

Eaten, Beaten, Crowded, And Thriving

We don't want to focus on the crowds. We want to focus on Jesus. We want to focus on each other. And we want to focus on the lost.

Mark 4:3-9 TPT

3 “Consider this: A farmer went out to sow seeds. **4** As he cast his seeds some of it fell along the beaten path and soon the birds came and ate it. **5** Other seeds fell onto gravel with no topsoil and the seeds quickly sprouted since the soil had no depth. **6** But when the days grew hot, the sprouts were scorched and withered because they had insufficient roots. **7** Other seeds fell among the thorns, so when the seeds sprouted so did the thorns, crowding out the young plants so that they could produce no grain. **8** But some of the seeds fell onto good, rich soil that kept producing a good harvest. Some yielded thirty, some sixty—and some even one hundred times as much as was planted! **9** If you understand this, then you need to respond.”

Whenever Jesus speaks to us, He doesn't just speak to us so we could be amazed. He isn't just looking for an “Amen”. He's looking for a response.

Mark 4:13-20 TPT

13 Then he said to them, “If you don't understand this parable, how will you understand any parable? **14** Let me explain: The farmer sows the Word as seed, **15** and what falls on the beaten path represents those who hear the Word, but immediately Satan appears and snatches it from their hearts. **16** The seed sown on gravel represents those who hear the Word and receive it joyfully, **17** but because their hearts fail to sink a deep root into the Word, they don't endure for long. For when trouble or persecution comes on account of the Word, they immediately wilt and fall away. **18** And the seed sown among thorns represents those who hear the Word, **19** but they allow the cares of this life and the seduction of wealth and the desires for other things to crowd out and choke the Word so that it produces

nothing. **20** “But the seed sown on good soil represents those who open their hearts to receive the Word and their lives bear good fruit—some yield a harvest of thirty, sixty, even one hundred times more than was sown!”

Jesus has a relationship with His disciples that allowed Him to be real. And He didn't withhold anything good from them, including discipline or correction. He spoke plainly words that would result in life.

Eaten

It seems that the devil is able to make the Word of no effect almost immediately in the person who is hard-hearted.

The result of hard-heartedness is not a punishment from God but it works in such a way as to give access to the devil's work in our lives.

Hard-heartedness prevents faith from mixing with the Word of God and producing a harvest.

Beaten

The beaten place is where the ground is shallow. When conflict comes, the seed doesn't have the roots sufficient to withstand the pressure.

When we are unbelievers we are going in the same direction as the world. It is only when we become followers of Christ that we start going contrary to the world that we begin to face difficulty.

If we do not have the Word deeply rooted in life then when pressure comes we will wither and maybe even fall away.

Sometimes the pressure we feel doesn't come from the outside. Sometimes the pressure we feel comes from the Word of God. As it works to equip us, it also teaches, rebukes, and corrects us (2 Timothy 3:16).

Crowded

The crowded person looks at the things of this world and desires them so much that they become double-minded (cf. James 1:5-8).

Double-mindedness leads to division in areas of our lives. If we do not do something about this, eventually God will be crowded out.

An example of this is if you had a few teenagers in your home. Often your spiritual life gets crowded out amidst the challenges of life and various scheduled games, events, etc.

Thriving

The progression in the parable is from hard, to shallow, to divided, to the open heart.

The thriving heart is the open heart.

It is critical to guard our hearts if we want to thrive (Proverbs 4:23).

Observations

The seed is exactly the same but there are different results.

The seed is not the problem. It is the incorruptible Word of God (1 Peter 1:23).

The thriving soil did not get any special treatment. There is no indication that the birds didn't come, or the elements didn't bear down on the soil, or that the weeds somehow avoided the good soil. Because the soil was good, it refused to allow these other things to keep it from fruitfulness.

Excuses

It's the devil

I'm constantly being attacked, under pressure, etc.

I'm so tempted

Conclusion

The devil is our adversary, but he can't stop the Word of God in our lives.

The world is against us and is under the sway of the evil one but that is not new and the Word of God is greater.

There are opportunities and temptations and that has always been the case. Yet the Word of God is powerful to overcome.

Those who aren't bearing fruit talk about these things. Those who are bearing fruit are enjoying the harvest. They don't have a perfect life. They just are experiencing the joy that comes by pressing on through the attack of the devil, the pressures, and temptations to receive the harvest.

Thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold are not categories of people but are about how open our hearts are to the Word of God.

It's not about being perfect as much as it is about being wide open to God. David was not perfect, but his heart was wide open to God.

A change of heart will change your harvest.