

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 13:3-7; 18-22 | Three Ways to Spiritual Disaster
Sunday March 3, 2024

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 13.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- Notes are in the foyer. Take them home with you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we learned about “Jesus, Parables, and Plan B.”

We also touched on God’s *Plan A* for salvation—

“How does a holy God get sinners into Heaven?”

That’s why Jesus came from Heaven. *-to answer that question.*

Illustration:

Think of God’s *Plan A* as a cruise ship...



Fortunately, we do see God’s *Plan B* all throughout Scripture.

And regardless of how arrogant, proud, and uncooperative we are—make no doubt—God will achieve His mission to save and rescue His children/elect.

So we learned that Jesus is on mission, but changed His strategy to *Plan B*. *| Parables*

LW KEYPOINT:

Parable: a simple story that illustrates a profound spiritual truth.

LW KEYPOINT:

Parables both reveal and conceal Gospel truths (at the same time).

LW KEYPOINT:

Parables reveal the nature and disposition of the Church between Jesus' first and second coming.

How are we, as disciples of Jesus/Church/Bride of Christ, supposed to act and behave while waiting for His return?

What Are we supposed to do?

The Sermon on the Mount and this sermon in chapter 13—Parables Discourse answers that question.

Because the Kingdom of God is a spiritual Kingdom at this moment—we have dual citizenship.

As disciples of Jesus and children of God, the parable of the *Sower/Seed/Soils* has a direct application to our daily lives.

It's within the mystery of this parable that Jesus commissions His disciples—aka The Church/ Us—to do something inside the spiritual Kingdom. *in the UV.*

And it's not just “something” to do. It's not a suggestion, either.

This parable reveals the reality of the Great Commission found in Matthew 28.

If we fast forward another year or so in Jesus' life and look at Matthew 28—

Jesus has completed His mission—He has paid our sin debt by shedding His own blood on a Roman Cross.

He was buried for three days and resurrected on the third day.

(He walked out of His own grave, conquering sin and death on our behalf!)

But the Good news doesn't stop there!

Jesus went on to show himself to the Disciples and to more than five hundred people. (1 Cor. 15:6)

The disciples are meeting Jesus for one last time, and this is what happened.

Matthew 28:16—The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them.

Matthew 28:17— When (the disciples) they saw (Jesus) him, they worshiped, but some doubted.

Matthew 28:18— Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

Matthew 28:19— Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Matthew 28:20— teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

And with that statement, Jesus ascends back to Heaven, where He is now seated at the Father's right hand—ruling and reigning the cosmos.

I closed last week by 3 Reasons Jesus Spoke In Parables:
1. To sow spiritual seed.

As the church, we are commissioned to sow spiritual seed to the Verde Valley.

Commission — a divine calling in which the Church is faithful to God by serving Him with our spiritual gifts.

↳ together
↳ team
↳ Brothers & Sisters

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we'll study the Parable of the Sower/Seed/Soils.

Now titles matter.

Jesus has many titles—sermons have titles. Both are important.

While it might be tempting to focus on the sower or even the seed—this parable's main focus are the different types of soils.

And the reason for that is because the sower and the seed remain the same throughout the entire parable.

There is no variation between the farmer and his seed.

However, there are variations/differences between the soils.

So, if we were to title this parable theoretically—we would call it “The Parable of the Soils.”

However, that title would only be half correct.

^{AS}
~~When~~ we look at Jesus' explanation, we'll notice that we miss a profoundly deep theological truth if we hear this story from a surface-level reading.

So, if we want to be theoretically and theologically correct, we would title this parable “Three Ways to Spiritual Disaster.”

What are the three ways?

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

+ **Matthew 13:1**—On that day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea.

+ **Matthew 13:2**— Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, while the whole crowd stood on the shore.

+ **Matthew 13:3**—Then he told them many things in parables, saying, “Consider the sower who went out to sow.

+ **Matthew 13:4**— As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.

+ **Matthew 13:5**— Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn't have much soil, and it grew up quickly since the soil wasn't deep.

+ **Matthew 13:6**— But when the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.

+ **Matthew 13:7**— Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it.

+ **Matthew 13:8**— Still other seed fell on good ground and produced fruit: some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times what was sown.

+ **Matthew 13:9**— Let anyone who has ears listen.”

These are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wondrous things from your instruction.

(Psalm 119:18)

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 13:1—On that day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea.

Matthew 13:2—Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, while the whole crowd stood on the shore.

Matthew 13:3—Then he told them many things in parables, saying, “Consider the sower who went out to sow.”

Last week, we learned that Jesus is teaching on the beach.

There are so many people listening that He had to get in a small fishing boat to give Him some space.

And Jesus used this boat as a floating pulpit.

So picture the scene—it’s a beautiful sunny day on the beach in Galilee.

A slight breeze to cool everyone off.

And as Jesus is teaching, he may see a farmer out of the corner of His eye.

Matthew 13:3—Consider the sower who went out to sow.

Your translation may read “listen or behold.”

The idea here is that Jesus wants us to see.

Jesus asks his original audience (and us) to slow down and ponder what He will say next.

We are to see beyond our natural way of seeing.

We are to discern, learn, and ascertain a spiritual truth that comes from His story.

Matthew 13:3—Consider the sower who went out to sow.

Please note that the sower is not named.

Some people say that the sower is Jesus—be careful.

Because Jesus doesn't name the person anywhere in the parable or in His explanation.

Some folks point to the next parable, *the Parable of the Weeds*, where Jesus does name Himself as the Sower—to make their argument.

And the reason I want us to be careful is because those are two separate parables with two separate main points.

Drawing from one parable and placing information onto others is bad hermeneutics—a bad way to interpret Scripture.

The “sower” could be God, Jesus, and/or the Church—(you and me!) *All The Above*

Regardless, in this parable, all we know is that someone is sowing seed.

The picture is this—the farmer is tossing his seed everywhere.

He's doing so indiscriminately—openly and evenly—so that the entire ground is covered with seed.

Matthew 13:4—As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.

This path is similar to the paths we walk when hiking around the Verde Valley.

The path itself is extremely hard because it's packed with dirt.

It's as hard as a concrete sidewalk.

And because it's so hard, any seeds that fall on it will never take root.

Which means those seeds were quickly spotted and devoured by birds.

Those seeds never had a chance.

Matthew 13:5— Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn't have much soil, and it grew up quickly since the soil wasn't deep.

Matthew 13:6— But when the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.

Rocky doesn't refer to loose rocks.

Before sowing seed, the first-century farmer would have removed all rocks, sticks, and other debris.

This rocky ground refers to the rocks that are below the surface.

And because these rocks lay just under the surface, there's not much soil around them—and that's a problem.

Because when the seeds begin to sprout, the roots can't penetrate the rock, so the little plant grows much faster than it usually would.

And the hot Israeli sun would scorch it because it's roots had no water supply.

Matthew 13:7— Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it.

So, the soil in this part of the farmer's field looks pretty good.

But, when the grain began to sprout—so did the thorns.

These seeds took root and actually started to grow.

However, the farmer didn't realize that this third type of soil was infested with thorns.

So the good seed faced competition with thorns and weeds—and lost.

The thorns took most of their space, water, and nourishment.

Now, none of this would seem unusual to Jesus' audience—until Jesus says this:

Matthew 13:8— *Still other seed fell on good ground and produced fruit: some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times what was sown.*

Now, that statement would have gotten everybody's attention—because, in the first century, nearly everyone was a farmer of some sort.

If you didn't grow your own food, you didn't eat.

And then Jesus says...

Matthew 13:9— *Let anyone who has ears listen.*

And with that, it's like Jesus says, *Let's bow with a word of prayer.*

Jesus closes His lesson and reiterates what he said at the beginning of the parable — "Consider the sower who went out to sow.

In other words, did you listen? Are you seeing what was not said?

Now, let's take a short intermission.

As you look at your Bible, the next thing that happens is that the Disciples get Jesus alone and ask,

What are you doing? Jesus, nobody knows what you're talking about—including us! Why are you teaching in parables?!

And Jesus explains why He's teaching in parables in verses 10-17.

It's a fascinating lesson—that we'll discuss in a few weeks.

But what I'd like to do is move to Jesus' explanation of this parable.

Because one of the cool things about being a Bible teacher/expositor is that I don't really need to explain this text—Jesus does for us.

So, let's move to verse 18:

Matthew 13:18— So listen to the parable of the sower:

This is the third time Jesus has said this—listen, | hear, | ponder, | think.

Remember the old Verizon commercial? “Can you hear me now?”

In other words, our job as disciples is to hear beyond human hearing.

Matthew 13:19— When anyone hears the word about the kingdom and doesn't understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the one sown along the path.

There's a ton going on here...

Matthew 13:19— When anyone hears the word about the kingdom

Time out! Where did the Kingdom come from?

Isn't this parable about farming?

Didn't Jesus just give an agricultural lesson?

Wasn't He referring to the hard dirt path and seeds bouncing off of it?

When was he talking about the Kingdom of God?!

And what's the deal about the Evil One?

We learned last week that the literal Kingdom of God will have to wait due to Israel's rejection of Jesus.

So this Kingdom Jesus refers to is spiritual—think Sermon on the Mount.

Before moving forward we have to recognize the importance and symbolism of the seed.



KEYPOINT 1:

The seed is the Word of God.

And the Word of God is specifically the Gospel.

The Good News that Jesus Himself came to pay the sinner's sin by living a perfect life, dying a substitutionary death, and proving that it's all true by walking out of His own grave—that's the Gospel!

Here's the connection: *to the parable*



KEYPOINT 2:

The power of the spiritual life is in the word of God—just as the power of the plant is in the seed.

Matthew 13:19— *When anyone hears the word about the kingdom and doesn't understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the one sown along the path.*

Unfortunately, many Christians don't believe in the Devil.

However, Jesus sure does.

Jesus talks a lot about Satan.

Jesus watched Satan fall from Heaven like lightning. (Luke 10:18).

And Jesus uses Satan as part of His parable—Satan is doing what He does best—steals.

John 10:10— *A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.*

Stealing, killing, and destroying is Satan's game plan.

It's pretty easy for Satan to steal the Gospel from a hard-hearted person.

The good news of the Gospel bounces off a hard-hearted person like a seed bounces off a concrete sidewalk.

And then Satan comes, like the birds of the air, and snatches it away.

hard-hearted
This person is often referred to in the Old Testament as stiff-necked.

He will not bow his head in humility.

He is unconcerned with the things of God, utterly indifferent to anything spiritual.

He immediately dismisses the Gospel.

He has no interest in it—many are hostile to it.

The book of Proverbs says that this person is a fool who hates wisdom and instruction (Prov. 1:7).

This person is self-sufficient, self-satisfied, and often self-righteous.

We all know people like that—AND we used to be those people!

So, the hard path equals the hard-hearted person

KEYPOINT 3:

There is no growth or spiritual fruit from a hard-heart.

Matthew 13:20— And the one sown on rocky ground—this is one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.

So this is great news!

Unlike the hard-hearted person—this guy immediately receives the Gospel with joy.

Greek verb is *lambánō* —to take, receive.

TO ACCEPT, TO TAKE HOLD OF, TO GRASP.

This man appears to have been waiting to hear the Gospel and embraces/accepts it quickly.

Unlike the hard-hearted man, he offers no resistance, has no questions, and says he believes it.

Maybe he sheds tears, is baptized, becomes a church member, and is discipled.

Matthew 13:21— But he has no root and is short-lived. When distress or persecution comes because of the word, immediately he falls away.

Oh, no...that didn't take long.

KEYPOINT 4:

Jesus said he ^{heartily} received the Gospel message (rather than believe in the Gospel message.)

Words matter—

Greek verb is *lambánō*—to take, receive.

Rather than *pisteúō*—to believe and trust regardless of the consequences.

Today there are two words for the *rocky-ground receiver*: Prosperity Gospel.

The Prosperity Gospel is the black plague of our generation.

When someone preaches a shallow gospel, they get shallow receivers ~~believers~~.

Matthew 10:38— Jesus said, "Pick up your cross and follow me."

The apostle Paul said,

Acts 14:22—"It is necessary to go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."

So when the prosperity preacher said that God wants you:

- Rich—but you're broke.
- Healthy—but you're sick.
- Both—sick, broke and now no hope.

Well, of course, your faith is short-lived/temporary—the prosperity preacher lied to you—and did so with a smile as he stole your money.

Matthew 13:21— When distress or persecution comes because of the word, immediately he falls away.

Distress and persecution are word pictures for being punished for your faith.

And we know this type of persecution is religious because Jesus tells us—Because of God’s Word.

It may take years before this kind of testing comes.

But when friends, family, or co-workers criticize him for his rocky faith, he becomes ashamed of the Gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ.

People start making fun of him for attending a Bible study instead of the bar.

You read the Bible? What a joke! I thought you were smarter than that!

And yet...

+ **2 Timothy 3:12**— all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. *— some form ? fashion*

The prosperity preacher won’t tell you that either.

there is a great irony to persecution

+ **KEYPOINT 5:**

The same persecution that makes the rocky receiver wither— makes the true believer stronger.

~~There is an irony to persecution.~~

ACCEPTING

[]

There is a eternal difference between receiving the Gospel and believing the Gospel.

+ **Matthew 13:21**— When distress or persecution comes because of the word, immediately he falls away.

Falls away is literally ‘tripped up.’”

The Greek is *skandalizō* = from which we get *scandalize*.

It is not a gradual loss of interest but a total collapse under pressure. Why?

KEYPOINT 6:

The rocky receiver's feelings changed—his heart did not.

He is superficial in his faith and has a shallow heart.

He's superficial because there was no true repentance, no remorse over sin, no recognition of his sinful state before a Holy God, no brokenness.

There was no change because there was no humility— humility is the first mark of true conversion (Matt. 5:3/Poor in spirit).

KEYPOINT 7:

There is a difference between a profession of faith and a possession of faith.

Unfortunately, the rocky hearted person—the superficial receiver—when he hears the Gospel it brings about a religious emotional experience— but it does not bring true salvation. (Tragic).

And it's tragic because that's the state of many of our churches today.

KEYPOINT 8:

The rocky hearted person had quick and shallow growth, which produced no fruit.

Matthew 13:22— Now the one sown among the thorns—this is one who hears the word, but the worries of this age and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Note that these people “hear” the Gospel, ^{As well} but unfortunately, they do not listen with spiritual ears—which means they don’t understand it.

The third type of soil represents a strangled heart—a heart strangled by things.

The thorny soiled person is the one who loves the world.

This person cares too much about the world, which means he has little time to care about his soul—or to care about the souls around him.

Everything is fine when there’s money in the bank, and there’s no problem at home.

But the moment he’s overdrawn financially or emotionally—he collapses.

There are few barriers to the Gospel greater than the love of money.

Jesus said—

Mark 10:25—It is easier for a (gigantic) camel to go through the eye of a (tiny sewing) needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

The apostle Paul told Timothy—

1 Timothy 6:9—But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction.

1 Timothy 6:10—For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

The apostle John writes—

+ **1 John 2:15**—Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

+ **1 John 2:16**—For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world.

+ **KEYPOINT 8:**

Riches do not choke a person all at once.

↳ love of money

Choking is a very unpleasant but yet gradual process.

Like the weeds in the parable, the love of money can also grow up gradually—if we're not careful.

That's why Jesus told this parable—

+ **Luke 12:16**—"A rich man's land was very productive.
By God's GRACE

+ **Luke 12:17**—He thought to himself, 'What should I do, since I don't have anywhere to store my crops?

When you ASK the wrong question - you always get the wrong answer

+ **Luke 12:18**—'I will do this,' he said. 'I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones and store all my grain and my goods there.'

+ **Luke 12:19**—Then I'll say to myself, "You have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself."

+ **Luke 12:20**—"But God said to him, 'You fool!' This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared—whose will they be?"

Luke 12:21— “That’s how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Amazing isn’t it? That God tells us what will happen when we are not gracious and giving to others?

KEYPOINT 8:

The strangled hearted person heard the Gospel, but didn’t grow and did not produce any fruit.

PREACH:

Jesus has shown up three ways to spiritual disaster.

Each soil represents a heart—The hard heart. The shallow heart. The strangled heart.

None of these soils (aka human hearts) produced fruit—and ^{Fruit is} ~~that~~ is the key to Jesus’ parable.

What good is a fruit tree if it doesn’t produce any fruit?

Today we learned that each soil is dirty and polluted, spiritually.

There’s no purity to the soil—these ^(HEARTS) soils are all contaminated—therefore, no plant can take root.

So, we are zero for three.

Some people refer to these soils as “fruitless believers” or some kind of carnal Christian.

This is not what Jesus is teaching in His parable.

Nor does the rest of Scripture confirm that you can hear/receive the Gospel and not be forever changed.

We must believe the Gospel.

Six Reasons This Parable is Paramount to our lives today.

1. Lack of perseverance.

We shouldn't be surprised when people don't persevere.

The Gospel is intended not only to change our eternal destiny—from hell to Heaven—but to change our lives for the here and now.

The Gospel is a permanent change.

For the Believer, we are living within the Kingdom life. *right now*

However, Jesus reveals that most people won't persevere.

This parable promises that 3/4 of the people we share the Gospel with won't be interested or won't persevere until the end.

We are not to be surprised by that.

2. It's not our fault.

Nobody should be blamed when people fall away.

Look how many people fell away from Jesus, and yet He blamed no one, including Himself.

Each person is responsible for their own faith and actions.

↳ Mom, Dad, Grandma, Grandpa

Jesus didn't blame the person who sowed the seed—and He surely isn't going to blame the seed.

And today, for us, Jesus will not blame the church they attended—nor should we.

3. Don't judge a book by its cover.

Not everyone who says that they're a Christian is a Christian.

Many people who know how to 'play' church.

They know all the words, terms, and lingo.

They appear to be saved from the outside—but they're not.

Time always tells. Time is the great equalizer.

4. A person's current spiritual state is not permanent.

We need to be careful of judging people's first response to the Gospel.

Just because someone gave you a red light on the Gospel doesn't mean their heart won't soften over time.

Think about your own life—consider how hard your heart was at one time.

5. Own our responsibility.

Jesus doesn't name the sower because the sower is you and me. *-At thistime.*

Our job is to Share Jesus Day-By-Day.

God's job is to work on people's hearts.

We believe in the sovereignty of God, yes that He has chosen people from the foundation of the world who are called “the elect.”

But we don’t know who they are—only God knows.

And although God knows ~~who they are~~, He has commissioned (divinely called) us to go out into all the world casting and watering Gospel seed.

We don’t sow seed only to those we think may be interested in hearing the Gospel.

We too, are to sow God’s Gospel seed indiscriminately.

6. Beware of apathy

If you have zero to little interest in sowing Gospel seed—that’s a red flag.

If the state of our hearts is indifference and an overall sense of unconcern for people and their souls—let me suggest two things:

1. Confess your apathy as sin.
2. Repent—Get busy. Time is short.

Lastly, we as the church can’t do what Jesus has commissioned us to do with at teaching and training.

Deep Water / Swimmer lessons.

Three Things:

1. If you’ve never been taught or trained to confidently share the Gospel—
Evangelism Class March 28 @ 6:30 / Foundations.

2. Spiritual Gifts Class | March 21 @ 6:30pm / Foundations.

3. We have blue business cards in the foyer and the Fellowship Hall that say, “You’re invited.”

I dare you to take one—only one—stick it in your wallet and give it away this week—and watch what God does with your small seed faith and fruitfulness.

Speaking of fruit, that's where Jesus leads us for next Sunday.

We have learned the Three Ways to Spiritual Disaster—next week, we'll learn the three ways to spiritual abundance.



PRAYER

BENEDICTION

Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Cor. 15:58)

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