

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

Don't cut the tree down before it's time. If we read this parable carelessly, we will assume that the harvest produced from the good soil is immediate. And if immediate, none of us could have the assurance that we are among those who have truly heard and understood God's word. In part one of this series, we each received an acorn in illustration of how God brings mighty things from seemingly insignificant things. Of course, Jesus being the one who was treated and seen as insignificant, but whose life, death and resurrection changed the course of human history. Did you know, depending on the species, it takes an oak tree upwards of 40-50 years to reach peak acorn production. Observe the maturation process:

0–5 years: the tree establishes roots and slowly develops into a sapling.

5–15 years: Rapid growth in height and trunk diameter, but typically no acorns.

15–20 years: Some species may produce a few acorns.

20–30 years: Most healthy oaks begin producing regular crops.

40–50+ years: Peak acorn production is often reached, and the tree may continue producing for centuries.

Don't cut the tree down before it's time. The point is this, don't give up on yourself. Maybe you feel you have been totally ineffective in your pursuit to live out the gospel. Maybe you can't see any evidence of fruit bearing in your life that has led to seeds being planted in others. It is not too late. Make no mistake about it, every disciple is

called to bear fruit, to produce a harvest. But remember we cannot do this alone. We cannot do this apart from Jesus, apart from his Holy Spirit working in and through us. So, if good soil is God's work (and it is), how do we cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He continues cultivating our hearts? I find two answers in Jesus' description of the good soil.

**First answer, let go of what you think you already know about God.**

**V23a** “<sup>23</sup> The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God’s word.” I am convinced that the biggest hinderance to hearing and understanding is believing we already know enough. That we have amassed all the answers regarding God and life. That we know better than God, who gave the scriptures. To hear and understand you must be open to the possibility that you don’t know what you think you know. **Listen! Farmers do not assume a plot of land will produce a crop if planted simply because it is dirt. No, they test the soil. When we enter the presence of God/Jesus, whether it be in prayer, study, and/or worship, let us never forget we are the soil, not the farmer.** We are a branch not the vine. And it is the word of God, the gospel of Jesus the Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit that does the testing and fertilizing, making us capable of producing great harvests. Some thirty, some sixty, and some one hundred times what was planted. If only we let go of what we think we already know about God.

**John 15:1-8** “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless

you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

**Second answer, very simple. Expect to produce a harvest. V23**

“<sup>23</sup> The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!” As good soil we should fully expect God to accomplish in and through us what scripture promises. No one plants a seed expecting nothing to come up. True humility is not seeing yourself as nothing, worthless, but rather seeing yourself as God sees you. Listen! When we plant a seed in good soil, we do so in expectation that the seed will produce what it was designed to. And because we do so in expectation, we water and watch. We water and we watch. We water and we watch! And when that plant bursts forth we take care of it. We protect it. We make sure it gets the right amount of sun. We keep bugs and animals from it that would do it harm. Sisters and brothers, we nurture it. We must treat our faith with the same level of care! We must water it by scripture reading and study, prayer, worship and fellowship. Too many of us have neglected our faith. We have expected fruit without abiding in Christ. We have expected growth without nourishment.

I want to close this series by drawing our attention to **Luke 13:6-9**, the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree:

“<sup>6</sup>Then Jesus told this story: “A man planted a fig tree in his garden and came again and again to see if there was any fruit on it, but he was always disappointed.<sup>7</sup> Finally, he said to his gardener, ‘I’ve waited three years, and there hasn’t been a single fig! Cut it down. It’s just taking up space in the garden.’<sup>8</sup> “The gardener answered, ‘Sir, give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I’ll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer.<sup>9</sup> If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down.’” **NLT**

Is this you? All hope is not lost. The gardener doesn’t give up on us as easily as we give up on ourselves. He tends barren trees. Receive His pruning. Don’t cut the tree down before it’s time. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand. The seed, the soil, and the outcome. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**