Title: The Sower, The Seed, and The Soils

Description: In this Sunday morning message from Mark 4:1-9, Pastor Anthony Kim of Calvary Road Baptist Church opens the parable of the sower, the seed, and the soils. After the hostility of Mark 3, Jesus explains why some reject Him as mad or demonic while others become His true family: the seed is the unadulterated word of God, but hearts differ, from the hardened path and the shallow ground to the divided heart choked by cares and riches, and the good ground that yields fruit, more fruit, and much fruit, even thirty, sixty, and an hundredfold. Connecting that harvest to the true vine of John 15, Pastor Kim calls every listener to hearken and behold, to ask what kind of soil they are, and to abide in Christ, whose word will not return void.

Transcript:

That's a very sobering thought, isn't it?

Thank you, choir.

As we open our Bibles now to Mark chapter 4, we find ourselves at a very crucial turning point in our Lord's earthly ministry. In the preceding chapters, Jesus's own family try to seize him, saying, "He is out of his mind." We witnessed the mounting hostility of the religious leaders, the scribes and the Pharisees who tragically rejected the testimony of the Holy Spirit and attributed the miraculous works of the son of man to Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Because of this hardened rejection, our Lord formally declared the establishment of new spiritual relationships that would redefine his true family as the phrase, "Whosoever shall do the will of God." Now, this sets up the core question of Mark chapter 4. Why are people responding so differently to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Why do some reject him as mad or demonic while others become his true family? So, as we enter chapter 4 in the Gospel of Mark, the parable of the sower explains these fractured reactions, the different soils, the hard path, the rocky ground, the thorny patch, and then the good soil. It mirrors the exact hostile, shallow, preoccupied hearts of the scribes, the crowds, and his family seen in chapter three.

So, as we begin our new section in chapter 4, would you please stand out of respect for God's word and follow along in your Bible? And I'll be reading from Mark chapter 4, beginning at verse one all the way to verse 9.

Mark chapter 4, beginning in verse 1 all the way through verse 9. And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

In the agricultural society of Judea, Jesus's audience would have easily understood the actions and the outcomes described in this parable. But to someone who has never farmed or lived in an agricultural society, you'll understand what first-century farming life was like this morning.

So let me just start off with the very setting of Mark chapter 4. We see in verse one that Jesus began again to teach by the sea. This is not his first time doing this. And there was gathered unto him a great multitude. Again, not the first time the multitude gathered. And it's not his first time that he entered into a ship and sat there. And then we see that the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

The location unfolds with the northern shore of the sea of Galilee. This is where the Lord Jesus is giving this parable. It's in a very crowded center of Galilee which he would go there often because crowds would be there and he would just be at the very center of his teaching.

The other thing that we are to note is that him being on this ship and the people gathered on the shore is a perfect place for a natural amphitheater. As an enormous crowd pressed intensely on Jesus, he steps into this boat and he pushes himself slightly off the shore and he sits down.

And this utilizes again this natural sloped section of the beach and again creates the acoustics of an amphitheater. He didn't have to speak that loud. But he makes this interesting note at the end. He says, "He that hath ears to

hear, let him hear." It's not talking about listening with the physical ear, but rather to an open understanding of a spiritual matter concerning an earthly metaphor. So, we're going to see here that it's not so much to listen to the wavelengths of Jesus's words, but the actual content and how to respond to that very content.

And we're going to see in verse two, if you follow along with me, he taught them many things by parables.

So this is one instance of parables. Let me just explain what a parable is. If you don't know what it means, it literally means throwing something side by side. Side by side to something else that is relatable to the story.

For example, today, this morning, we're going to talk about farming. Farmers planting seeds. And so he places this parable right next to a deep spiritual truth, God and his kingdom. That's the focus. And the key is not to get caught up with hidden meaning, but that there is a single point, a single primary lesson that you're supposed to take away from parables.

For example, Matthew 6:33 says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Meaning, focus on that. Don't focus about the other things. He tells you to seek first the kingdom of God. That's the most important thing in life.

So why parables? Why does Jesus give parables? Well, he explains that in Mark 4:10-12. Parables serve a dual purpose. We're not going to go to it in depth in this sermon, but I'll explain it briefly.

So, let's focus on the first purpose. It's to illuminate truth for those who would respond with the responsive heart. Those who are eager to learn instructions from the Lord Jesus while simultaneously veiling the same story making it obscure the central truth that he's giving for those that have hardened hearts. So we have two objective purposes. Those who are responsive to his parable and those who are hardened to his parable. And they are meant to make listeners check your own heart and respond accordingly.

So the Lord Jesus, the method of Him using parables, is that He is in fact the ultimate sower in this text. He is the one that is mainly teaching the parables.

He is the one throughout his ministry repeats them with slight variations. After all, there are synoptic gospels. I won't get into it here, but there are slight variations to the parable of the sower in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Mark, what he does, he groups the same story, the parables, and he groups

them together to display the unfolding dynamics of the kingdom of God.

And then we go on to verse three. Look with me here. This is now Jesus speaking with a piercing command with the words, "Hearken. Behold. Hearken. Behold." Before he unfolds the parable that he's going to give in detail, he says, "Hearken and behold." Meaning, hear and look. Hearken and behold to the context of the very lesson that he's going to share.

In other words, he's saying, "Stop, look, and listen. Don't get distracted. There might be other things going on in the peripheral. For them, they were on the beach. Maybe there were fishermen on the peripherals. Maybe there were just people casually walking by. Don't get distracted. Every time you hear the Lord Jesus speak in parables, hearken and behold.

Although Jesus is speaking to a massive crowd here, as I mentioned, a call for spirituality and an open heart is individual by individual. So don't pay attention to your neighbor right now. Pay attention to the very message that is speaking to your heart directly right now and is requiring for you to individually respond to the parable. Each person in that crowd after all each listener today is the same. It represents a specific type. The parables rather explain specific types of soils into which the eternal seed of the word of God falls and true spiritual perception begins with the call to pay close attention like verse three commands us to and to apply the very instructions to then your own life.

So now we go in to explaining the sower, the seed and the four soils.

Let's start with the sower. Jesus presents a vivid agricultural picture again familiar to first-century farmers walking through a field with a bag of grain. So picture a farmer with a bag of grain and he would get from that bag of grain and scatter the seeds by hand, no machine here, across the landscape before or while turning the soil. And because of this method, the seed landed on four different types of ground.

So he starts off in the parable, there went out a sower to sow. The sower is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He's been scattering as it were as the sower to his biological family, to the scribes and the Pharisees. He's been scattering it to the multitudes of the crowd. He is the one himself sharing the parable and he is the primary sower casting the message of the kingdom to come which is at hand upon Jesus' arrival.

And though the role extends to his disciples who are there listening, it also extends all the way to all proclaimers of the gospel which is us in this room who are believers in Christ to proclaim the same truth.

The kingdom is at hand. Repent. Repent. Turn to Christ. That is to be the always the point. Not turn to us, not turn to anyone else, but to the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He is sovereignly sowing the seed here in this context. He is producing the fruit himself. In the gospel narrative, we shall see how disciples stayed with him. But the sower is someone primarily who plants seeds with the goal of growing a harvest. It would be foolish for a farmer to just throw seeds and not expect anything out of it. There will be a return. God says his word would not return void. Right?

Now we go on to the seed. The seed is the unadulterated word of God. Focus on unadulterated. The sower sows the exact same seed in every instance. Whether it's to the Pharisees or scribes or to the multitudes or to his own biological family. It is the same seed in every instance. And of course the disciples. The variable is never the seed nor the sower, but entirely the condition of the soil which is the human heart.

So now let's examine the four types of soil and their distinct outcomes. Beginning with the first two soils, we see the footpath and the rocky ground representing immediate upfront obstacles to spiritual growth. You see, before the seed ever reaches maturity, there must be explained the first two soils.

So let's look at the first soil, the hardened roadside soil. Verse four. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

This is soil hardened by constant foot traffic. So hard by feet that the seed cannot sink in. It rendered the very seed impenetrable to the ground. So what happens physically is that when seed falls on this particular path, it sits exposed to the very surface that it lands on. It cannot penetrate the packed dirt. So then birds can quickly swoop down and eat it.

What is the spiritual reality to this text? This represents an unsaved individual whose heart is hard, unyielding, and closed to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Truth never sinks in with this person. When the word is preached, the seed sits on the surface because there's no internal reception.

And so Satan takes the very words and plucks it before it can penetrate into the hardened heart. So immediately he comes, snatches it away, leaving the

person completely unchanged by the word.

So think about it. If you're here and you've been here for many, many years, it's not about you learning something intellectually. Again, it's at the heart level. The word of God says, with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. And that's why a four-year-old or a five-year-old can be saved. It has nothing to do with your intellect, but so much about your heart. So that's the first description the Lord Jesus gives. No time for the word to be processed. The thought just bounces right off the surface. Soon as you hear it, you forget the word of God.

Then we go on to the stony rocky ground. The stony and rocky ground. So we go from the hard heart to now a shallow heart. The Lord Jesus says, "And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away."

Here we see that there's a thin layer of soil just inches from the surface that is covered by an underlying shelf of rock, bedrock.

So what is the spirituality in this context? The Lord Jesus is saying because of the shallow depth the seed rather sprouts rapidly creating a superficial appearance of immediate spiritual vitality. And you can look at verse 16 where he explains it that way. However, when the scorching hot sun beats down with the arrival of tribulation of persecution or testing that arises because of the Lord Jesus Christ, your faith potentially all aspects by the way of tribulation, persecution, testing is for all Christians. All Christians. This plant cannot sustain itself because it lacks deep roots for ongoing growth.

It cannot reach down to the deep moisture for this ongoing growth to happen. So there's a little sprout. You can think of it as enthusiasm, excitement. Something emotionally has occurred to this person where the plant quickly grows but then soon enough it quickly withers away. Quickly withers away. You see enthusiasm is temporal. It's temporal joy that dries up as it were and quickly falls away. So you need to be on an emotional high as it were. This pictures a person that's just really emotional. They're superficial in their profession who receives a word with enthusiastic again emotional temporary response but possesses no true deep regeneration of the Holy Spirit in the soul.

And so they need to be constantly hyped up as it were. Practically they fail to develop deep spiritual roots with depth. So they have really no prayer life.

They really have no truth that they're living and their commitment is almost zero to Christ because they don't hold on to these things as valuable for their soul. They're only here for the excitement. Maybe we might put together an event and yes, from the outside it might be exciting and you see people enthusiastic but that's not all of the Christian life, right? We go through trials, we go through tribulations, we go through persecutions. Why? We all suffer, but here's the distinction: as followers of Christ we suffer for Him, not suffer primarily for sin.

That's the clear distinction. You see, test of time will prove if you are someone who is on shallow ground, someone who has a shallow heart, who just comes for the excitement, for the enthusiastic events, but soon enough you leave and you don't come for the moments to hear messages that speak about trials. That speak about suffering for Christ, that speak about ongoing growth in our sanctification in Christ Jesus becoming more holy. Is your life becoming more pure and more holy, as God says, Be ye holy; for I am holy. Or are you still living in sin and coming out of just a habit just to get another excitement going on in your life, but soon enough nothing ever sticks. Nothing ever grips your soul. No growth ever occurs spiritually in your life.

Then we go on to verse seven. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

Here the Lord Jesus Christ brings out in regards to fruit. He didn't say any of that in the two previous verses, the two previous conditions, but he makes it an emphatic yielded no fruit. The soil contains hidden roots, thorns beneath the surface, things that even at the deeper level people get challenged. So spiritually the seed germinates. It begins to grow alongside the weeds. But the competing thorns representing the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things. These three thorn types are false security, thinking you do not need God.

Second, constantly chasing after the next new thing almost close to the second type of ground or the deceitfulness of riches. And Luke adds the pleasures of life to warn against living solely for comfort and for entertainment and for self-indulgence. You see, gradually this plant gets choked out by the weeds that grow faster than the plant. That's the word choke. It overwhelms the plant. It grows faster than the plant. Have you ever seen your own garden? If you have a garden, weeds grow much faster than the actual plant. And so this is a picture of one's heart where you're just fully overwhelmed by this world. It's just constantly going on in your life and it's

consuming you.

It's consuming you and it chokes here. It is the light of the sun and the nutrients from the underground. It sucks out from the top and from the inside. Meaning external and internal, external and internal, choking them from the outside and in. It's not just the surface level, but there are roots going on with the weeds that are affecting underneath at the heart level.

So it yields zero fruit. Verse 18 and 19 for reference. Here the heart is a divided heart. A divided heart. It attempts to serve God while clinging on to this world. And on one end is anxiety, the cares of this world and on the other end is wealth, ambition, selfish at the core by the way or the comforts of this world.

That's what the Lord Jesus Christ depicts being swallowed up on both sides until there's nothing left, no fruit. You see this person's life is maxed out with constant cares of the world, maxed out for the pursuit of riches in this world, maxed out in entertainment. And then daily anxiety of these things slowly and gradually little by little suffocate the spiritual life as what once was.

Think of Judas. He is a picture of a false disciple of Christ. What was his issue? Deceitfulness of riches. The cares of this world and he wanted to pursue things in this world more than pursue Christ.

Is that you this morning? Because the first three types of ground and outcome are not good for seeds to germinate and grow. In contrast, the fourth type is good soil where seeds can successfully germinate and thrive and the final outcome is exceptionally good. It's not just good, it's exceptionally good. By the words of Jesus in this parable.

So look down verse eight. He says, "And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased." And increased. This represents the true believer in Christ. The true disciple of Christ. The one who hears the word, receives the word, and brings forth fruit that increases to his harvest.

His harvest. The primary takeaway is that a genuine encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ produces an unmistakable abundant change in one's life. Is that you this morning? You're just seeing life increased to the purpose of eternal life where you began to see, oh yes, it's worth it. You see, notice carefully the wonderful variation and harvest. He doesn't just say one type, but he says three types. Some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred.

See, to a modern reader, thirty, sixty, and a hundred sound just like rounded numbers, doesn't it? That was my first impression of this. But let me give you the true meaning behind what Jesus is saying here. You see, to first-century farmers, again here in this context, these figures would have sounded almost unbelievable.

And that was entirely intentional by the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, according to ancient agricultural records, an average yield for grain was roughly 7 to 10 times seven to 10 times amount of seeds sown. So, a tenfold harvest was considered a very good year. But look at what the Lord Jesus starts with. A thirtyfold harvest. Almost three times a very good year of harvest. So he's talking about miracles here. He's talking about miracles. Having a thirtyfold is a miracle. Think about it. Salvation is a miracle. A miracle. So he starts with 30 and then he goes on with sixty and then a hundred. So let's just go with the lowest number. He uses the thirtyfold harvest.

This is three times the normal bumper crop. And then he goes on to a sixtyfold harvest which is again practically unheard of. And then a hundredfold harvest was just out of mind in a good way. Not like his family said out of his mind. But here's an echo and I'm just going to briefly touch on this. I was going to go more in depth, but for the sake of time let me just share this one miracle found in the Old Testament the story of Isaac whose crop grew a hundredfold and it says in that text in Genesis 26:12 because God directly blessed him it was only because God put his favor upon him that he was able to do this hundredfold harvest. So this miracle story showed up in the Old Testament. This is not the first instance of this to show the consistency from Old Testament to New Testament.

And so what is the message behind this figure of speech of this thirty, sixty, and hundredfold? Jesus deliberately used exaggerated farming numbers to shock the listeners. Yes, it was to create some shock to allow them to listen more intently. Wait, wait, Jesus. This is not normal. I'm a farmer. I know what a normal harvest looks like. This is not normal. You're telling me I can create a thirty, sixty, hundredfold. Yes, but it's not what you think. What he was trying to do is to shock the listeners out of discouragement. Perhaps there was some farmer there that was not bearing any harvest that year. Possibly spiritually disciples are going, "We've been with you for a year and a half, Lord, and there haven't really been any miracles or blessings upon our lives.

What about us?" Now, it's not in the text, so this is just my thoughts. Take it for what it is. But I think he's saying these things to get them out of

discouragement. Have you ever felt discouraged? Nothing going on in your life as it were, but God is doing something underneath and he's waiting for his timing for the harvest, not your timing. Are you waiting for miracles? Or are you waiting for, oh, maybe if I just know more about this or maybe if I just force myself to understand this. You can't force God's timing. Can't do that. And so, you've got to stay consistent in God's word and in prayer and you leave the results to God.

That gets you out of discouragement. Just continue to stay faithful. So, at the time of Jesus' ministry, he looked small. This is dialed in to this situation and a year and a half in his earthly ministry. His ministry looked very small. He had after all about 12 disciples with him. 12 real followers at the time and then he had about 72 that kind of were there but not really there all the time. And so looking around at all the crowds and looking at this very small group compared to the crowd of maybe hundreds there, it looked very insignificant. There's much to be discouraged. What's going on?

But much like seed wasted on a footpath or the rocky ground or the thorns, he promises a return of thirty, sixty, and an hundred. Think about all the people that already left him up to this point and his year and a half of ministry. So Jesus reassures his true followers that despite the visible setbacks, his own family not listening, the Pharisees and the scribes, the religious rulers that they're not listening, the crowds coming and most of them going. He reassures his followers with this text that despite visible setbacks, the ultimate success of God's kingdom will be beyond anything they could imagine.

That there is going to be an increase in God's kingdom. I mean, think about it. How many more Christians are there now than in the time of the book of Acts, for example? Increase, isn't it? So, while the unbelieving soils produce zero fruit, while genuine believers yield varying degrees of fruit, this mirrors our Lord's later teaching in the upper room regarding the true vine. Let me just go over that to show you the connection of the true vine in John 15:1-5 with this parable. And after you see this, you're going to be like, "Oh, the Lord is so consistent in his teachings."

So, the true vine where believers are called to bring forth fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. The three things that are mentioned in the parables. I'm going to read the text now for you. These are the words of Jesus. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that

it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. Verse five, I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. You see the progression: fruit, more fruit, much fruit, the thirty, the sixty, the hundredfold. What is the connection? You must abide in Christ. That's the connection. That's the connection. So the initial fruit is this: that there's evidence of spiritual life, that there is a true conversion of the soul from death unto life, from sin, turning away from it, to receiving Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Then you see more fruit. This is growing in our discipleship, growing in our sanctification, growing in our character in Christ and more practical obedience and commitment while being pruned away so that we can bear more fruit. More fruit. So here's an encouragement, brothers and sisters in Christ. If you are in a stage of purging so that God will bear more fruit in your life, more fruit. It's a paradox. Taking away first and giving more. Taking away and giving more. Taking away the things to make you more refined as gold. Pure gold. Pure honey. In another context. And then in your discipleship and your walk with the Lord and growing in more holiness in Christ, you can bear much fruit. This is now the one that is deeply abiding and communing with the father consistently. It doesn't matter how bad it might go through your trials, your persecutions, your whatever that may be that's going on in the world of cares.

It doesn't even affect your communion with God the Father. You just love spending time with him in his word. You love spending time with him praying not just your request but adoring him in your prayers, hallowing his name and just wanting to spend time with your heavenly father. This is deep. This is where it's singular focus and you're not pulled from left to right, but you have a singular aim. I want to please my father. I want to do his will, not my will. You see that? That's how the Lord Jesus Christ ends in his prayer to God the Father. Is that how we end our time in our prayer? Not my will, but your will be done.

Isn't that so focused, so clear? Your will, your will, your surrender, more surrender, more surrender. I surrender all. As one hymnwriter puts it, it's a wonderful thing. When you surrender more, God gives you more, more blessings that this world can never offer you. One, eternal life. Next, a hundredfold in brothers and sisters in Christ, the eternal family, the true

family of God, the one that was given to you by the heavenly father upon your adoption. And so now with the one that's bearing much fruit, you're not only being fed to the deepest level, but you are now bearing fruit. You are now able to multiply what God is doing in your life.

Let me ask you a question. Where you are right now, would you like to multiply that version of yourself? Would you like to multiply the version you are right now to make other disciples? That's the question you must ask yourself at this level because you're just only multiplying what God is doing in your life. You can't blame someone that's following you going, "You're not doing this." And then it's actually you're not doing it either. There's very little hypocrisy at this level. The gap is closed from what you say and what you do. You're not only hearing, but you're doing his word more consistently.

And then that is what you multiply. And then that's what you have as a living church, a true body of Christ of those that love one another, that are united with one another, that encourage one another, that pray for one another, all these one anothers that we see in the body of Christ, it is worthy to multiply, isn't it? It's worthy to reproduce. After all, that's what the disciples did. That's what the disciples did. Apostle Paul said, "Follow me as I follow after Christ." 1 Corinthians 11:1. If your aim is following after Christ, yeah, people will follow you and they will follow because they will they're following Christ like you are following Christ. Let you not be the end point, but you keep pointing people to Christ as you're going and following Christ. That is the supernatural flow of discipleship.

It's not very complicated, is it? But it takes a miracle for it to continue to happen again and again and again and again in your life.

Let me just share a few thoughts to those who may be the first three grounds. Let me just take a step back. I want to be a pastor here. I want to help you. Let's go with the one that's on the hard path, the hard heart. Because in verse 9, this is Jesus saying, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." He says that to all of the four different types of hearts, by the way. So, here's what you should hear. A heart that is hardened must admit first that you do not know everything.

That's the first thing. You do not know everything about God's word. You do not know what it really means to be a follower of Christ. You may have thoughts of what it is, but it's not according to God's word, and it's certainly not according to his spirit. So, you must admit you don't know everything and

you must approach God's word with a willingness to be taught by the word of God rather than desiring to argue or dismiss God's word. Have you been that person? You're just arguing all the time with God's word. You're dismissing God's word. This is the time to, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Because in Mark 4:10, the disciples stick around after the multitude leave and they do something really important. They ask questions. They ask questions. Do you ask questions that you don't understand? Doesn't always have to be with me as a pastor. Maybe it's another Christian here. Do you go to them and ask, "I don't understand what this means. Can you show me? Remember, sorry, it just came to my mind, but I don't remember the exact way to say it, but remember the person that was reading the book of Isaiah. Ethiopian. Yes. Thank you. He had to have someone help him to show what does this mean.

So ask questions. Ask questions that will bring out the confusion, and that person will, as I would pray that God continues to open your eyes until you become softened by the word of God. The word of God humbles us. Amen. That's one of the things that God's word does.

The next one is the shallow soil, the shallow heart. Matthew 6:1-6 Jesus warns against doing righteous acts to impress men. A shallow heart is one that loves to impress. Loves the theatrics as it were. And he says three specific things. Don't try to impress people in your giving. Don't try to impress people in your praying. Don't try to impress people in your fasting. These are to be done secretly, not to be like the ones that are seen and being praised by people.

So, do you seek after these things secretly in your heart? Or are you like the hypocrites in Matthew 6 who want human audience and temporal recognition? God wants a hidden devotion to him. He is a jealous God after all. So in order for roots to push down inward into lasting truth, you must realize it's not about impressing men. Because we see in the next chapter in Matthew 7:21-23, the issue shifts from who sees you to who knows you, from who sees you to whom you are known by. Jesus warns against doing religious acts to impress God. Now, so it's not just about impressing man, but trying to impress God. While your heart remains a stranger to him. After all, they all come to him.

Lord, Lord, didn't we do all these things? Didn't we impress you? And he says, I never knew you. I never knew you. You did things that I wasn't calling you to do. You never knew me. You never abided in me as a true vine and the true

branch. To this person as well. Expect heat. Jesus warns his followers ahead of time that trials and push backs are normal. John 16:33. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. Do you believe that?

And then the third, this is the one that goes, "Okay, I don't want to impress God. I don't want to impress man. I don't want just the words to just fall on deaf ears. I don't really care about the crowd. I want to be part of this group of disciples." This is the one who says, "I want to clear out all the noise, all the distractions to hear the one true voice. To combat the cares of this world, Jesus instructs his followers to seek God's kingdom first rather than constantly worrying about daily needs. Matthew 6:31-33. Bringing worries to God through gratitude and prayer pulls anxiety up by its root. Are you thankful? Do you thank God for the common grace that he gives to you? Or do you complain and want more and more and more?

Do you hold wealth and comfort? Or do you hold it loosely because the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of life quietly choke the spiritual focus? Jesus encourages again in Matthew 6:33. That's what God sees. The intents of your hearts. The intents of your hearts. It's time wherever you are at upon these three different hearts, step away. Step away from the noise. Step away from the entertainment that is choking out the words of God. The busyness, the urgent distractions, the needs of this world. Don't make those things the primary things. If you seek God and his righteousness, all these things will be added unto you. Do you really believe that to be your case? I can tell you as a believer in Christ, it is true. It is more than true. And all the believers here can say, "Amen."

So, let me summarize with this. The problem isn't the quality of the seed. It's the condition of the ground, the listener's heart. So, I ask you, what kind of soil are you letting yourself be right now?

Let's pray. Father, it is a delight to hear your Son, the Lord Jesus, give such easy to understand practical truth to understand the spiritual meaning behind these truths.

As I pray this morning, Lord, I pray for those specifically now that are on the three bad grounds that you will begin working upon their hearts that some of them would see the light, see the truth, not the way they interpret it, but by the way the Holy Spirit does so. Convict them of their sin, of righteousness

and of judgment. I pray by your Holy Spirit bring them truly to the end of themselves in their endless toiling and may they truly be tilled by your word and by your spirit and that the word of God will indeed fall on good ground to them so that they can produce fruit, their conversion, more fruit, their discipleship, and much fruit and multiplication of disciples.

I pray for, of course, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ here. Lord, you know some have gone through much trials, tribulations and persecutions. I pray that whatever these distractions may have consumed them at this point that you would help them to not focus on those things to continue focusing and staying committed to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the author and finisher of our faith and who gives us life more abundant not only for this life but the life to come. I pray, Father, that you would help them, Father, to bear more fruit and much fruit.

May they see that we all must come to the truth. And I pray that the truth will set each one free to greater freedom from the things of this world and to hold this life loosely to hold the things of the kingdom of God with deep trust. Father, I pray that you would do this work, bless, Father, with this as the Lord Jesus Christ gave as a dual purpose of this story, the parable of the sower. And Lord, I pray that your word would not return void this afternoon. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.