

Matt 13:1-9, 18-23
The Seed, the Soil and the Outcome Part 2

Biblically, good soil does not come naturally. Neither is that generally true in agriculture. Healthy soil must be cultivated. The point of the parable is clear. The same seed can produce radically different outcomes given the condition of the soil. Given this truth then the remedy seems simple enough, just be better soil. But can we be better soil? Contrary the belief of many, no. So, what makes soil good, conducive to bringing the full potential of a seed to bear? To answer this question, I want to share three things that won't make the soil of our hearts conducive to the seed. The seed being the word of God, the gospel of Jesus the Christ.

First thing, you. We have no power to make our hearts better. Furthermore, we must stop believing our hearts are naturally receptive to the word of God. Take the footpath for example, verses 3 and 9. Jesus states the seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message of the kingdom and don't understand. Listen! Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. Apart from this explanation we might assume the seed never entered the heart at all, when in fact it did. So, why didn't they understand? Let's let scripture answer this question.

John 8:43-45 ⁴³Why can't you understand what I am saying? It's because you can't even hear me! ⁴⁴For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don't believe me!" **NLT**

1 Cor 2:12-14 “¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. **ESV**

Ephesians 4:17-19 “¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” **ESV**

The footpath represents the person who continually hears the word of God and ignores it, hears again and resists it; suppressing conviction and making excuses for sin. Unbelief takes hold. The conscience becomes callous. The heart becomes the footpath. So compacted by unbelief that the word cannot penetrate and take root. Let me remind you of something I said two Sundays ago. It is a dangerous thing to sit under the ministry of Christ Sunday after Sunday, month after month, year after year in unbelief.

Second thing, a surface level faith. V20-21 “²⁰ The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. ²¹ But since they don’t have deep roots, they don’t last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God’s word.” **Nothing excites me more than someone coming forth to profess faith in Jesus and request baptism. But experience has taught me to step back and ask some critical questions**

because few things grieve me more than having baptized a person only to see them fall away after a short while because they have a surface level faith. That is, no root. Listen! The initial growth of the rocky soil is impressive. These individuals often appear to be on fire for the Lord. They quickly volunteer for ministry. They boldly proclaim the goodness of God and the grace of Jesus Christ. If we judged only by outward enthusiasm, we might conclude they were flourishing. But the scorching sun rises; disappointment, persecution, suffering and what was flourishing soon withers because there is no root. Jesus himself explains why this happens.

Luke 14:25-33 “²⁵ Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.” **ESV**

Church, the rocky soil represents the person who comes to Jesus enthusiastically, but when the life gets hard, they fall away because the soil is not conducive to the roots reaching down to the region of

life sustaining nutrients. The hardship only served to reveal rootless faith. Never mistake early enthusiasm as evidence of deep-rooted faith.

Final thing, a divided heart. V23 “²² The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God’s word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced.” No farmer plants a field and never comes back to check on it or tend to it. We cannot not expect our fields not to become overrun by weeds if we do not tend to them, nurture them. Devotion can truly only be directed towards one thing. We can’t serve Jesus while allowing the cares of this life to rule our hearts. We can’t serve Jesus if we are chasing after wealth. A divided heart will choke to death the life-giving word sown. Once again, Jesus himself explains this.

Matt 6:24-30 “²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money. ²⁵ “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? ²⁸ “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing,²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?” **NLT**

The divided heart has never fully trusted in the provision of God. It believes that the world has something to offer that God/Jesus cannot give them or that the world can fill a need or void that God/Jesus is unable to. Only to be left barren in the end.

Brothers and Sisters, good soil does not come naturally. So, what makes soil good, conducive to bringing the full potential of a seed to bear? God, by the power of His Holy Spirit upon the hearts of believers through faith in His Son, Jesus. Are we good soil? Have we not only heard the word but received it deep into the soil of hearts? Truly examine yourself and if you determine you are anything other than good soil cry out to God in the name of Jesus. For only He can change the condition of our hearts. Know this: If we are good soil, it is God who has made us so. And where the Holy Spirit has prepared the heart, the harvest is sure to come. More on the harvest next Sunday. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**