

**Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23** On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. <sup>2</sup> And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. <sup>3</sup> Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> "And as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup> "Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. <sup>6</sup> "But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. <sup>7</sup> "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> "But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

<sup>18</sup> " Therefore hear the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> "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. <sup>20</sup> "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup> "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. <sup>22</sup> "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. <sup>23</sup> "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."

**He who has ears to hear, let him hear!** – I think we sometimes assume that Jesus words here are a metaphor, in our heads we tend to translate this “if you are able to understand than figure out the meaning of the parable.”

Jesus is being very literal and offering a very sharp rebuke to the crowd. “You’ve got ears why won’t you use them.” What I’ve got to tell you is super important. I’m telling you about the kingdom of heaven. I’m warning you about the dangers to your soul.

And that is what this parable is a very harsh warning. Part of the reason that Jesus speaks in parables is to soften the blow. What he has to say here ought to cut us to the heart, but by speaking in a parable it removes us a little from the fierce wrath and judgment of God and allows us to consider the warnings.

## What are these warnings?

### 1. He warns against those who simply don't understand

#### **Some falls on the path and seed can't even take root, but it is immediately plucked away by Satan**

The Gospel is simple, it is super simple. We are evil, evil deserves to die, Jesus died for us, we get to go to heaven. It is so simple that even the littlest Child understands. "Jesus loved me so much that He stressed out His arms and died for me"

But even as simple as it is there are still many people who just don't get it. Now we are right back in our text from last week. **"I praise you Father that you have hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to infants."** Why is it a good thing that the Father kept it simple, because even when He keeps it simple most still don't get it.

And I'm not talking here about Atheists, rather I'm talking about many who say they are Christian. Jesus says, "You are forgiven," and our sinful human response is to say, "Ok what's the catch, what do I have to do?" Jesus says, "Nothing you are forgiven." "I don't know Jesus I'm pretty sure I have to do something."

One of the nice things about India is that people were always telling me how great I am. I remember one time Jyothi was introducing me at a church and he just kept going on and on, I'm pretty sure I heard him say something about bishop of Germany. But you know I was the rich white man, so of course how do you act towards rich people? You butter them up lather them with praise, hoping they will help you in return. I still get emails like that, "O great honored pastor, we miss you so much . . ." Then you write them back and the next email you get from them is, "we need \$3,000 to build a new church."

The really sad thing though is not that they do this with people. It works with people. The really sad thing is that I noticed they treated their gods, and we often treat our God the same way. By nature we expect God to act like this because this is the way that men act. But God isn't a man, he doesn't act like this, you can't butter him up with praise and think that is going to win Him over.

The gospel is so simple, "Jesus died for your sins, you are forgiven." And yet because of the hardness of our hearts we just fail to understand. Instead we always keep coming back to that question of what do I do. And when we fail to understand Satan snatches the word away before it can take root.

## 2. He warns against those who are offended by trials

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

Well we don't have to worry about this, because we all know as Joel Olsteen says, if you just have enough faith you can get whatever you want from Jesus. WRONG!!!

Jesus warns over and over and over again, that those who believe will have difficulties. Because this life is filled with sin and evil, and therefore it is also filled with pain and suffering. Jesus sets limits on the evil as we see in Job, but He doesn't stop it entirely. And we are ok with that in the abstract. It's ok when its happening to someone else. But when it happens to us, all of sudden it's "What did I do wrong? Why is Jesus punishing me?" To stand in the day of trial means you need deep roots.

I remember once when I was a child and my family was camping. And we played this game where we hid something in the woods and then the rest of the kids were supposed to go and find it. Well I was the one who got to hide. And it was something like three days no one could find it. But then one day as I watched them look I notice one brother getting close to my hiding spot. And the closer he got the more worried I became, until finally I was so sure that he was going to find it that I darted in front of him, grab the thing and ran. Of course he caught me, and I lost the prize. But if I hadn't lost my nerve he probably would not have found it.

Polycarp was a martyr who as an old man was eaten by lions. Before he was thrown to the lions however he was told that if he renounced Christ he would be released. He responded, "I have served the Lord my whole life, should I turn back now."

Luther many times in his life wrestled with doubt, how can he alone be right, how can he stand against the pope and the emperor. But he dug into the Word the of God, and because he drank deeply of that word, he had roots long and deep. And the Lord gave him the strength to stand against pope and emperor.

We may not have to deal with lions or emperor who want to kill us. But we are going to be called bigots, and we are going to be ridiculed as stupid. The new thing now is to refer to young earth creationist as "flat earthers." They say that we are "hateful, and spiteful, and ignorant, and backwards." There are many who want to even take our children and raise them in the lies of this world. How can we stand up and profess the truth of God's word in the day of tribulation? If we have not drunk deep of God's grace and love, if we do not have deep roots in His word?

### **3. He warns against those who care more for the things of this world**

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

It's important to weed the garden. If you don't either your plants or going to die, or if they don't die they aren't going to produce as much or as well. After church you can take a look at my garden over there. I have purposely not weeded it so you can see the evils of not weeding a garden. OK so I didn't do it on purpose. I just haven't had time. If my garden doesn't do well because I never get around to weeding it, it's not such a big deal. If your faith doesn't do well because you never get around to spending time in God's word, that is a big deal.

Jesus here warns us against those who make wealth their god. He warns against those who think that having money or fame is the only thing that matters. But he also warns against those who are believers but just never get around to spending time in the word, because they are just too busy with the things of this earth.

Many of you probably think that its ok, you know the Word of God, you know your bible, its not that big of a deal. And you might be right, you might remain and grow despite all the weeds you've allowed to grow up around you, although you won't produce much. But what about your children? What about the little ones whose faith is small and weak. The big plants might be able to survive despite the weeds but what about the little sprouts? Will they be able to grow in their faith if you allow the distractions of this world to keep you from spending time in God's word with them?

This is what Jesus warns against with this third and final warning.

All of these warnings we should take to heart, but there is one final thing we need to remember about this parable:

**The Sower is Jesus** – there is no way around this. All of our other readings make this very clear. It is the Lord that causes the rain to fall and the seed to grow. It is the Lord who sends out His Word and His Word accomplishes what He pleases. The Sower is the Lord.

In a secondary sense it can be the preacher, or anyone who speaks the Gospel, any of you when you share the Gospel are sowing the seed of the Lord. But it is not your word that you are speaking, if it is you are not sowing the seed of the kingdom. So it is not your word it is the Word of the Lord. So even when we are the means through which Jesus sows, it is still Jesus who is doing the sowing.

If then the Sower is Jesus, than it is Jesus who is the one who makes the ground into good ground. Does ground make itself good? Do birds or the thorns or the rocks make the ground good? No it is the farmer. The same one who plants the seed is the one who breaks the ground with his hoe. These days the “hoe” might be a 30,000 pound tractor, but it is still the farmer who is breaking up the ground so that it is not hard and the birds don’t take the seed. It is the farmer who digs out the rocks. It is the farmer who pulls out the weeds.

So it is Jesus, the sower, who makes the ground into good ground. Now this is a little beyond the scope of this parable. This parable isn’t really concerned about how the ground becomes good. Jesus point here is really just to warn us against the dangerous that would steal our faith. But we need to take note of it, because otherwise in our sinfulness we would assume that we have to go out and make ourselves into the good ground, and if we do a really good job of being faithful Christians then ok we will produce the fruits Jesus speaks of here. But that isn’t possible and it isn’t true.

The psalm, the passage from Isaiah and the text from Romans all point us instead to Christ. Reminding us that it is He alone who breaks our hard hearts, who digs out the stones, and who pulls out the weeds.

And it is for that very reason that we saw His invitation last week. Come to me and I will give you rest.

Christ breaks open our hearts to plant the Seed of His word, to cause it to grow, and to produce in us fruits 100 fold.

**Amen**

**May the peace of Christ that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**