



:: summary

Jesus, fully God and fully man, is the ultimate expression of God with us, and his resurrection from death on the cross marked the beginning of a new era in which all that is broken in the world is being made right according to God's plan. This is what Jesus meant when he spoke of the nearness of God's kingdom, and his teaching instructs his followers how to live according to that reality. In his parable of the sower, Jesus affirms the lives of his disciples should be fruitful, purposeful, and influential in a way that glorifies God.

:: explore and discuss

We can all agree that different people respond to new information in different ways. This is evident in cases of scientific discovery, innovations in technology, fashion trends, the seemingly endless health and wellness fads circulating on social media, and even something as simple as sending or receiving an invitation.

Have you ever sent invitations to a large group for a specific event? What was your experience like as you tried to collect RSVPs?

Read Matthew 13:1-9

When Jesus speaks about the seed that falls on good soil in verse 8, the verb for "producing" a crop is *edidou*, which is an imperfect verb tense that stresses regular, ongoing action. Throughout the Bible and in the teachings of Jesus, this idea of continuous production is often communicated in agricultural language, using phrases like "bearing fruit" or "living a fruitful life" to describe the results of living with God according to His ways and for His glory. For a disciple of Jesus, being productive or "bearing fruit" is meant to be an ongoing part of one's life.

What does it take to remain fruitful spiritually over the long haul? What takes away from fruitfulness in your life?

Read Matthew 13:18-23

In verse 19, the "word" is specifically identified as the "message about the Kingdom." This was the central message of Jesus' teachings spoken to his disciples and followers, and their understanding would have been limited to what they heard him say about it at the time, since these teachings and those about Jesus and the Church would not be recorded and compiled in the form of the New Testament of the Bible until years later.

Share your understanding of what Jesus means by the Kingdom of God.

In verses 19 and 23, Jesus focuses on people "hearing" and "understanding." As you recall verse 9, which says, "Whoever has ears, let them hear," what does Jesus mean when he talks about hearing?

:: make it personal

When we hear Jesus' words about the Kingdom, we all must make a choice about what to do with it. The opportunity you are presented with is to carefully receive the word, take ownership of it, and allow it to shape your worldview.

Since "hearing" means to receive and respond to Jesus' teaching and that "producing a crop" means to live with God according to His ways and for His glory, what does being "fruitful" mean in your own life?

:: pray

Ask for God's help and invite God to work in you, so that you will live a fruitful life that He sustains in you.

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