

Symbolism In "The Sower": An Analyzation Of The Parable Of Christ

Dr. Harikumar Pallathadka¹, Prof. Mairembam Sangita Devi², Shoraisam Kiran Singh³,
Tiganlung Rikhi Panmei⁴

^{1, 2, 3, 4} Manipur International University

Email: harikumar@miu.edu.in

Abstract: Parables were the prototype for the word parable in Western culture. Parables are among the many literary types found in the Bible, but they are particularly prevalent in the New Testament gospels. Short tales, such as the Good Samaritan, are parables distinguished from metaphorical claims. A true parable can be thought of as an extended simile. The research paper aims to interpret and analyze the parable entitled "The Sower." It attempts to delve into the meaning of the narrative at different levels of interpretation. It primarily focuses on the function of different symbols and their meaning-producing factors. The term "symbol" refers to a word or expression that indicates an entity or occurrence that, in turn, refers to something or has a spectrum of meaning beyond itself. "The Sower" parable has multiple symbols, and the present research paper mints to shed light on them and interpret them to disclose the true meaning in the respective context.

Keywords: parables, seed, sower, land, pathway

1. INTRODUCTION:

According to Adolf Julicher, parables are extended metaphors with an image component, an essential component, and a reference point between the image and reality components. While some believe parables are just extended allegories, others are adamantly opposed. A parable is defined as an earthly story with a heavenly message. It is a distinctive form of storytelling prevalent throughout the Bible. A parable is a brief instructional tale told via a series of illuminating comparisons in prose or poetry. It is regarded as an excellent story with a brief storyline.

On the other hand, Fables deal with creatures, nonhumans, and plants, while parables interact with human characters. As a result, the parables are well-known as tales with illustrations. The word parable comes from the Greek word parable, which means "to tell a tale." 'para' and 'bole' signify 'alongside' and 'throwing,' respectively.

Parables have been used to teach ethical values, and Jesus Christ employed them often in his teaching. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the three synoptic gospels containing Jesus's parables. To reach the common folk, Jesus used parables as a method of teaching because the ordinary people felt that Jesus' ethical philosophy sounded complex. Thus, Jesus has used parables in his teaching. It is a tool and approach that Jesus used to the greatest extent possible to reach out to familiar people. Since Jesus recognized that his disciples and believers could not comprehend his message, he attempted to convey moral teachings through parables. The parabolic form, according to scholars, was used by Jesus in his teaching because it was a catchy way of attracting listeners.

The parables of Jesus are tales that appear to be straightforward and unforgettable, and they all offer a lesson that we should apply in our everyday lives. Scholars have noted that while the parables seem plain, the meanings they express are profound and fundamental to Jesus' teachings. Christian writers view them as inner analogies in which nature becomes a witness for the spiritual world rather than as mere similitudes for the sake of illustration. The stories of Jesus have many representations and explanations, but they all reveal the truth of scripture. According to Vernon D. Doerksen, the parables are deciphered in multiple manners starting "from the extreme allegorical method of Augustine to the topical method of Chrysostom" (4). He argues that the "parables are not mere human tales; they are teachings of the Son of God" (Doerksen 3). The parables are thought to be the lights that Jesus sparked on the world. For Doerksen, parables aim to preach scriptures to both believers and nonbelievers in Christ.

When approaching the parables, we must be comfortable with metaphors and recognize that we cannot avoid them. We need to understand allusive abstract language. Due to technology, people become matter-of-fact and unimaginative, which could be a sinister move toward dissociation and de-civilization. In such a sense, the study of literature takes on a new role to humanize culture. The source is important not as the "*ipsissima verba Jesu*" (Blackman 6) but as the source of the church's faith. Dan Otto Via's beautifully suggestive book latches on to this idea and expands on it. He claims that the true purpose of interpretation is the reapplication and discernment of meaning. He is vulnerable to criticism here, and he might be interpreting the parable in ways that he prefers. He runs the risk of arbitrariness, although he still establishes the initial reference - what he refers to as the historical interpretation - and uses it as the starting point for, or allows it to influence, his existential interpretation.

Objectives:

This research paper will examine and evaluate Jesus Christ's parable of the "Sower." The main objective is to determine the existence and function of symbols within the given landscape. It attempts to dig into the narrative's significance on many levels of interpretation.

2. METHOD AND METHODOLOGY:

The present research employs an interpretative method to analyze the selected parable in the light of symbolism. The selected parable is interpreted and analyzed to discover the underlying meaning of the text. Here, the word 'text' refers to the narrative of Jesus Christ. "The Sower," a parable narrated by Jesus, is present in the Holy *Bible*. *Matthew* chapter 13 verses 1 to 23 narrate this parable. It is also found in other books of the Bible. Chapter 4 of *Mark* and chapter 8 of *Luke* reiterate the same parable.

Many poets like Novalis, Holderlin, and Shelley often used private symbols in Romantic poetry. Shelley, for example, employed things like a boat traveling upstream, winding caves, a serpent, and an eagle as symbols. William Blake outperformed all of his romantic contemporaries in his use of continuous symbolism. In American literature, the writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Emerson, and Thoreau practiced symbolism. In literature, the Modern Period was a significant period of symbolism. Writers make use of symbols that are partly derived from religious and esoteric practices and partly made up. Some period works have symbolist settings, agents, behavior, and objects.

In the most significant context, a symbol is something that represents something; all words are symbols in this sense. However, when addressing literature, the term "symbol"

refers only to a word or expression that refers to an entity or occurrence that, in turn, refers to the thing that has a spectrum of meaning beyond itself. Some symbols are "traditional" or "public," such as "the Cross," "the Red, White, and Blue," and "the Good Shepherd," all of which points out symbolic artifacts whose different meaning is determined by the society in which they are used. Symbolism "transforms the reality into a concept, the thought into a picture, in such a manner that the idea stays perpetually alive and unapproachable in the image, and would remain inexpressible even if articulated in all languages" (qt. in Abrams 313). Wellek and Warren have described symbolism as an object that relates to some other object but gets attention in itself, as an appearance.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

Many symbols are used in a different context to convey reverential meaning to the context in the Bible. Jesus Christ has also used symbols in his narratives to reach the folk. The parables of Jesus are also considered narratives in a literary sense. He used parables as a method of communicating biblical truths to the commoners. The narratives of Jesus have a vast number of symbols that convey a profound biblical truth to the readers and listeners. The present study deals with the parable "The Sower," printed in Matthew chapter 13 verses 1 to 23. In this narrative, Jesus portrays the work of a sower and the impact of his sowing. The son of God could describe philosophical concepts to the people all over Judea, and they could understand the scripture through parables.

Jesus did not go into extensive detail because he wanted that his listeners assist him. If He had filled in all the gaps for others, it would not have had the same effect. The audience must connect the story to its reality, which is one of the most compelling elements of a parable. The "A-ha!" moment happens when the listener makes the relation. The parable was conveyed to the whole crowd; only the disciples were given the explanations. The parable documented in Mark follows a definition of a growing animosity toward Jesus and his ministry in the previous chapter. The Pharisees accused him of not strictly observing the Sabbath by executing different healings. Some schools believed that such acts were only appropriate if the individual being handled was in imminent danger of death.

For a farmer, life is contained in a tiny kernel of the seed. The seed is packed with all the components necessary for a remarkable miracle. It may develop into a plant or tree bearing life-sustaining fruit. The capacity of the seed to survive, on the other hand, is influenced by several environmental variables. A seed that is unable to enter healthy soil will not grow. The seed of this story is the kingdom's message.

Moreover, like all seeds, it will be unable to perform its transformative function in an inhospitable environment. If the gospel seed falls on bad soil, it will not germinate. The many soils in the tale symbolize the seductive power of the human heart. In this setting, the gospel's effectiveness is contingent upon the soil into which it falls.

The narration of Jesus discloses a tremendous spiritual truth even today. Though it was narrated and written during an immemorial period, even today, readers try comprehending the true meaning of the 'Sower's Parable.' Verses from 1 to 23 of the books of *Matthew* is mentioned below:

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Moreover, great crowds gathered about him so that he got into a boat and sat down. Furthermore, the whole crowd stood on the beach. Moreover, he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. Furthermore, as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds

came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose, they were scorched.

Moreover, since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."

"Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself but endures for a while. When tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately, he falls away. What was planted amid thorns is the one who hears the word, but the worries of the world and the deception of riches choke the message, rendering it fruitless. As for what was planted on fertile soil, this one hears and comprehends the word. Indeed, he produces fruit and gives a hundredfold in one instance, sixtyfold in another, and thirtyfold in another." (ESV 875-6)

When we conceive of sowing, we imagine the picture of a farmer plowing up the land and inserting the seed deep into the ground with a tool. One can observe that the seed in different stages of readiness is dropping on the path and soil. Birds were one of the most significant risks for farmers who dispersed their crops. The planting season is an unforgettable feast for birds. That is why farmers had to be extremely generous with their seed disposal. They had to be sure that it was enough for it to take hold. The first souls of whom Jesus speaks have never been able to internalize the gospel since it has been taken away by the evil one. Some people are never given a chance to consider the good news. Reflection, belief, or remorse have never relaxed their souls. As a result, when the gospel is introduced to them, they are preoccupied with the material aspects of life. They are so engrossed in the world's amusements and baubles that the empire text has little chance of gaining traction.

The story's interpretation is straightforward. It was demonstrated to the disciples by Jesus himself. The farmer reminds me of Jesus. The seeds he sows are the seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The farmer sows the seed in various locations, just as Christians share God's good news in various locations. What happens to the seed varies depending on where it is planted. It is the same for the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has a positive impact on certain people's lives while hurting others. The first seed landed on the course, which was devoid of soil. Some people hear the good news but do not pay any heed. This is like the path's seed. These individuals do not alter their conduct. These people are unconcerned with others. They are self-centered. The good news is quickly forgotten. Where there are bricks, some seed drop, it proliferates before dying. This demonstrates that some people are receptive to positive news. They seem to like hearing about Jesus. This, however, does not last. They are having a hard time, or other people are making fun of them. They lose faith in Jesus as a result. They never had faith in him.

Jesus has employed several images, and these images function as symbols. First, the sower is a symbol that refers to Jesus Christ and the preachers of the church. Second, the seed signifies the word of God. The seed has life, and it can contribute to the reproduction and cultivation of crops. The bird signifies Satan, who hovers over to snatch away the word of God, which has the power to metamorphize the listener's life. Likewise, the word of God is considered as 'the seed of life, which renders life to both the spiritual life and the temporal life. The parable deals with four different types of land. The first land is referred to as 'the path.' The path symbolizes the people who do not have a stronghold on God and his words.

Secondly, the rocky land symbolizes the listeners of God's word who give no space for transformation. The word of God transforms all hearts and minds, but it does work against the individual's free will. From this, it is clear that God works when He is invited and given space to work.

The third type of land is denoted as the 'thorny land.' This land symbolizes the people who listen to the words of God, but they are unable to grow spiritually as they are overwhelmed by other worries and thoughts. The thorny land does allow the seed to grow tall and produce fruit. The thorny present crushes its productivity in the land. Finally, the fourth land is called 'Good Soil' as it has fertile soil. The fertile soil symbolizes good listeners with faith in God. Such listeners of God's word and the believers of Christ wait on God and give space to God for his will to get accomplished in their life. This land is called good soil as it can contribute to the growth of the seed and thereby nurturing the seed to bring a good amount of yield.

This parable can be interpreted in multiple ways; however, its primary meaning is about living a productive life by hearing the word of God. Some seed germinated among the weeds, and the weeds suffocated it. This demonstrates that certain people do not have time for Jesus. They are self-centered and just care for themselves. Sometimes they aspire to be wealthy or influential. They are always worried. They are concerned about their belongings. Finally, they hear about seeds on fertile ground in the narrative. People who love the Lord are like the good ground. They respect Jesus and believe in him. God will bless these citizens. His Holy Spirit will assist them in loving others. They will be willing to forgive and live together in peace with other people. They will be overjoyed. It is because God has the power to alter them. He alters these people's internal states, which alters their behavior.

Plowing enables a peasant to transform the soil repeatedly and clear all stones. Though they work hard to remove the stones and make the land a good fertile one, it is impossible to make fertile land. When land is full of stone, it can yield to the farmer, as is the condition with the seed that is sown the rocky land. This symbolically indicates the believers who are not so firm in faith instead of having a superficial relationship with God. Such believers would not be able to withstand the troubles and hardships of the world. That is why Jesus expects His children to have a strong relationship with Him. A similar idea has been communicated in *John* 16:33 wherein Jesus reminds us of this "You will face difficulties in this life. But do not despair! I have triumphed over the universe ".When they are confronted with pain and opposition, these people fade away. Perhaps, it is because they imagine that pursuing Jesus will make them immune to resistance and turmoil, or it could be because they do not even learn how to put their faith in Him. In either case, they cannot establish the root structure that will enable them to survive when life becomes difficult.

Soil can be very deceiving. When a worker does everything he can to prepare the soil and remove all its impurities, weeds have fibrous roots waiting to grow and restraining the good seed's growth. The worst thing about weeds is that one will never seem to be able to get rid of them. When the weed grows tall and green by observing the complete nutrition from the good land, the seed will not get the wanted space to grow and develop to produce yield. Such is the condition with the spiritual realm. The word of God has the power to enlighten and build any dismantled soul and mind, but when the mind is overwhelmed with worldly things, the powerful word of God does not have sufficient space to function. God has given free will to men; therefore, He does not fight with the human soul.

We are given the liberty to choose between good and evil; however, God wants us to choose suitably. However, the soul submerged in the world will fail to choose suitable as it does not see God's things pleasing to its eyes. It is as if Paul is explaining something to the

Corinthian church in 1 *Corinthians* 10:23: "You say, 'I have the right to do whatever I want,' but it is not always beneficial. 'I have the freedom to do whatever I want,' but not everything is always beneficial." When the heart cannot understand the difference between good and evil, the destructive forces ultimately outnumber all others. The problem is that re-establishing the goals is a long-term process. When one tears out one unreasonable priority, thousands of others spring up to take its place, just like weeds. For apostles, fostering single-mindedness is essential.

A good land supports the growth of the seed and generates the crop-producing a hundred, sixty, or thirty-fold what was seeded, as Jesus claims. It is advisable to determine that the seed is in the fruit, much as in flora. Love, joy, goodwill, forgiveness, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are all safe fruits of the Christian heart, as mentioned in *Galatians* 5:22–23. The greater the effect of a healthy heart on the world, the more fruit it makes. People are more open to the gospel seed when they see the fruit in people's lives. This is how one can grow a large harvest.

This parable sheds light on the position of God. He takes the position of the farmer in this context. Bible says that Jesus Christ spent three years of His life preaching about the kingdom's truth to a varying degree of success. It is significant to see God as the sower. It is indeed inefficient for a sower to dump seed on the non-productive land. This shows that the farmer is too optimistic that he is determined to do it anyway. Since He has overcome with such a desire to see everyone reunited to Him, this parable scintillates the truth that Christ sows the seed in all the lands. He does not discriminate between the fertile and non-fertile because He is a God of all. He treats everyone equally and gives the liberty to the people to choose whether to follow Him or not. The free will rendered humanity choose between worshipping the creator and standing still without worshipping the creator. This idea is transparently mentioned in the *New Testament* books, and it is recorded that:

Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and earth has been granted to me. So go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to follow all that I have commanded you. Moreover, I will undoubtedly be with you until the end of time. (Matthew 28:16–20; Mark 10:16–20).

The parable shed light on some of the spiritual understandings. First, there is the rough core, the seeds that fall by the side of the track. This reflects those who hear God's Word but never honestly believe it. There is the heart that's too shallow. The seed that falls on the barren ground is this one. This represents those who hear God's Word and rejoice in it but who perish because they have no root to support them. Then there is the throbbing vein. That is the seed that falls and is choked out by weeds. Slowly but steadily, these people, preoccupied with the cares and riches of this life, lose interest in God's things. Finally, there is the heart that is fruitful in receiving the word. The seed falls on fertile land, and the plants yield a bountiful crop.

4. CONCLUSION:

The interpretation of the 'Sower' parable scintillates the truth that it is everyone's responsibility to go out into the world and sow the gospel seed. Everyone must be aware of the different types of soil if one is to make disciples. We need to disperse as much seed as possible if we want a bountiful harvest, even if we realize that many will not grow to produce yield. The symbols used in the parable are a sower, seed, bird, pathway, rocky land, thorny land, and good land. Sower refers to Christ and preachers of the church. Seed symbolizes the word of God, and the bird indicates Satan, who steals the seed. The lands like a pathway,

thorn, and rock signify the people who listen to the word of God but do surrender themselves to God to allow Him to work in their lives. The excellent soil symbolizes God's people who have given their lives to God. These symbols have functioned in their respective contexts to produce lofty spiritual meaning. They have worked on adding literariness to the parable.

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