

Title: The Parable of the Soils — Four Hearts: Hardened, Hollow, Harried, or Hones

There's a moment every preacher secretly loves...

- ...when the sermon is over and someone whispers, "Now *that* was a sermon." The crowds felt something like that when Jesus finished His Sermon on the Mount. But it wasn't His illustrations that stunned them.
- It was His authority. "He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:29). The scribes leaned on other rabbis; Jesus leaned on no one. He spoke for God — because He is God. Even the temple police sent to arrest Him returned empty-handed: "No one ever spoke like this man!" (John 7:46, ESV).

Look at how Luke sets the stage.

Luke 8:1 - "Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve *were* with Him,

- Jesus is on the move — not debating opinions in the synagogues, but declaring the kingdom in the open air. And notice who surrounds Him. The twelve — rough fishermen being shaped into apostles.
- And a company of women: Mary called Magdalene, delivered from seven demons; Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward; Susanna; and many others — transformed lives who now supported His mission "out of their means" (Luke 8:3).

Don't miss that.

- This is the pattern of everything Jesus does: **the power of the Mighty God produces a people who are healed, are changed, and then give themselves to His mission.**
- Women delivered from demons now fund His ministry. Transformed lives become giving lives. Changed people stay.

But before Jesus tells His first parable, He plants a warning in the soil of this passage:

- **Luke 8:18** "Therefore take heed how you hear..."
 - o Not **whether** you hear, but **how** you hear
 - o Because the same Word can produce a harvest, or it can produce nothing at all.
 - o He then tells a farmer's story — a Sower, seed, and four kinds of ground — and closes it with the same charge He gave on the mountain:
- **Luke 8:8** "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

So here's Jesus' story.

- A farmer goes out to sow. He throws seed everywhere — and it lands on four kinds of ground. The seed is the same. The sower is the same.
- The only variable is the soil. And that's the whole sermon in a sentence: **the Word of the King never changes; the question is what kind of heart it lands in.**
- Let's look at the four hearts.

Title: The Parable of the Soils — Four Hearts: Hardened, Hollow, Harried, or Honest

Text: Luke 8:4–15 - And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable:

Jesus is a Master Story Teller – He would use what is called a Parable

- The word "parable" in the Greek literally means "***something thrown alongside***" It means: an earthly story thrown alongside a heavenly truth.
- Jesus took common, everyday things — seeds, sheep, coins, farmers, fathers, barns — and placed them next to the realities of God's kingdom so that the familiar would illuminate the spiritual.
 - o Parable reveal truth to the humble hearts / Conceal Truth to the Hard Hearts
 - o They were memorable – People forget sermons, but remember stories
- ***A parable is a window — for those who want to see, it opens; for those who refuse to look, it's a wall. Jesus taught in stories so that hungry hearts would feast and proud hearts would stumble (Luke 8:10).***

Luke 8:5-8 - ⁵ "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶ Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. ⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. ⁸ But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Luke 8:9 - ⁹ Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?" ¹⁰ And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.'

Jesus Explains the Story

Luke 8:11 - ¹¹ "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. ¹³ But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. ¹⁵ But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience.

Seed = Word of God

Sower = Anyone who shares the Gospel.

I. The Hardened Heart — The Wayside: Luke 8:12

Luke 8:11 - ¹¹ "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² ***Those by the wayside*** are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

Some of the seed fell along the path.

- Picture it: a well-worn footpath running through the edge of the field. It's packed down hard. Not by anything the farmer did — by traffic...By generations of feet crossing back and forth, tramping it down until it's like pavement.
- That's the hardened heart. It's a thoroughfare. It's crossed continually by the mixed multitude of iniquities — every sin that ever marched through it has left its mark. It is never plowed by conviction. It is never cultivated by self-examination, by honest assessment of guilt, by repentance. It's as hard against the sweet beckoning of grace as it is against the dreadful terrors of judgment. Indifference, insensibility, and a love for sin have made this heart dense, dry, and impenetrable.

Notice again what Jesus says in Verse 12...Jesus gives the interpretation...

Luke 8:12 - ¹² Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; ***then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.***

The People heard it...

- The Sound of the Word of God proclaimed hit their ears...
- But it never got in. The evil one snatched it away before it could take root.

We have all seen this heart.

- The person who has heard the gospel a thousand times — Sunday after Sunday, year after year — and it rolls off like rain on pavement. No conviction. No discomfort. No question.
- The Word comes, and the enemy steals it in a moment, the way a bird snatches seed off a road.

Friend, if you're here this morning ...

- and the gospel has never once convicted you — that's not a sign of strength.
- That's a warning. The hardest heart in the world is the one that's heard the most and felt the least. Jesus says of that heart: the Word never even got in. (MacArthur, John, *Parables*, p. 29).

II. The Hollow Heart — The Rocky Ground: Luke 8:6,13

Luke 8:6 - ⁶ Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.

The second soil is different.

- This isn't a hard heart. It's a shallow one. It's Hollow

Luke 8:13 - But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.

Here's what's fascinating about this soil: it received the seed.

- The plant actually came up. There was growth. There was green. From a distance, this patch of the field looks exactly like the good soil — right up until the sun comes out.
- Jesus says these "are the ones who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy" (Luke 8:13). Notice — joy. Not indifference. Not resistance. They're excited. They're enthusiastic.

- They sing the hymns. They sign the cards. They tell their friends about Jesus. It's real emotion — there's nothing fake about the tears.
- **Intellectually, at least, they are receptive, affirmative—even quite enthusiastic.**

Luke 8:13 - But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, **who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.**

The word for **temptation** can also be understood as **testing** and **trial**

- **Testing** — tribulation, persecution, a job, a relationship, a reputation.
- And here's the honest, sobering truth: the same **speed** with which this heart **embraced** the Word is the **speed** with which it **abandons** it. "In time of testing" — not in time of thinking, not in time of counting — just falls away. Like a plant on rock: it springs up fast, and it dies fast.

No matter how enthusiastic the response may have seemed in the beginning, that person will "fall away"—meaning she will abandon the faith completely. (MacArthur, John, *Parables*, p. 29).

- Because the heart is superficial, shallow, rootless, totally at the mercy of the hostile elements that are sure to test its viability.
- **You see, the Word costs something.**
- Jesus said it Himself in **Luke 14:28** - "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish *it*— (Luke 14:28).
- The hollow heart never counted the cost. It wanted the benefits without the cross — the peace without the obedience, the joy without the sacrifice.

The hollow heart has religion on the surface and nothing underneath. It believes — for a while.

III. The Harried Heart — The Thorny Ground (Luke 8:7,14)

Luke 8:14 - Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

The Harried Heart – It means "troubled, divided, pulled at from every side.

The third soil is the most tragic of all — because it's the most **respectable**.

- **Luke 8:7** - " And some fell among thorns, and the thorns **sprang** up with it and choked it.
- Something grew here – Seed grew here.
- The thorns didn't kill it the day it was planted. They grew with it — side by side, season after season, competing for the same soil, the same water, the same sun.
- **John MacArthur, "These make superficial commitments without a true repentance."**
 - o And slowly, steadily, the thorns won. It wasn't a violent death. It was a slow strangling.

Jesus names the Weeds – verse 14

Luke 8:14 - Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with **cares, riches, and pleasures** of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

The Cares

- The Greek word is *MER-imnah* — the exact word Jesus uses later when He says, "Do not be anxious about your life" (Luke 12:22). Worry. Not wickedness, just worry — and it chokes the Word. A heart consumed with anxiety about money, about the future, about what people think — is a soil where the Word of God cannot mature.

The Riches

- the deceitfulness of wealth. (mt. 13) Money lies. It promises security and delivers anxiety. It promises freedom and delivers chains. And the seed dies believing the lie.

And Pleasures of this life...

- **1 John 2:15-17** puts it plainly: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Not persecution — just preoccupation. Not an enemy at the gate — just a garden full of weeds.

Here's the tragedy: the harried heart *looks* like a believer.

- It's in church. It says the right things. It gives every sign of pursuing Jesus. But its affections are divided — it values the temporal at the expense of the eternal.
- And eventually, without any dramatic fall, the Word is muffled, choked, and fruitless. You don't have to trample the seed to destroy it. You can just let the weeds grow.

THE DOCTRINAL ANCHOR — THREE SOILS, NO HARVEST

The first three soils share one thing: **no harvest.**

- Not a smaller harvest — nothing. These aren't weak Christians God grades on a curve. They're pictures of a heart that never truly believed.
- The rocky ground "believes for a while, then falls away" — the language of profession, not possession. The thorny ground is active — even religious — but fruitless. That's not a carnal Christian; that's an unconverted heart with religious interests.

A faith that finally falls away was never the faith that saves.

- **John 10:28** - Jesus: "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish"
- **Phil. 1:6** - Paul: "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion"
- **1 John 2:19** - John: "They went out from us, but they were not of us"
- Fruit doesn't save you — it's the inevitable evidence that you *are* saved (Matt. 7:16; James 2:17; Eph. 2:10).

One caution: this parable is a *mirror*, not a measuring stick (2 Tim. 2:19).

- Believers can have dry seasons — the difference is trajectory, not perfection. So take the mirror yourself: "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith" (2 Cor. 13:5).
- We'll do that in a moment. **But first — the fourth heart.**

IV. The Honest Heart — The Good Soil (Luke 8:8,15)

Luke 8:8 - But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Luke 8:15 - But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience.

Notice what makes this soil different.

- It's not the seed — same seed. It's not the sower — same sower.
- It's the heart. An honest and good heart. Honest — genuinely open before God, no games, no pretending. Good — prepared by grace to receive what God plants.

And notice the three verbs in Luke 8:15 –

- They hear the Word, they hold it fast, and they bear fruit with patience. They're not just hearers. They're holders. When tribulation comes, they don't fall away — they hold fast. When the weeds press in, they don't get choked — they bear fruit.
- Matthew's Gospel adds: **Matthew 13:23** - But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."
- "This is the one who hears the word and understands it" (Matt. 13:23) — and he bears fruit "in varying degrees," some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (Matt. 13:23).
- Not everybody bears the same amount. But the changed heart bears.

Jesus told His disciples in John 15:2, "Every branch in me that bears fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2). John 15:5 – he who abides in me bears much fruit

Hear the progression — fruit, more fruit, much fruit.

- Not everyone bears a hundredfold; some thirty, some sixty. But the Vinedresser never leaves the fruitful branch alone.
- And Hebrews 12:1 tells us what He cuts: "lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely."
- Two kinds of **cutting**. Sometimes God prunes — He cuts away weight: good things, busy things, even right things that drain the strength the branch needs for fruit.
- Other times He **corrects** — He cuts away sin through His Word: "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you" (John 15:3).
- Either way, the cut is love — because the branch that bears much fruit glorifies the Father (John 15:8).

This is what our Lord was talking about when He said in John 15,

John 15:4 – Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

John 15:5 - ⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

- Not fruit *for* salvation — fruit *from* salvation. Fruit of righteousness. Fruit of the Spirit. Fruit of souls converted through a changed life.
- The honest heart doesn't just hear the Word of the King. It receives it — and the Word of the King does in that heart what it was always meant to do: it produces a harvest.

THE CALL TO ACTION: NEXT STEPS – EXAMINE & EVALUATE (TWO-FOLD)

First, the mirror — salvation. Second, the measure — sanctification.

- One question asks, ***Which soil am I?***
- The other asks, *How much fruit is the Spirit producing in me?*
- Both matter. Both are yours to answer.

First: Examine your heart — are you in the faith?

2 Corinthians 13:5 - Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

- This is not about *earning* your salvation — it's about *having* it.
- Fruit doesn't save you; fruit shows you're saved.

So ask the three honest questions:

1. **One: Does the Word have roots in my life?**

- Not just a head full of Bible facts — but a heart that obeys when it's hard? When the Word costs something — a habit to break, a relationship to change, a pride to swallow — do you obey?
- Roots aren't visible from the surface. They're only proven by the heat.

2. **Two: Have the cares of this world been choking the Word?**

- That's the thorny soil. Are you so anxious about money, about your children, about the future — that the Word of God has slowly, silently stopped producing anything in you? James has a name for that heart: "a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8).
- The harried heart tries to love the world and the Word at once — and Jesus says that's impossible: "No one can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24). Don't dismiss this. Worry isn't just uncomfortable — it's one of the three things Jesus named that keeps the Word from ever maturing. A heart consumed with worry is a soil where the Word doesn't grow.

3. **Three: Is there fruit?**

- Real love. Real obedience. A growing likeness to Christ. Not perfect — but real. Because 1 John 2:19 tells us why some fall away: "They were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."
- Profession is not possession. The soils prove it: only one heart endures.

And here's the good news about the mirror.

- If it shows you the road, the rocks, or the thorns — the answer isn't "try harder." The answer is *come to Christ*. The Sower doesn't just scatter seed; He changes the ground: "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you."
- And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). That's a promise for hard hearts, hollow hearts, and harried hearts alike. And if you've never truly believed — the call is the same as it has always been: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (Heb. 3:15).

Second: Evaluate your life — how much fruit is the Spirit producing?

Now the question changes.

- To those standing in the good soil, the question isn't *whether* you're saved — it's *how much* the Father's harvest is growing. Jesus said, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit" (John 15:8). The progression is fruit, more fruit, much fruit — some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold (Matt. 13:23).
- So ask: **Where is the Spirit producing fruit in my life?** "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22–23). Is it growing?
- And is there anything to yield to the Vinedresser — a weight to lay aside, a sin to cut away (Heb. 12:1)? Remember: the branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more (John 15:2). The cut is love.
- And if you're a believer in a dry season — repent, and hand your worries to the Father who cares for you: "Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). The way back is not working harder; it's abiding: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me" (John 15:4).

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Let's pray.