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Parable of the Sower Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23

Matthew 13:3-9, *Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. ⁶But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. ⁷And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. ⁸But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

Matthew 13:18-23, *"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. ²⁰But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no root in himself,*

but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. ²²Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. ²³But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

The parables of Matthew 13 are given by our Lord to describe the character of the kingdom between His rejection and His return.

These parables describe the church age, our Lord called the mystery form of the kingdom.

Christ is still the King.
His kingdom is here.

The King was rejected.
He will return to establish His prophesied kingdom.

What will be this church age be?

Will the gospel be preached?

What will happen to the kingdom in this period?

Our Lord knows how to take the natural world and employ with great precision in instructing spiritual truth.

He takes something they could understand, lays it alongside something they did not understand. The one explains the other.

Each of these Parable is filled with profound spiritual truth.

V 3, *“Behold, a sower went out to sow.*

There was much agricultural life in that part of the world. Everybody understood the sowing of seed.

The sower would drape over the shoulder a bag, and the bag would be full of seed, and it would have an opening. As the furrows had been prepared, the man would reach in and take out the seed and with his hand he would throw it.

He would scatter the seed into the furrow.

He would do it with ordered steps in a straight line.

When he reached the end of the line, he would turn to start the other way, never miss a step, and continue throwing the seed.

This is how the field was sown, by throwing the seed.



As he throws that seed, Jesus indicates there are four kinds of soil on which that seed will fall.

1. Wayside Soil.

V 4, And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.

In Jerusalem was literally crisscrossed with fields. The fields were usually long, narrow strips and men could cultivate those fields.

The strips were separated from other fields by paths. These narrow paths being about three feet or so wide.

Those were used by the farmer to get in between the fields to get to whatever field he wanted to reach. They were also used by the travellers who were going from one part of the country to another.



In **Matthew chapter 12**, that the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples were walking through the fields of grain.

- There were no fences around the fields.
- There were no walls surrounding the fields.

This is what the Lord has in mind when He talks about the wayside.

The dirt would then be packed down, beaten hard, uncultivated, never turned over, and never loosened.

By the continual pounding and pounding, and because of the dryness of that part of the world it would be compacted to the point where it was like a road. It was as hard as pavement.

When the farmer came along and threw the seed and it went beyond the furrow and landed on that hard surface, it could not penetrate the ground.

Some seed would lie there on the top and birds would hover, no doubt, until the farmer turned his back.

As he started down the next furrow, they would land on the hard surface, and they would eat the seed.

What they did not eat, Luke says, was trampled by the feet of men who were passing through the fields.

This is the wayside.

The birds and the men removing the seed which cannot penetrate the soil.

2. Stony soil.

V 5-6, *Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. ⁶But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.*

Luke 8:5-6, *A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.*

“They had no moisture.” There was no root to capture the moisture.

This is not talking about soil with rocks in it because any farmer who cultivated a field would make sure all the rocks were out.

But basically, Israel, in terms of its land, has running through it strains of limestone rock bed.

In many places this rock bed surges up to become close to the soil so that maybe inches beneath the soil there would be solid rock bed limestone.

When cultivating the field, you might not see that, or you might be unable in the cultivating process to break up that rock bed.

Right beneath the soil is this hard rock bed and as the seed falls in and begins to germinate and tries to shoot its roots down, they hit the rock bed. They have nowhere to go.

All the moisture and the sun that's there generates life upward and they spring up. Probably higher than the other grain and the other seed which is going both ways and using its energy to go both ways.

This flourishes immediately, but when the sun comes out, it dies. Because its roots are not strong enough to maintain moisture or to find moisture. The rock bed hinders them, and it dies in the heat of the summer.

3. Thorny/ Weedy Soil.

V 7, And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.

This soil looks good.

It is deep, rich, turned, over, tilled, cultivated, clean and it looks ready.



The seed falls into that area and it begins to germinate. But also, there are fibrous roots of weeds, and they tend to choke that life out.

Weeds are natural to that soil. They belong in that soil. They fit in that soil. They are at home in that soil.

The sowing of the grain is a foreign element into that soil. It's not natural. It must be carefully cultivated.

The weeds in their natural soil just totally dominate and strangle and choke and grow up fast and send out their leaves and shade so that there cannot be the sun or the moisture.

There is not enough room for everyone to share the nutrients of that soil. So, the good seed dies,

4. Good soil.

V 8, *But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

Here is deep, soft, and clean soil.

It's soft, unlike the hard wayside.

It's deep, unlike the stony limestone ground.

It's clean, unlike the weed-infested soil.

The seed bursts into life and it brings forth a tremendous harvest, a hundredfold, sixtyfold, thirtyfold.

The average would be **7.5-fold**. A good crop would be **10-fold**. A tremendous flourishing crop.

- A man goes out and throws seed.
- The seed falls into four kinds of places.
- It falls on a hard path where it will never germinate. It's either picked up by birds or trampled under the feet of those who walk on the path.
- Some seed falls into rocky soil, germinates for a little while because the sun and the water are there to start

with. It responds by growth. But its growth is all upward and there's no root. When the sun scorches and burns that plant up there and it finds no resource underneath, it dies.

- Some seed that falls on the weedy ground that is strangled out and choked out by that which already lives there and is natural to that place.
- Some seed falls into the good, clean, deep, rich soft soil and it grows and produces a tremendous harvest.

V 9, *He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*"

If you can understand this, then understand it.

If you can get the message, then get the message because there's an important message.

Who can hear?

V 10-17 Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear. Whoever can understand this, understand this.

We studied last week that the only people who can understand it are the people who believe in the King.

The people who are redeemed and who are in the kingdom.

Because of you are in the kingdom, the King promises to explain to you the meaning of this.

You become a Christian God promises to teach you the meaning of His Word.

Who can understand?

The people with the hard hearts and the deaf ears can't understand.

Jesus quotes Isaiah.

Who is it going to be?

V 16, *"Blessed are your eyes, for they see and your ears, for they hear."*

Only you can hear.

This is then given to conceal from those who don't believe.
Revealed to those who do because the Lord's going to teach.

Mark 4:10-11, *But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. "And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables,*

But only them who know the King have the promise that He will be their teacher.

He begins in verse 18, to explain the meaning of the parable.

V 9, *“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*

V 16, *“Blessed are your ears, for they hear.”*

V 18, *“Therefore hear the parable of the sower:*

Who is the sower?

Obvious that the sower is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 13:37, *He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.*

The Lord is the original sower.

He is the one who first puts the seed in the soil.

What is the seed?

V 19, *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.*

The seed is the Word.

The seed is the Word of the kingdom.

It is God’s revelation.

Luke 8:11, *“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.*

The message about the King and His kingdom, it is the gospel.

The first sower of the gospel was the Lord Himself.

Anybody who sows what Jesus first sowed is a sower.

If you repeat the message of Jesus Christ, you become a sower.

Mark 4:14, *The sower sows the word.*

So, anybody who sows the Word becomes a sower.

Jesus was the first sower, and we who follow by giving His message are also the sowers.

We are all the sowers who love Christ, who received His message and who pass it on.

The seed is the Word of God.

We are sowing the gospel, the message of the kingdom.

Seed in its natural sense cannot be created. If we ever lost the seeds, if we lost seed, we could never cause things to grow. We are dependent on what grows and produces more seed because the origination came from God.

God originally created seed and seed reproduces itself. If we ever lost seed, we would never be able to reproduce it. We can't create it.

Same is true in the seed of the Word of God.
God does not call on us to create our own message.

We are not to produce a new supply of information.
We are to build upon the revelation of the Word of God.
We are utterly dependent upon divine revelation as much as we are dependent on God creating the seed in the first place which reproduces itself and brings to us the fruit that we eat even today.

So, the seed is the Word.

The Word encompasses the written word but inside of it is the living word.
It is as if the Bible is the husk, and the living Christ is the seed within the husk.

So, initially, it's Christ sowing the Word of God containing the seed, which is Himself.

Jesus is both sower and seed.

We are the sowers who sow the seed. The husk is the Word of God and in it contains the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, the parable is about preaching the gospel.

It is about preaching the Word about the King and His kingdom.

- Telling men that Jesus is the King, He is come to bring a kingdom.
- Telling men what the King is like and telling men how to get in His kingdom.
- Telling men what His kingdom is like and what it will promise to do in life and death and eternity.

It's all about the good news of the King and His kingdom.

The soils.

How will men respond to the gospel?

There are four kinds of soils.

All the soils are basically the same.

Dirt is dirt is dirt, whether it's hard dirt, soft dirt, dirt with rock under it, or dirt with weeds in it, dirt is dirt is dirt. It's all talking about the same part of the world.

The issue is not specifically the soil.

The issue is what has influenced the soil, the condition that it is in.

All men could receive the seed.

All soil could receive the seed if it was broken up if it was cleaned of weeds.

The result of hearing the gospel in the life of an individual depends upon the condition of that person's heart.

This is what Jesus is teaching.

The result of the preaching of the gospel will depend on the condition of the heart of the hearer.

V 19, *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.*

Heart is the same as soil.

The issue is the condition of the heart. That determines the reception of the gospel.

Jesus is saying to these disciples who at this point are saying, "Lord, what is going to happen?"

You have been blasphemed.

You have been rejected.
The kingdom cannot come.
All is lost.

What is going to happen now?

You are going to sow the seed, which is the Word of God.
You are going to preach the same message about the same King and the same kingdom.

What is going to happen is to depend on the condition of the heart of the hearer.

The basic point of the parable is to encourage the apostles, that there will be wayside soil.

You could really get disillusioned. There will be stony ground soil and there will be weedy ground soil but there will also be good ground soil that will bring forth thirty, sixty, a hundredfold.

It is an encouraging parable.

It is a parable to help them to approach the ministry with excitement, anticipation that God is going to produce results.

Salvation is noted by fruit.

We are going to meet four kinds of hearers,

Four kinds of responders to the gospel.

They are characteristic of our day.

1. Unresponsive /wayside hearer.

V 19, When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

Seed fell on the hard surface, couldn't penetrate the hard surface. The birds hovered around, waited till the man's back was turned, came down and hit the surface and ate the seed. The rest was trampled under feet.

This is the man who is hard-hearted.

This is the man the Old Testament would call stiff-necked.

This is the man who is irresponsible, unresponsive, inattentive, unconcerned, indifferent, negligent, doesn't want anything to do with it, just hits him and bounces off.

Satan is seen as the birds, the wicked one who comes and snatches away.

There is a condition of the human heart that has been so pounded and pounded with the crisscrossing of the mixed multitudes of sins that traverse the life, and no sensitivity at all.

This is the heart that knows no repentance, knows no sorrow for sin, knows no guilt, knows no concern over things that really matter.

Allows itself to be trampled and trampled with the mixed multitude, the feet pounding away that mark the sins of life day after day. Never broken up, never softened by conviction, hard-hearted, callous, indifferent.

Proverbs.

- The fool who hates knowledge,
- The fool who hates instruction.
- The fool who despises wisdom.
- The fool who is stiff-necked.
- The fool who is hard hearted.
- The fool who says in his heart there is no God.

This is the fool who will not hear, whose mind is shut, who does not want to be bothered at all.

Have we all met him?

We have thrown our seed and it just bounces, nothing, no penetration. It doesn't stay there very long but Satan comes in and he takes it away.

2 Corinthians 4:4, *whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

When someone does not respond to the gospel initially, when they are hard hearted and stiff necked, Satan just snatches it away.

How does Satan do that?

He does that is send false teachers along to say all that stuff was lies. Don't believe that stuff.

Satan snatches the seed is by the fear of man. People don't respond to it because they are afraid, they might lose their reputation, or they might be kicked out of their little group, or somebody might think they are a religious fanatic.

- Sometimes Satan uses pride. They just don't want to admit that they need some help, that they need some information.
- Sometimes Satan snatches it away through doubt.

- Sometimes he snatches it away through prejudice.
- Sometimes through stubbornness.
- Sometimes through the love of sin the person doesn't want to give up.
- Sometimes through procrastination.

But one way or another or a combination of ways, Satan snatches it away and the person easily forgets that it ever came.

Some of them hang on the edges, very close, and very shut to the truth.

We expect that when we preach the gospel.

2. Emotional/ rocky hearer.

Second kind the rocky ground hearer.

V 20, *But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;*

This is the person who hears the Word and immediately with joy receives it. The indication is that there's not a lot of thought involved. It's just sort of a quick response!

It's sort of emotional of instant excitement without counting the cost, without understanding the real significance.

There is a warm affection, good feeling, and lot of joy.
All the energy is going up and it's all external and outside.

Because there is nothing underneath.
Because that rock bed of resistance is still there to true repentance, to true brokenness, to true contrition.

There's just a soft surface, that's all.
There are people like that. They don't ever deal with the real issues. They just sort of jump on the Jesus Bandwagon. It looks so good.

Three months later they are gone.

They got all joyful and didn't turn out the way it looked.
They found acceptance and you have been kind to them. They have a sort of a sense that everything's okay and it's all wonderful, but they have never really ploughed the soil underneath.

They are like the person who built the house on the sand.
The religious structure is there, nothing holding it up.
Superficial joy.

V 21, yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

Never been redeemed.

He has just sort of accepting the seed, but never been genuine.

Endures for a little while, and tribulation and persecution.

Pressure and suffering arise because of the Word.

Because you are being identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, suddenly, some pressure comes. There may be a pressure to really begin to live the Christian life.

You are a Christian and now people start to say things about you. They start to knock you. They start to criticize you.

This kind of person won't survive that because there is no root and no depth.

When I pray with someone to receive Jesus Christ, they can be this kind of person. When you see a very immediate, very instantaneous response, there's something in you that says this might be rocky soil.

Where is the depth and the brokenness and the counting of the costs?

Tribulation, pressure, suffering for the sake of Christ.

2 Timothy 3:12, *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

When the persecution comes and the pressure comes, they are gone.

We have had them here.

We have baptized them.

We have even prayed with some of them.

We have even spent hours discipling some of them.

Till the persecution comes they are there afterwards they are gone.

They are trapped, caught, and offended.

Watch for that superficial kind of thing that happens so often today in the superficial presentations of the gospel that very often occur through television and other means.

Trouble and persecution will do two things.

One, trouble and persecution will kill the false believers.

Secondly, they will strengthen the true believers.

1 Peter 5:10, *But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*

We should really desire this because trouble and persecution kill off the false and strengthen the true!

- If your confession of Christ does not come from a deep inner conviction of your sin,
- If your confession of Christ does not involve a great hunger for self-denial and self-sacrifice and a willingness to suffer for His sake,

Then you have no root. Only a matter of time.

Jesus said, to take up the cross and follow Him.

If you are not, then you are not worthy to be His disciple.

Only God can break up that stony heart.

If you have got that kind of heart, you need to pray and ask the Lord.

Ezekiel 36:26, *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

3. Worldly/ Weedy hearer.

V 22, *Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.*

They all hear the Word.

The heart and soul of worldliness.

Living for the mundane, and the things of this world.

You live for

- Career,
- House,
- Car,
- Job,
- Clothes,
- Prestige,
- Looks, etc.

Riches deceive.

They pierce many hearts.

1 Timothy 6:9-10, *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

There are these who hear, but they never clean out the soil.
The world is still there.

Money is still there.

Luke 16:13, *“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”*

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.*

You can't be that double-minded man.

The soil that is going to produce the fruit must be cleansed of that stuff.

True salvation only occurs where there is true repentance.

When an individual come to the Lord Jesus Christ, there must be a willingness to deal with all the stuff, to get it up and get it out.

The soil is good. Somebody trying to hold on to everything at the same time wants the Word of God and wants everything else.

Everything else is indigenous to that earth. Weeds flourish, that's their natural home. When you introduce the seed that is a foreign element, and it must be cared, nurtured, and cultivated.

It can't survive on its own. The ground is only got so much to give. There is only so much nourishment there.

If the soil is trying to support all the weeds, it isn't going to be able to cause the seed to survive.

- Nothing wrong with this sower.
- Nothing wrong with the seed.
- Nothing wrong with the soil either.

It's just the condition that it was in.

People don't get saved when their hearts are still occupied with the things of the world. They will choke it out.

Always seem to be preoccupied with the world's thing. Money, career, fame, fortune, etc. Always wanting to fulfil the lust of the flesh.

This is a person who always says they are a Christian but can't be faithful to care about a pure life.

Or the person who just lives their whole life for personal gain, personal prestige, personal money, enterprises, and this is the goal of life.

There are some like that sitting right in this room right now, some of you. You never really ploughed out the garbage, you never got rid of the world and the cares of this age and the deceitfulness of riches, and the seed is choked.

When Jesus said this, this is all prophetic, and this is exactly what we see in the church today. This is what we see in the kingdom.

We might tempt to say that maybe they lost their salvation. But Jesus is saying here they never had it.

What is the mark of salvation in this parable?

Fruit.

John 15, if you don't bear fruit, He cuts you off and burns you. That's hell for people who are fruitless.

Because not being on the vine, that's not salvation. It's the fruit bearing that marks the salvation.

4. Good hearer.

V 23, *But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."*

Mark says, "Accepts it."

Luke says, "Holds on to it."

This is dirt like the rest of the dirt, but it was good because of its preparation.

- No weeds,
- No rocks,
- No hard surface.

There is good soil out there.

When you go away preach and you are discouraged.

What is fruit?

Evidence of the divine life.

Galatians 5:22-23, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

Fruit is a right kind of attitude and deed.

Paul tells us in Romans that fruit is winning People to Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:13, *Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.*

Fruit is God at work, manifesting in the attitude, manifesting in the action. Fruit is God producing spiritual reality in our life.

Psalm 1:3, *He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.*

Fruit is always the mark of true faith.

There will be some who bring a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty. Not everybody is equally productive.

God uses people in different ways.

There are some Christians who never fully get their act together, and they go through life being a thirty-folder, when they could be a sixty or a hundred.

Christians will always be fruitful. We are not saying that all Christians will always be as fruitful as they ought to be or could be. Because when we do become disobedient, then we restrict that.

All Christians at this point in the parable start and thirtyfold.
30-fold is three times what was even normal.

A true believer is one whose fruit is multiplied and manifest. It only goes from a tremendous and obvious fruit to one that is just inconceivable in terms of fruit.

Conclusion:

What is our Lord saying in the parable?

Go and preach and realize it as you preach,

You are going to get resistance.

You are going to get short-termed converts,

You are going to get double-minded people who can't let go of the system.

You are also going to get the real ones.

You are going to have an enemy all the way along.

The enemy is defined for us very clearly. **V 19**, “*The wicked one*,” Satan, the devil.

Secondly, the flesh, **V 21**.

People get under tribulation, persecution, and they can't take the grief. They want to be comfortable. They are not willing to pay the price, make the sacrifice. The flesh is an enemy.

Thirdly, in **V 22**, the care of this age and the deceitfulness of riches speaks of the world.

We have the three constant enemies of the gospel.

- Satan,
- Flesh, and
- World.

They will be at it in the process of sowing to try to stop you.

Application:

1. Self-examination.

What kind of soil are you?

Where do you fit?

God help you to be the good ground.

If you are that hard soil that the birds just take the seed off, you better ask God to plough your heart.

If you are that rocky soil underneath a soft superficial exterior, you better ask God to do the ploughing deeper.

If you are that weedy soil, you better ask the Lord to clean you so you can receive with purity the gospel.

Please look at your own life to see what kind of ground you are.

2. Not the talent of the sower.

It is not the talent of the sower.

You take a little kid, barefoot, five years old, wants to go out and sow a field with his daddy. His father knows how to do it beautifully.

The little kid's going along throwing seed all over the place.

Do you know something?

It may not be as much seed hit the good soil when the little guy throws it as when his dad does. But when the seed hits the good soil, it doesn't matter who threw it!

It will grow.

It does not depend on the talent of the sower.

Some might say I am weak, and I don't know how to preach but remember it's the seed and the soil.

The more you throw the better the opportunity you are going to hit some good soil.

3. Don't give up!

Sometimes the Lord ploughs up the stuff that doesn't receive the seed the first time, so don't give up.

They would throw the seed first, and then plough it under afterwards. Sometimes you have just thrown the seed and before the birds can hit it, comes the Holy Spirit with the ploughs it under.

So, be faithful.

Hard soil, shallow soil, weedy soil, may not always stay that way.

By God's grace He may do some tilling in that soil.

So, keep throwing the seed in that same field over and over.