

Jesus Is a Farmer

When explaining the kingdom of heaven to us, Jesus chooses to show himself as a farmer. He through hard work removes stones and weeds, tills, and fertilizes our hearts, so that we might be good soil bearing fruit for God.

Matthew 13:1-9,18-23 On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. ² 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. ³ Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ "And as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ "Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. ⁶ "But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. ⁷ "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. ⁸ "But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" . . .¹⁸ "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 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. ²⁰ "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 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. 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. 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."

Expectations – There is little that can ruin a relationship as quickly as false expectations. If you enter any relationship, especially marriage, expecting the other person to live up to your preconceived notions you are going to be disappointed. You are also probably going to ruin the relationship.

It's bad enough when we do this to one another. What is far worse is when we do it to God. When we come to God with preconceived notions of who he is and what he is going to do or what he should do, we are going to end up in trouble.

This is part of what God was talking about in our Old Testament reading when he said "my ways are not your ways and my thoughts are not your thoughts." In that verse he is about to tell us something truly odd and he wants us to be prepared. It is something that you are going to think this is wrong if you look at it from an earthly perspective. Yet nevertheless this is the way God does things.

We see the same thing in our sermon text. Jesus compares himself to a farmer. That is not what we would expect.

I don't know of any sports teams or schools which have chosen "the farmers" as a name or mascot. This is not the way we like to portray ourselves Yet this is how Christ chooses to reveal himself. There are plenty of teams named the Vikings or the Warriors, but Jesus is a farmer. He digs. He tills. He pulls weeds. He waters and the plants grow, little by little with time and effort.

This is who Jesus is and how he grows the kingdom of God. Jesus is the Sower and the word of God is the seed. Jesus preaches the word and the word grows.

It would be easy to think that the point and the purpose of this parable is to teach us what kind of soil we ought to be. Make sure you aren't stony. Make sure you aren't weedy, etc, but it's not. The main point of the parable is those first six words, "a Sower went out to sow."

This is what was prophesied by Isaiah, the word of God is like the rain, or the snow, or the seed. It falls from heaven and will cause growth. Jesus sows the seed and it will have an effect.

The rest of the parable explains to us the effect which this preaching has on the hearts of men. Some won't even hear, some hear but lose interest; some hear and grow but never bear any fruit; and finally some bear fruit. Yet the whole time Christ is the farmer. Christ who preaches, Christ who pulls rocks and tills and weeds and prepares a soil that is a people ready to hear the kingdom. Jesus is a farmer and we are his field.

The Hard Ground

The hard ground are those who have so hardened their hearts that they will not even listen. They have decided long ago to reject God's word. They have already decided that if God were real they know what he would look like and it isn't this farmer coming to us through his word. They have preconceived notions about who God is and what he ought to look like which get in the way of them hearing about the true God.

Nevertheless this is a parable not an absolute. It is here to help us understand the nature of the kingdom. When we share God's word why is it some simply will not listen? It is not meant as an absolute condemnation of the stony ground. Indeed Jesus still sows the seed even on the hard ground. Many commentators speak about how the seed lands on the hard ground by accident. Yet make no mistake Jesus does not preach to some by accident. Jesus knows the stubbornness of men's heart. Jesus knows when the ground is hard but he preaches anyway.

What ground is there that is so hard that no plant can ever break through? Even the asphalt and the cement break over time. Even in boulders in the mountains plants and trees find cracks and grow and

split the rock over time. So it is with men, the power of God's word is greater than the hardest heart of men and breaks open those hearts

Jeremiah 23:29 ²⁹ **"Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces?"**

And so Jesus still sows the seed even on the hardest ground. We can see some examples of this in the bible. The city of Ninevah is one example and the Apostle Paul another. Even in the face of the bitterest opposition we keep sowing the seed, because it is not we who sow but Jesus who sows through us and the power of the seed is greater than the hardness of man's heart.

The Rocky Ground

The rocky ground is the enthusiasm that is so much a part of so many churches these days. They hear God's word and respond but it is all about the emotion. It is all about feeling God's presence. They come to church not to hear and learn and meditate upon God's word but looking for an emotional experience. They are looking to be moved by God.

Their songs, their sermons, their entire service is empty of any depth because the music that moves you is more important than the words. Indeed, many of these churches will start their service with music that has nothing at all to do with God. They start with the pop music of our age because it is easy to get people in the right mood with such music.

That is not to say it is wrong to feel joyful or restful or to be moved in church. Indeed God's word gives us peace and comfort and joy, but it must be found by digging deeply into God's word not by the manipulation of external stimuli.

Again we see the truth of the words of Isaiah "my ways are not your ways." All around in our society we can see the "Mad Men" of this age. These are men who know how to manipulate the emotions. These are men who know how to make you think and want and feel good. The tactics of the advertisers work. But this is not God's way. Jesus is a farmer sowing seed. God creates Christians by the slow steady growth in his word.

The Ground of Weeds

Unfortunately we have to admit that this third group is probably the danger we are most prone to. Note that these plants do not die. These are not those who have no faith. They have roots that are deep in the soil, and the faith is growing but they produce no fruit. Why? Because they are too busy with the cares and concerns of this life. The cares and concerns of this life don't necessarily kill the faith but they keep it from producing fruit for God.

Matthew 6:33 ³³ "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

If we put the concerns of this life first, we are going to find we don't have any time for Christ. If we put Christ first we are going to find that he takes care of the rest.

Yet the bible also tells us to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesars" and also "honor your father and mother" and again "let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" and again "children are a heritage from the lord" and again "father's bring up your children in the fear and admonition of the lord." So the word of God makes it clear that we are not to hide from the world or the things of the world. We ought to pay taxes. We ought to take care of our families. We ought to have a job and work. It is a good thing to marry and have children. We ought to do the job of a parent, all the things that are a part of this world we should do them. Therefore, we cannot pull out all the weeds of this life, that is all the things that might distract us from Christ, but instead we must learn how to live with these things without allowing them to distract us from the priority which is the word of God.

We see once again how God's ways are not our ways. We would say pull out the weeds they are a danger, but God says no many of these things are good and should be, but learn not to allow them to distract you from my word in order that you may bear fruit for the kingdom.

The Good Ground

Finally we come to the good ground, and the good ground is good as any farmer will tell you because of hours and hours and hours of backbreaking difficult labor. You dig out the rocks. You pull the weeds. You till the ground so that it is not hard. You fertilize it. You do this year after year and the ground is good because you have made it good and then it produces a great crop. And so, Jesus chose the farmer as a picture of himself. If the ground is good it is because Jesus has made it so. This Jesus has done through the preaching of his word.

Thus the promise of this parable is the promise of the words of Isaiah. **"My word will not return to me void it will accomplish the purpose for which I sent it."** The word which the Lord sows amongst us will have an effect. The preaching of his word is not worthless.

We might expect the kingdom of God to have its effect instantaneously. We might expect the kingdom of God to overwhelm us in the waves of joyful ecstasy. But Jesus is a farmer. He works through his word. Through that word he gradually transforms out stony hearts into good soil. We might think that going to church and daily devotions aren't really making any difference in our life but the promise of Christ is that that word is working on your hearts to slowly grow faith and fruit.

It is our sin which will not hear the word of God. It is Christ's word of forgiveness and peace to sinners which forgives our sins and makes out of us good soil producing 30, 60, 100 fold fruit to our God. **Amen**