

## Parables: Showing the Way of Jesus

### The Way of Receptivity

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

**July 4th:** We celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. While our gathering each week is not ultimately about America but about Jesus Christ, it is appropriate to thank God for His kindness to our nation.

As Christians, we can be deeply grateful for God's providence in the history of the United States. Scripture reminds us that God *"determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place"* (Acts 17:26). For 250 years, He has graciously allowed our nation to enjoy an extraordinary measure of religious liberty, enabling churches to gather, preach the gospel, baptize believers, make disciples, plant churches, and send missionaries around the world with remarkable freedom.

We are also thankful for the many expressions of God's common grace that we have experienced as Americans—the stability, prosperity, public institutions, natural resources, medical advances, and countless other blessings that have not only benefited our own people but have also enabled American Christians to play a significant role in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. While the Great Commission belongs to every church and every believer, God has graciously used the resources of this nation to advance His kingdom across the globe.

So today, we celebrate America's 250th birthday not because our nation is perfect, nor because our hope is found in any earthly kingdom, but because we are grateful to God for His providence and mercy. We thank Him for the ways He has used this nation to protect religious liberty, bless countless people, and advance the gospel. And we pray that He would continue to do so until the day King Jesus returns and establishes the only kingdom that will never end – The Kingdom of Christ Jesus!

*"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."* **Matthew 6:33**

Jesus often taught in parables. Illustrations of stories. But why?

*"Then the disciples came and said to him, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?' And he answered them, 'To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.'"* **Matthew 13:10-11**

### Two Purposes of the Parables of Jesus:

- Revealing Secrets to Those Who Desire the Truth
- Concealing Secrets from Those Who Deny the Truth

### How To Understand the Parables of Jesus:

- Listen from the Hearers Perspective – Can't mean something it doesn't
- Look for the Main Point – Don't over-parallel (i.e., Good Samaritan...)
- Let the Truth Change Our Perspective – Most Important=Receptivity

**Main Idea:** The Way of Jesus Requires a Heart Receptive to His Word

*"That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him hear.' ...18 'Hear then the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. 20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.'" **Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23***

### I. What A Receptive Heart ISN'T – Matthew 13:1-7, 18-22

*"This is not the parable of the Sower as much as it is the parable of the Soil, because the soil is the key variable in the story. The sower and the seed never change...the problem of rejection is not with the seed (the gospel of the kingdom) and not with the sower (Jesus); the problem is with the soil (the human heart)." **David Platt***

Jesus illustrates what a Receptive Heart ISN'T with three types of soil.

*"And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them." **Matthew 13:4-7***

### Three Types of Hearts that Are Not Receptive to Jesus's Word:

- **The Hard Heart** – Does not consider it, vulnerable to the enemy!

*“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.”* **Matthew 13:19** // Understanding = Volitional Acceptance

- **The Superficial Heart** – Initial excitement/acceptance but no depth.

*“As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.”* **Matthew 13:20-21**

**The Divided Heart** – Does not make room for the Lordship of Christ Jesus.

*“As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.”* **Matthew 13:22**

*“The parable provides a sober reminder that even the most enthusiastic outward response to the gospel offers no guarantee that one is a true disciple. Only the tests of time, perseverance under difficult circumstances, the avoidance of the idolatries of wealth and anxiety over earthly concerns, and above all the presence of appropriate fruit can prove a profession genuine.”* **Craig Blomberg**

**Main Idea:** The Way of Jesus Requires a Heart Receptive to His Word

**Tr:** 2 Realities of Receptivity from Matthew 13: 1) What A Receptive Heart ISN'T

#### II. What a Receptive Heart IS – Matthew 13:8, 23

Now we see the differences in the hearts (soil)

*“Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear... As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”* **Matt 13:8, 23**

Do you see the difference? The unreceptive soils all produced the same thing: death! The receptive soil produced life, actually, multiplied life (30, 60, & 100-fold).

*“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”* **John 15:8**

The fruit of the spirit are the results of Christlikeness. This is manifested in the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5) of Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control as well as disciple-making. True faith bears fruit.

*“Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit & increasing.”* **Colossians 1:5-6a**

**Main Idea:** The Way of Jesus Requires a Heart Receptive to His Word

Just like the grain in Jesus' parable, once our hearts are receptive to his word we can see great fruit and great opportunity for multiplication. In this way, we are both the sower (spreading the word of Jesus) and the soil. But Jesus not only explains this principle to us...he empowers us to experience it.

Jesus can and does miraculously change hard hearts, superficial hearts, and divided hearts into receptive hearts. It's available for you and me today!

*“And 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. And I will put my Spirit with in you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules...and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”* **Ezekiel 36:26-27, 28b**

You can have a new heart, a receptive heart, from God today.

#### Sources and Further Reading Opportunities

- **CSB Study Bible** – Trevin Wax, Ed. (2017)
- **Exalting Jesus in Matthew** – D. Akin, D. Platt & T. Merida (2013)
- **Bible Exposition Commentary** – Warren Wiersbe (1996)
- **New American Commentary: Matthew** – Craig Blomberg (1992)
- **The Gospel of Matthew** – William Barclay (1976)
- **Spurgeon Study Bible** – C.H. Spurgeon (2017)
- **Tony Evans Study Bible** – Tony Evans (2019)
- **Holeman NT Commentary: Matthew** – Stuart Weber (2000)