

Sunday, September 1, 2024

Matthew 13: The parable of the Soil (aka parable of the Sower) Part 1

1. Recap of parable re: seed and sower

Matthew 13

1That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. **2**Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. **3**Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. **4**As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. **5**Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. **6**But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. **7**Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. **8**Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. **9**Whoever has ears, let them hear." **10**The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" **11**He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. **12**Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. **13**This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. **14**In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: " 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. **15**For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' **16**But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. **17**For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. **18**"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: **19**When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. **20**The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word

and at once receives it with joy. **21**But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. **22**The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. **23**But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

This parable summarizes the life and results of MillCity: COMMITMENT. Over the past nine months we have studied how God can use anyone from anywhere with all kinds of strengths and weaknesses once they make a COMMITMENT to Him. We have studied what can happen when we lose that COMMITMENT, and the dangers of a HALF-HEARTED COMMITMENT. Your COMMITMENT is critically important.

The Seed is the word of God (Mark 4:14, Luke 8:11). More specifically, Jesus is referring to the WORD as the Kingdom of God or The Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13:19, Mark 1:14–15). **The SEED is THE GOSPEL of JESUS CHRIST.**

Jesus says, ‘repent and believe.’ Repentance is part of your COMMITMENT.

The Sower can be seen as four people:

- God
- Holy Spirit
- Jesus
- Anyone who Shares the Gospel because we are called to bear fruit and share the gospel when we become a Christian (Colossians 1:6, Matthew 28:19–20)

We have a responsibility to be a Sower of Seed in the Soil.

2. The Soil: Heart of the people who have seed sown in their lives

We must sow and explain the Gospel as Christ’s Ambassadors (II Corinthians 5:20, Mark 4:14). As well, the word listen or hear is found fourteen times in Matthew 13: 1–23 and so, this message is also for those of us who already are Christians for two reasons:

- We need to take a good hard look at our own HEARTS. What kind of SOIL do you have?
- As we spread seed, we see the responses that we can expect from those who hear the word.

There are six examples of soil given in this parable.

3. First Type: Hard Soil

Matthew 13: 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. **4** As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

Jesus explains this verse in **Matthew 13: 18** "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: **19** When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

Hard ground is what we see here, not rock, but like clay. Two types of people come to mind:

- a. People who are hard-hearted because of things that have happened to them by others. Physical, sexual, emotional abuse by others, completely outside of their control. In many if not most cases, by people they should be able to trust. Their opinion of God becomes warped because of what has happened to them: "How could a loving God allow such a thing?" "Where were you when this was happening to me?" **Luke 8:5: Some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and birds ate it up.**
 1. People who are hard hearted because of things they have allowed into their own lives, opened themselves up to, that have consumed them and essentially 'forced' God out of their lives. Some examples of how we open up our lives to these things include: demonic realm that warp our sense of right and wrong, movies and TV, music, books and literature. Those who get all around the things of God, find out all they can know about God, but never know Him. Those who cannot imagine a God.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 1:27** But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.
 - b. **Luke 8:12** The devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, **so that they may not believe and be saved.**

Seed must be accepted into SOIL if there is going to be root.

4. Second type of soil: Rocky Soil

Matthew 13:5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. **6**But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

Jesus explains this verse in **Matthew 13:20** The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. **21**But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

Rocky ground is what we see here and it can impact on our spiritual life. If we allow things in our lives that get in the way of a relationship with Christ, these 'rocks' (which can be the same things seen in hardened hearts) prevent us from moving forward. Paul gives us a list of things that belong to our 'Old Self' in Colossians 3.

Colossians 3: 5Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. **8** ...anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. **9**Do not lie to each other...

These are rocks. In the parable it says: 'who hears the word and at once receives it with joy...' These people here the Word and are initially joyful! However, 'When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they **quickly** fall away.' Why? 'They have no root.' Jesus gives us two examples of why this happens:

- a. Trouble – Affliction come. Some Christians think that once they accept Christ and become a Christian there will no longer be any problems.

1 Peter 1:6-7 Rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

- b. Persecution for believing in God and you want to retaliate or fight to clear your name. Getting rocks out of your life takes demanding work which separates the contenders from the pretenders.

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature... **8**But now you must also **rid yourselves** of all such things...

5. Third type of soil: Weedy Soil

Matthew 13: 7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

Jesus explains this verse in **Matthew 13:22** The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.

If the rocky soil has hidden things under the surface, the weedy soil exposes them.

What do we know about weeds?

- They grow **fast**,
- often grow **tall**,
- sometimes have **thorns**,
- uncontrolled, they can **take over**.
- they **don't produce fruit**.

Jesus gives us three examples of weed and thorns that we can allow in our lives (not an exhaustive list) that can '**choke the word.**'

- a. The worries of life: **Matthew 6: 31**So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32**For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33****But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**
- b. The deceitfulness of wealth: **Matthew 6: 19**"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20**But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- c. The desires for other things, or as **Luke 8:14** says '**pleasures.**' This could be distractions like TV, work, education, sports, family. When that happens, Jesus says it 'chokes the word' making it 'unfruitful.'

6. Closing

In each of these note that the person 'HEARS THE WORD.' Also note what is missing; there is no crop, yield, or fruit.

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Next week, the Good Soil.

QUESTIONS:

1. Are you a gardener? If not, why? If you are– tell us about how you plan a garden, keep a garden? Are you happy with the results of your garden, why or why not? Have you always been a gardener or did you “decide to be one” or “fall into it”– tell us more!
2. Tell about a time in your life when your heart was hard and you refused to see, hear, and understand. Tell about a time when you were joyful, and it quickly went away as “life happened.” In our cultural context, what are some common forms of persecution Christians face, and how might we prepare ourselves to remain faithful when we experience them? Have you experienced persecution for your faith?
3. What things compete for our attention that seem to be weeds and thorns that keep the seed from growing in our lives? (Hint: do not just name bad things!) If you were going to do some “weeding” in your life, what easy and obvious weeds would you pull? What weeds might be tougher to remove than others, and why?
4. Consider that we are not just the soil but that, as Christians called to spread the good news of God’s love, we are also sowers. How should we scatter seeds in a way that is consistent with the sower in the parable? What do we need to prepare in our own lives to be good sowers?