

KINGDOM SOIL

We begin when Jesus healed a demon-oppressed man. The Pharisees weren't amazed like the rest of the people. They accused Him of casting out demons by the prince of demons, Beelzebul. Beelzebul was a Philistine deity - "Lord of the flies". It's not uncommon for one nation's gods to become devils to their neighboring enemies. In Jesus' time, it was the current name for the chief or prince of demons, and was identified with Satan and the Devil among the Jewish nation. Jesus called out their illogical accusation and warned against blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. He then taught that one should make a tree good or bad. He taught that whatever comes out of one's mouth proceeds from the heart and mankind will be judged by their words. At that point, the Pharisees asked so see a sign from heaven, and Jesus said they were an evil and adulterous generation for asking. The only sign He would give them was that of Jonah - in the belly of the earth for three days and three nights. He said gentiles would rise up in judgment against them. He then taught about unclean spirits, how they can leave someone and then return with spirits more evil than themselves and make the last state worse than the first. Finally, as He was speaking (in was in a house), His mother and brothers asked to speak to Him, but He taught that those who do the will of His Father were His brother, sister and mother. So, consider what happened. Afterwards, Jesus left the house and sat beside the sea. Great crowds surrounded Him and He entered a boat to teach. He taught in many parables.

Matthew 13:1-9: The Parable of the Sower

The Setting:

- **vs.1-3** That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow."
- Just like Jesus "went out of the house" to teach by the Sea of Galilee, so this sower "went out to sow." Later, the one who sows the good seed in the field is "the Son of Man" (**vs.37**). Jesus does not mention the Kingdom in this first parable, but it is a "kingdom parable" because Jesus states they are receiving "secrets of the Kingdom" (**vs. 11**) and when the parable is explained, Jesus states the seed is the "word of the kingdom" (**vs. 19**).

Hard Path

- **vs.4** And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.
 - This is a typical scene of first century farming. Guy grabs seed out of the sack and throws the seed out. The seed goes everywhere. At that time, they wouldn't have fenced in land. It was common for others to walk through your property by your toiled soil. So, some simply landed on the path. That path would be hard from people traveling.
- **vs.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.
 - It's not that the person didn't hear, but they don't understand what they're hearing. So, even what they have will be taken away. The heart isn't penetrated, so the word is snatched away.

Rocky Soil

- **vs.5-6** 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.
 - Kind of odd, but the shallow surface would allow for more warmth allowing it to immediately spring up. However, as it was exposed to the sun, it died since it had no root.
- **vs.20-21** 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.
 - Such individuals are joyful about what they've received, but not joyful enough to stand the trials and tribulations of life on account of the word. "I didn't sign up for this" kind of mindset.

Among thorns

- **vs.7** Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.
 - Again, he just threw the seed out. This is the nature of what happens. It does grow, but it doesn't produce.
- **vs.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.
 - The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches prove to be too strong. They win over.

Good Soil

- **vs.8** Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.
 - Here you go. Finally, some good soil. What happens? It produces!
- **vs.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.
 - They hear it and understand it. The first one heard it, but they didn't understand. The second hears it, but has no depth. The third one hears it, but becomes distracted. See a common denominator? Also take note: such people will produce differently, but they're all acceptable to the Lord. So, what's the real goal? How much you can produce? Is that what Jesus' main take away is?

So, what?

- **vs.9** He who has ears, let him hear.
- **vs.18** Hear then the parable of the sower:
- Or, as Mark accounts begins: "**Listen!**" It's powerful. Know what the Greek definition is? Listen! :)
- **Matthew 13:10-17** 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. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: " ' "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their

heart and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

- Jesus was speaking this way on purpose. Those who wanted to understand more would seek Jesus out, but those who didn't would walk away without answers. Why? Because they didn't truly care.
- Also take note: this was a real time parable. Jesus has thrown seed out. What will happen? What kind of soil has it landed on? Will those who have struggled seeing and hearing come to Him and be healed? Will anyone produce fruit?
- So, hearing with the intention of following is Jesus' main point. In fact, if you won't listen, then you'll not understand any of His parables. It's not about how much you can produce . . . do you see that? It's about listening, truly understanding and trusting in what they hear. After that - God gives the increase. Some 100, 60, or 30 fold. However, there's no producing anything without truly hearing. So, to those who had little - even what they had would be taken away. However, to those who have, more would be given in abundance.
- So, can we "listen" today and evaluate where we're at?

Hard Path

- It's really not fair enough to say, "Listen, I know I grew up hearing all this religious talk, but I just don't think we can really know if this is true. There's so much out there, so much information, so much confusion, etc. I just want to be open to other possibilities. I'm trying to be open and see honest." The reality is, Jesus says . . . "You're hard. You need to 'soften.' You need to open your eyes. You need to open your ears. You need to be more serious. You need to humble yourself."
- It's laziness at times. It's not wanting to be told what to do. It's fear. Yet, so many of these individuals will spend a lot of energy and time "searching." I've always found that to be interesting.
- What are you waiting for? What are you looking for? What's your plan? What do you think is going to happen? What if you're wrong about Jesus?
- What's scary to me, is that some of the people in this category, if I'm looking at this correctly, were religious people who heard Jesus' message and simply didn't care. So, I'm not convinced this is mainly talking about agnostics, atheists or those belonging to false religions (though the principle wouldn't definitely apply.) He's talking about religious folk who don't like what they're hearing from Jesus.

Rocky Soil

- It's really not fair enough to say, "Listen, I'm just not a confrontational person. Or, I'm not brave like others, it's just my personality, etc."
- It's not enough to say, "Listen, I'm doing the best I can, but this is just too hard and has gone on for too long."
- Jesus says . . . "You're acting shallow. You need to dig deep. You need to mature."
- God will judge the cowardly. Ultimately, it seems like we've been hit with that old crop killing fungus known as: entitlement. Why would we think it's okay for all the men and women in the past to suffer for righteousness, but not us? Did we think that becoming a Christian would protect us from ever getting hit by the Sun? Jesus never promised that. However, the Son of God can give us

the strength to endure the heat. How? He gives us roots? We're rooted in Him. He also gave us each other.

- We've got to stop making excuses. We need to learn from others that have been exposed to the sun for a good while. But, you've got to make the commitment.

Among thorns

- It's really not fair enough to say, "Listen, it's just my personality. I believe it and don't mind being ridiculed for it, but it's not what gets me going. So don't read too much into what you're seeing or not seeing in my life. I believe in Jesus and all, I'll be here when we get together for the most part, and I may be around every now and then for a get together, but this just isn't my cup of tea."
- It's really not fair enough to say, "Listen, I've got so little time and too much to do. It's hard having a family and trying to accommodate and please everyone." Or maybe, "The reality is - I need a little "me time and attention."
- The reality is, Jesus says . . . "You don't seem to have this problem with worldly activities and topics! No, the reality is that everything in the world has choked out My word and Kingdom. You're not turning to Me anymore. You're not thinking of Me. You're not producing in My kingdom. You need to reprioritize. You need to see the evil caused by Satan and sin. You need to figure out who you'll serve. Time to make a decision. Stop telling Me "No" and start telling that to your boss or family if need be! Stop telling Me, 'No!" and start saying that to yourself."
- Jesus knows about life. He understands what uncertainty feels like. He knows that many times, when we're afraid, we go into survival mode and try to work things out ourselves, begin to doubt God, and attempt to find comfort in material things or people. He gets it. But it doesn't make it right. It doesn't mean we can't turn and be healed. It doesn't mean it's too late to make a change. Listen, ignoring God's word doesn't make this world and its nature go away. Bad people aren't going anywhere. Lost people will not be able to help you - they can only offer the pit they're in, whether they realize it or not.

Good Soil

- God bless you - and He is blessing you. Because you're seeing Him. You're hearing Him. You're trusting in Him. One of you has been making some changes, and you came to mind when preparing this lesson. In fact, I was on the fence about delivering this one, but after talking to you, it was clear - we need to hear it. I can tell you right now that this individual is choosing the better portion. What changed it all? Well, no doubt, you all have been wonderful and shown the love of God. However, specifically, they've been spending more time with Jesus. They've even been hit with some trials, but Jesus is giving them roots. Know how they're feeling right now? Completely satisfied and optimistic. They're alive. Looks like they're beginning to produce some fruit. Wonder how much increase God will give. Who knows, but in a sense - it doesn't matter. They've heard. They're rooting. They're growing because of their trust in God. They're producing.
- But Jesus healing you isn't in vain, is it? As we've said - we produce. You know what's significant about producing? You're not typically doing it for yourself. Yes, we grow closer to the Lord, but we're producing for the Lord by serving others. Where as majority of religious people are ultimately struggling with a "me, myself and I" mentality. That's not the nature of the Kingdom. The Kingdom was rooted in selflessness. It was rooted in Jesus Christ, who, like a seed must die, but then sprouts and gives life. We find our nourishment and example in Christ.