted by sowing the land too frequently with them. All these things are mystically adapted by preachers for sowing the Gospel.

*And understandeth it not*, does not perceive the meaning of the Word of God; because some other occupation, desire, or care, or the devil himself, distracts the mind to think of other things. *This is he who is sown by the wayside*. The heart of such a man is signified by that portion of the ground which is by the wayside, or the path itself. For as seed failing in the way, or by the side of the way, is rejected by the hard and trodden ground, and is snatched up by the birds; so, in like manner, the seed of the Word of God is not received into a heart which has become hardened by a habit of sin, but is immediately carried away by the devil impelling the heart to its accustomed sins. Such an one, therefore, cannot really be compared to *ground* at all, but to *a way*; he has the name and character, not of a hearer, but of a despiser of the Word of God.

Now the inaptitude for seed of land trodden down in a way may be removed, if it be cultivated by the plough and the mattock; and if a hedge be placed so as to exclude those who tread it down. Thus, likewise, the unfitness of a heart that is hardened by habits of vice may be taken away by compunction, which may cut and mollify the hardness of the heart: and if it be broken by the mattock of continence which weakens vicious desires, and brings them into subjection to right reason and the law of God.

**Verse 21-** *But hath no root in himself*, &c. This is the second condition of those who receive the Word. It is better than that condition of ground which preceded; for this is ground sufficiently soft for the seed to be received, and to sprout, though it is only for a short time. The meaning therefore is, The heart of that hearer who hears the Word of God, and with joy receives it in his mind, meditates upon it, and approves of it—according to those words of the Psalmist, “The statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoice the heart”—is like the seed sown on stony ground. This seed quickly

6. As the earth ought to be ploughed, manured, harrowed, that the seed may germinate, so also ought the heart of man to be cleared, and cultivated by laborious acts of penance, mortification and other virtues, that the word of God may produce fruit in it. This is what Isaiah says (xxxii. 20.) "Blessed are ye which sow beside all waters, sending forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass." See what is there said. 7. In order that seed may germinate, it requires the rain and the sun; so also that the word of God may strike root in the soul, it ought to be watered by grace, and warmed by heavenly love. This is what Isaiah says (lxi. 11), "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth: so the **LORD GOD** will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." This is effected by the word of the Gospel scattered by Christ and His Apostles. 8. As seed that is sown in the earth must decay, burst and die, that it may be fruitful: so also that the word may fructify in the heart it must be, as it were, resolved, bruised, and die by meditation; and it must likewise bruise and mortify the heart itself, according to that saying of Christ (John xii. 24.) "Verily, verily, I say unto, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Thus likewise must the faithful soul suffer many adversities before it can bring forth fruit unto God. 9. The seed must first strike root in the earth, then spring up in stalks and branches, next bud into flowers, and lastly, produce fruit from them; so also must the word of God first be rooted in the soul, then bring forth the germs of good thoughts, and the flowers of good desires, that it may at length produce the fruit of good works. 10. The entire power of a tree or plant is in the seed: for from it the plant and all its parts and members, which it possesses in an analogous manner to the limbs of men and animals, proceed. Wherefore many think that seeds have souls, as Aristotle hints (*l. 2. de gener. anim. c. 1.*) For when seed is cast into the earth, by and bye, as though it were living, it produces living germs. In like manner the whole force of virtue and perfection, whereby a man becomes spiritual, holy, and perfect, is contained in the word of God, as it were in seed. And this, unfolding itself and germinating in the mind produces all virtuous actions. 11. Different seeds produce different fruits; as the seed of a pear tree produces pears; the seed of wheat, wheat; the seed of barley produces barley, and so on. Thus different sentences of the Gospel bring forth different affections in the soul. The precepts of humility bring forth humility, the precepts of repentance, repentance. 12. As there is a father and a mother of every child, as for the production of fruit, there must be the earth and the seed; so in like manner, for good works there must be the concurrence of the word of God with that which is internal, *i.e.*, the free will of man, which must co-operate with the word of God. But this must be in such manner that the will must derive all its power of producing spiritual works from the word and grace of God, in order that they may be pleasing unto God, and may merit eternal life. (*Conr. Trident. sess. 6.*) In like manner the fruit derives liberty, or that it should be a free work and not compulsory nor done of necessity, from free will. For the interior word, which God speaks in the soul, stirring it up and strengthening it for acts of penance, charity, religion, &c., is nothing else but the grace of God itself, illuminating the understanding, and strengthening the affection, or the will, and inflaming it to the Divine works of virtue. This interior word, or grace, God is wont to add to the external word of preaching, What therefore the preacher speaks outwardly in the ear, God must speak inwardly in the heart if it is to bear fruit.

49. So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just.  
50. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.  
51. Have ye understood all these things? They say to him: Yes.  
52. He said unto them: Therefore every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old.  
53. And it came to pass: when Jesus had finished these parables, he passed from thence.  
54. And coming into his own country, he taught them in their synagogues, so that they wondered and said: How came this man by this wisdom and miracles?  
55. Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Jude:  
56. And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence therefore hath he all these things?  
57. And they were scandalized in his regard. But Jesus said to them: A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.  
58. And he wrought not many miracles there, because of their unbelief.

**Verse 1-** *At that time, &c. Syriac, by the sea shore:* When Christ, after His manner, had preached in the house, which He had hired for His dwelling in Capernaum, as I have said on c. iv. 13, He sent away the multitudes to attend to themselves and their affairs, and that He might refresh Himself and His disciples with rest and food. Bye and bye, since He knew that the multitudes were about to come to Him in such numbers that the house could not contain them, He went out to the wide, open shore of the Sea of Galilee; and there uttered the following parables.

**Verse 2-** *He went up into a ship:* from whence, as from a pulpit, He preached to the people assembled on the shore.

**Verse 3-** *A sower went out to sow:* Gr. *ὁ σπείρων, i.e., sowing*, Observe: Appositely are gospel doctrine and preaching compared to seed, and the harvest proceeding from it. For, as for the natural harvest there is need of seed, earth, sun, rain and wind, so also is there need of such things for the spiritual harvest. The seed is the word of God, or the gospel, and the preaching of it. The earth is the free will of all who hear. The sun is preventing grace, illuminating and inflaming the free will, that it may receive the Word of God so as from it to produce the fruits of charity and all virtues. The rain is grace, watering and promoting these good acts and motions of the free will. The winds are temptations which, by agitating them, cause them to take deeper root, and strengthen them. Lastly, there is need of patience, Gr. *ὑπομονή, i.e., endurance* in the labours and troubles of ploughing, sowing, &c., and long waiting for the reward

and fruit of the harvest.

Observe: the end and scope of this parable is, that Christ would teach that He Himself is the Sower, the preacher of the gospel upon earth, that is to say, among men, but with different results among different people. For, first, not all who hear the gospel accept it; as seed, although sown in the earth, does not everywhere strike root in the earth. 2. Not all who believe persevere in faith, but some fall away under temptation; like seed which sprouts in stony ground, quickly withers by the sun's heat. 3. Not all, who persevere in faith, bring forth the fruit of good works; just as thorns choke seed springing up well in otherwise good ground, and prevent it from bearing fruit. 4. These things happen, not through the fault of the seed, *i.e.*, of the doctrine, but of the earth. It is the fault of the hearers, and that in various ways. It is partly on account of the rocks, partly on account of the thorns. The rock is the flesh, the thorns are the world, the highway is the habit of a worldly and licentious life, where the birds of the air, that is the devils, like most eager and voracious devourers of souls, snatch away the doctrine that has been preached, from the mind and memory, whilst they draw off those who are by the wayside, *i.e.*, men who are given up to the customs and business of the world, as well as those who are wandering, who are slothful and curious, from considering and penetrating into the doctrine heard, to their accustomed vanities. 5. The seed in the good ground is that which those receive in a good heart, who begin to ruminate upon it, and profit by it; they are in the best way, who apply themselves with all their might, to arrive at perfection in virtue. 6. Some seed bears less fruit, some greater, some the greatest. That is on account either of the greater sowing, *i.e.*, preaching and illumination of spiritual things, and the assistance of grace, or on account of greater efforts and co-operation of free will with grace. This is the sum of the whole parable, from which it is easy to understand it in all its parts. I will handle them briefly, one by one.

*Moraliter*: Let the preacher with Christ, who came forth from the house, even from heaven, impelled by the force of love, to the earth, go forth from the house of contemplation into the field of preaching, that what he has drank from God in prayer, he may pour forth upon the people, and preach, not so much by words, as by the example of a holy life. Again, he invokes God that what he speaks in the ear, God may speak in the heart.

**Verse 4-** *And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside*, namely, on the path or boundary, conterminous with the field, which is constantly worn and trodden down by the feet of passengers, and is therefore unsuitable for the reception of seed, and exposes it naked, to be carried off by the birds. We see a gradation here, for from the unsuitable ground for seed, He rises gradually to the less unsuitable, to the more suitable, and the most suitable. The most unsuitable earth for seed is that by the wayside. The less suitable is the rocky ground. The more fit is the good ground which produces thorns. The most fit is that which is entirely good, rich, moist earth. Moreover, *the way* is a mind worn, and dried up by evil thoughts. Such a mind does not receive the doctrine of the gospel, which is contrary to its lusts; it does not perceive, nor understand it, because it is wholly intent upon fleshly allurements. Whence, says the Gloss, such are those, who neither are pricked by preaching, nor begin to do well.

and understand the same. This do not the Jews: for the soul, equally with the body, has its own eyes and ears—yea, the soul is all eye or ear.

**Verse 17-** *Verily, I say unto you, that many prophets*, &c. For, as Christ said (John viii. 56), "Abraham rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was glad." Here is the voice and prayer of Jacob: "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord." (Gen. xlix. 18). Then also Isaiah xlv. 8. "Drop down dew, ye heavens from above, and let the clouds rain the righteous one. Let the earth open and bring forth the Saviour." (Vulg.) There was the same feeling and desire to all the patriarchs, all the prophets, all the saints of the Old Testament—namely, to see and hear Messiah, the Redeemer, Teacher, and Saviour of the world.

It is said that S. Augustine had three wishes: the first to see Christ speaking in the flesh; the second to behold Rome in the splendour of an imperial triumph; the third, to hear Paul thundering forth in his preaching. Many have the same wish at this present time.

**Verse 18-19-** *Hear ye therefore*, &c. *Cometh the evil one*, Gr. *ὁ πονηρός*, that is, *the devil*. S. Luke (viii. 12) gives this more clearly, *The seed is the Word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear: then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*

Appositely is the word of God, or the gospel, and the preaching of it compared to the sowing of seed. 1. Because as the word from the mouth of the preacher, so is seed scattered by the hand of the sower. 2. As the word is received by the ear and the heart of the hearer, so is seed received into the bosom of the earth, that it may produce fruit. 3. As seed is the parent and origin of all corn, so is the word of God the parent of all good works. 4. As the earth without seed produces only nettles, tares and thorns, so also does the mind of man without the word of God produce nothing but what is vain and noxious. 5. As seed, in order that it may fructify, must be sown in ground neither hard nor stony, dry or thorny, but in moist or good earth, so also the word of God ought to be received in tender, pure hearts, and inclined to piety, that it may bring forth spiritual fruit: this is what James says (i. 21), "receive with meekness the engrafted word."

Again, Palladius (*l 1 de re Rust. Tit. 35*) suggests a remedy to prevent seeds being destroyed by moles, mice, ants, &c., that the seeds should be previously steeped in bitter substances. So also Pliny says that chick-peas keep caterpillars from herbs, and adds, "if the seed of herbs be steeped in the juice of wormwood, it will keep the herbs from all noxious animals." In like manner, in order that we may keep the seed of God's word in our hearts, untouched by the gnawing of pleasures, it must be macerated by sobriety, fasting, and other austerities, for these preserve the mind from the corruption of fleshly delights.

understand, obey, and believe Christ when He spake plainly of repentance and the way to the kingdom of Heaven. They deserved, therefore, that Christ should speak to them obscurely and by parables. For He taught at Capernaum—where were rich merchants, who trusted in their riches; where also were Scribes and Pharisees; these men despised, yea even derided and blasphemed, Christ's heavenly doctrine concerning contempt of riches, humility, poverty, and penance. Wherefore, Christ purposely betook Himself to parables, which (forasmuch as they did not understand them) they could not deride. Therefore He spake unto them in parables; not because they were absolutely reprobate, but because they were unworthy and ungrateful. Thus SS. Hilary, Chrysostom, and Bede. Nevertheless, I confess there were intermingled with this multitude of unbelieving Jews many who were desirous of hearing Christ for the sake of salvation; but because they were mixed up with the unbelieving, who were Christ's enemies, it was given to them to hear only in parables; that by them, even when they did not understand them, they might at least conceive admiration and reverence for Christ, which would at length lead them on to a better position. Yea, as S. Chrysostom says, to all the Scribes and Pharisees, unworthy and obstinate as they were, Christ spake in parables, with this intention and this end in view—that He might instil into them a sincere desire of searching and believing in Christ, and that having suffered a temporary obscurity in parables which they did not comprehend, they might the more eagerly desire Christ, the true light, and ask of Him the explanation of the parables. This is hinted at in Mark (iv. 33).

*And with many parables He spake the word unto them, as they were able to bear it, that (namely) they who were able to understand and receive them, might receive them; but they who could not, might be stimulated to search out the meaning.*

**Verse 15-** *For this people's heart is waxed gross, &c.* He cites Isaiah (vi. 9, 10), where instead of *make fat*, our translation has, *blind thou*—i.e., *thou shalt blind* (Chaldean, *infatuate*) *the heart of this people*. The Hebrew is *חשמו*, *hashmen*, i.e., *make gross, or fat their heart, and make heavy their ears*. Where observe that this blinding, making gross and hardening, is spoken of God deserting and leaving in his blindness the man who is made blind and hardened; as well as of the man who, of his own free will, blinds, makes gross, and hardens himself, by cleaving to his darkness and his sins, and shutting his eyes to the Divine light and the doctrine of Christ. Where the LXX (which the Vulgate follows) reads with different points, *huscheman*, and translate with a clearer meaning—*the heart of this people has been made gross*, namely, directly by themselves, indirectly by God; especially because the preceding words signify that they had not been so much blinded by God as by their own covetousness, pride, malice, hatred and envy against Christ. See what I have said on Isaiah vi., where I have expounded the passage at length.

**Verse 16-** *But blessed are your eyes, for they see* (Arabic, *see through*), &c. Eyes and ears of the mind as well as of the body. Blessed are ye, O ye Apostles, because ye receive the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, both with the exterior eyes and ears of the body, and the interior ears and eyes of the soul. With the eyes of the body ye behold My sacred actions and miracles: but, what is of far more consequence, with the eyes and ears of your minds, enlightened by God, ye believe

**Verse 5-** *But other fell on stony ground, &c.* This seed could not strike deep root, therefore it began to germinate and spring up before the proper time. For that which is quickly produced, quickly perishes. He adds the cause.

**Verse 6-** *When the sun was risen, they were scorched, Greek, ἐκαυματίσθη, i.e., were burnt up*, both seeds and germs, by the burning heat of the sun. And because they had no root, they withered away. They had but a little earth, which was succeeded by the rock. Hence, partly from want of moisture, partly by the burning rays of the sun, they were dried up. The *rock* in this place, says Rabanus, means the hardness of an insolent mind, in which there is no deep mildness of an obedient soul. Whence, such are only pleased by the sweetness of the word, which they hear, and of heavenly promises for a short time; but they strike not the root of desire unto salvation. Therefore by the heat of the sun *i.e.*, the fury of persecution, are they burnt up, through impatience, because their mind does not firmly cleave to the word of God, and they lose the greenness of faith, says the *Interlinear*. S. Chrysostom says, "With regard to souls, that which is rock, may become good ground, that which is wayside, not trodden down; and the thorns may be destroyed. Christ was speaking to all, even as if He were providing for the future, how He might declare what I ought to do, and have not done. Hereby He teaches His disciples not to be slothful."

**Verse 7-** *But other fell among thorns, &c., i.e., in land producing thorns. And they grew, Gr. ἀνέβησαν, i.e., they ascended, i.e., they grew more quickly than the good seed, which rises slowly, and by degrees. For tares sprig up easily, wheat with difficulty. Therefore the tares choked the wheat just as it was coming into ear. The tares did this, both because they drew away the moisture and nourishment to their own roots: as well as because they deprived them of air and room to grow.*

**Verse 8-** *But other fell on good ground, &c. (Arab.) For one a hundred, for one sixty, and for another thirty.* Good ground, if it be well cultivated, for one grain produces a hundred; other ground, less rich, sixty; other, more sterile, thirty. The good ground is a faithful and devoted conscience. Observe, only the fourth part of the seed, namely, that which fell on the good ground, produced fruit; the three other divisions of the seed perished. Thus, but few profit by the word of preaching. By far the greater number who hear the word bring forth no fruit.

**Verse 9-** *He that hath ears of hearing* (Greek) *let him hear.* Christ makes use of this expression when the subject is obscure and symbolical, or when he would arouse the attention of his hearers. *Ears to hear:* He speaks of one who hears diligently the words of Christ, in order that he may receive them, and ruminates upon them, and obeys them. For many heard Christ out of curiosity, for the sake of listening to something new. Such had not ears for hearing. So, even now, there are many who hear sermons for the sake of

their eloquence—not that they may amend their lives.

**Verse 10-** *And the disciples, &c.* They meant to say, the uninstructed multitudes do not receive parabolic and symbolic discourses. Why, then, dost thou not speak to them in plain words, that they may understand them?

**Verse 11-** *He answered and said, &c. (Arab), ye have been endowed with the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, and they have not been endowed.* The reason why Christ spake to the multitude in parables was, because many among them were as yet unfitted for receiving the heavenly doctrine of the Gospel; and some, indeed, did not believe—yea, some derided. The scribes also reviled Christ, and accounted Him for a false prophet. Wherefore they had not *ears of hearing* such as Christ required. Christ, therefore, urges them to take hearing ears, and examine carefully His parables, and ask from Him the meaning of them, that thus they may make themselves fitted to receive the preaching of the Gospel. This if they would do, He promises clearly to expound what He speaks in parables.

Moreover, Christ indicates that this capability of receiving the Word cannot be obtained by our own power, but must be humbly asked of God. For this is the gift of God, which He gave to the disciples of Christ, and did not give to the rest, but left them in their blindness. It is as though He said, “Yours, O ye Apostles, is this grace and happiness, that God has given you faith in Me, and that, for this reason, I clearly tell you of mysteries, whilst I speak to others only in parables. For faith is the gift of God. Do ye, therefore, render perpetual thanks to God for this, and pray for others, that God would give them ears of hearing, as He has given you. For then will I explain My parables to them, as I shall explain them to you.” Whence Mark has (4, xi.), *To them which are without, all things are done in parables.* That is, to the unbelieving who are outside of faith and of the Church, all things are spoken and done by Me, parabolically, *i.e.*, obscurely, by symbols and enigmas, that they may not despise and cavil at them, for as Bede says, “Not only the things which the Lord spoke, but also the things which He did, were parables,” *i.e.*, signs of mysteries, hidden from the unbelieving Jews, according to the words, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine.” Mark adds, *that seeing they may see, and not perceive, &c.* He means, they are blinded and obstinate, and thus they persevere in their blindness, and will not accept the light of truth, which I offer them. For this blindness is the punishment of past sins, which they have committed. All this will be more plain from what follows.

Observe: the word *that*, as Mark says, *that seeing they may see, and not perceive*, does not signify cause and intention, but consequence and *effect*. For Christ, in speaking parabolically, did not intend absolutely to blind them, but only to permit what was the consequence of His parables—namely, that the Jews, being blinded with envy and lust, although they saw so many miracles of Christ, and heard His heavenly wisdom, yet would not believe, nor understand what they saw and heard, but would be as though they had neither seen nor heard.

**Verse 12-** *For he that hath, &c.; Arabic, And he who has anything, it shall be given and added, &c.* The sentence is a species of proverb, as Salmeron and others say. It is most true: for to the rich things are given, from the poor there is always taking away. Similarly, God heaps upon His faithful and elect people (such as the Apostles were) new graces and benefits day by day, so that they abound in virtue and holiness: but from the unbelieving, the ungrateful, and the unworthy, He gradually takes away His gifts, both of nature and grace.

The meaning is: 1. He who has faith, to Him shall be given the knowledge of the mysteries of God’s kingdom; for these cannot be known without faith. He, therefore, who hath not faith, from him shall be taken away the good which he hath. As though He said, To you, O ye Apostles, because ye believe in Me as the Messiah, it is given to hear the mysteries of God and of Heaven, by means of which ye are every day advanced more and more in hope and the love of God. But from the Scribes, who will not believe in Me, God will take away the little knowledge which they do possess of heavenly things. Yea, he will deprive them of Church, kingdom, priesthood, and country; and, as profane and perfidious, they will wander in misery over the whole earth. Thus SS. Jerome and Hilary and Euthym. explain.

2. They who *have ears of hearing*, who come to Me with sincere affection, with a pure desire of faith and truth, to them I will clearly reveal celestial verities; and I will assist them in the path of virtue, by which they may arrive at the kingdom of God. But they who have not this pure desire of the truth, but indulge in their own lusts and errors—as ye do, O ye Jews and Scribes—from them shall be taken away, by degrees, that little knowledge of Divine things which they do possess, and they shall become wholly blinded. Therefore, to you, O ye Jews, I, Christ, speak not clearly, but darkly in parables. As Theophylact says, “For he who hath a small spark of goodness, and does not stir it up by means of the Spirit and spiritual things must of necessity have it extinguished.”

3. S. Augustine (lib. 1, *de Doctr. Christ. c. 1*) explains the word *have* to mean *use*, and applies it to preachers. Thus, the preacher who has doctrine—*i.e.*, who uses the doctrine given him by God, and diligently preaches it, and communicates it to others;—doctrine and words, which he may speak and preach, will never fail him, for God will suggest them. But if anyone does not make use of doctrine, he will gradually forget it and lose it. In the same manner, the word *have* means to *use* in c. xxv. 29. Thus we find by experience that zealous preachers, the more they preach, the more they abound in word and spirit; like fountains, from which however much water flows, just as much do they always receive.

**Verse 13-** *Therefore I speak unto them, &c.* Behold how Christ here plainly declares the reasons why He spoke to the Jews and Pharisees in parables. It was because they had been previously unwilling to hear, *i.e.*, to