

LESSONS FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH- The Parables - Pt 5
Sunday, July 25th, 2021, 6:30 p.m. - Teaching # 2124
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FOUR PEOPLE WHO WENT TO CHURCH

Matthew 13:1-9 - "That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. [2] And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. [3] And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. [4] And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. [5] 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, [6] but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. [7] Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. [8] Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. [9] He who has ears, let him hear."

The very first words of **verse 1** tell us something important about the background of this, perhaps the most famous, of Jesus' parables - "**That same day...**" What day? It was the same day containing the events of Matthew chapter twelve. We have been studying the parables of judgement in Matthew twenty-four and twenty-five. Those parables deal with the end of this age and the judgment of the King as He assesses the effect of the kingdom in our lives.

Now we begin to study the **entrance** and **growth** of the kingdom. Matthew thirteen deals with the **beginning** of the kingdom in our lives. The main point of this parable is quite simple. The seed sown is the Word of the Kingdom - the message of the gospel - the **Word of God**. Jesus identifies that for us in verses 19 and 22 - **“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....[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.”**

But the Word doesn't have the same effect in every life. The potential of the Word to produce change and fruit is determined by the quality and readiness of the soil - ***the heart that hears the message.***

Now, back to the opening words of our text - ***“that same day....”*** These ideas from Jesus didn't just pop out of the air. He had encountered some ***rugged opposition*** to His Word and works the very same day He spoke this parable. And that opposition is recorded in detail in **Matthew chapter 12.**

Jesus performed miracles the day He gave this parable of the sower. The people wouldn't believe Him even though he worked wonders right in front of their eyes. The people asked Him for greater and greater signs but wouldn't hear His words ***this very day***. This was the very ***same*** day Jesus had to warn the religious leaders about ***the unpardonable sin*** - about blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

In other words, this was the ***very same day*** Jesus, in word and deed, was scattering the seed of His kingdom all over the place. People had wonderful opportunities this ***same day*** to have their hearts transformed and stretched and healed. But many ***refused to hear*** and ***refused to see***. That's why, after the parable of the sower, Jesus had some scathing words of judgement that have troubled many people:

Matthew 13:10-15 - "Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" [11] 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. [12] 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. [13] 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. [14] 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. [15] 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.'"

Now most of us who have received our theological education in the past fifty years or so have been raised under the school of Biblical interpretation known as **dispensationalism**. This is the school of thinking that God had and has **two distinct peoples** (Jews and Christians) and has **two distinct ways of dealing with them**.

Verse 11 is a key verse for this theological system - “**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.’**” According to this view, Jesus, in **verse 11**, is saying, “I’m just telling **you** guys this explanation. I don’t want anyone else to know because this isn’t for the Jewish age. These ideas are just for the church age. So I’m hiding the meaning of these truths in parables.”

If you have cut your teeth on a **Scofield Reference Bible**, you’ve been taught that you have to be very careful to divide the message, especially of the gospels, into what was given for **you** and what was given for the **Jews**. Usually, in this system, the Sermon on the Mount isn’t for the church. That’s for the Jewish age. Much of the teaching of Jesus about the end of the age is given for the Jews. It has nothing to do with the church directly.

I'm not a dispensationalist. I think it is a very popular way of interpreting the Scriptures, but must be ***forced on the text***, rather than ***taken from the text***. In **verses 12-15** Jesus tells us ***why*** His words were hidden from so many in these parables - ***“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. [13] 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. [14] 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. [15] 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.’”***

We need to remember the events of ***this very day*** to see what Jesus had in mind when He spoke those words. The idea in this parable is if people didn't ***respond to, and embrace the truth He gave them, they would lose the opportunity to receive anything more***. The religious people - the people who should have known the most - had just taken His works of healing and deliverance and attributed them to Satan. He was surrounded by people who only wanted to see Him do neat stuff, but couldn't care less about His authority over their lives.

Jesus is very clear in His words on this subject. That's why, in **verse 13**, He doesn't just say these people **do not see**. He's very careful to say, "**Seeing, they do not see.**" And He doesn't just say they do not hear, but "**Hearing, they do not hear.**" These aren't people who have lacked **information**. They are people who have **rejected revelation and truth**.

This is clearly the meaning of the words Jesus quoted from the prophet Isaiah in **verse 15** - "**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.**"

So, Jesus gathers His disciples around Him and explains the meaning of this parable to them. He does that because He's soon going to send them out with the **same** message of the kingdom that He had been proclaiming. And just as He saw the different results to His own proclamation, and just as the crowd thinned out when the demands of the His kingdom rule and reign were pressed, **Jesus was bracing them for the same kind of response when they were continuing His work.**

Now let's look at this wonderful parable. I have five points. We'll look at two of them tonight and three next Sunday night.

- 1) **FRUIT WILL ONLY COME FROM THE SEED SOWN IN THE HEART**

What Matthew records more *indirectly*, Mark records very *directly* - “**The sower sows the word**” (Mark 4:14). The seed is the Word. Everything that grows *starts* with seed. The *soils* vary, but the *seed* is constant. Even in the very best soil, nothing will germinate without seed.

Imagine the foolishness of a farmer who comes complaining about the barrenness of his land. He comes to you and says, “I’ve borrowed a small fortune to buy this land. The previous owner told me it was *good* land. But I think he lied. I’ve worked that soil. I’ve irrigated it. I’ve invested in the best fertilizers known to science. I’ve been spraying insecticides and pesticides. I’ve worked from sunrise until it was dark. ***And nothing is growing on that land!***”

You say to your farmer friend, “That’s very odd. I can’t imagine getting absolutely *nothing* for all your effort. What did you plant?”

“Plant?”

“That’s right, what *seed* did you sow?”

“***Seed?*** What do you mean, *seed?* I didn’t know you had to plant *seed!*”

If you want to **harvest**, you have to **plant**. True, as Jesus will show in this parable, there are other factors too, but for **sure**, nothing will happen without seed.

But what is obvious in **farming** is never so obvious in **spiritual growth**. People aren't as interested in **sowing** as they are in **harvesting**. They want to go to church less and less. They don't want to spend time studying the truth of the Scriptures. They find themselves too busy with other things to spend extended time in prayer and meditation. But they want good **marriages**. They want God's blessing on their **home and kids**. They want God to **prosper** their business. **Harvesting** they like. It's the **sowing** they're not crazy about.

They don't see their problems until they start to **harvest** weeds instead of fruit. And then, usually, what they want is a **solution to their problem now without addressing the neglect of the Word of truth that got them into the mess in the first place**.

That's the first great **lesson** and the first great **warning** of this parable. **Let nothing but the Word of God take center place in your life**. Let no other authority or custom or the pressure of the crowd steer your life. Root yourself, renew your mind, regulate your actions and attitudes by Divine Revelation.

Psalm 1:1-3 - “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; [2] but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. [3] He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”

The counsel of the ungodly is everywhere. It crops up like weeds and thorns. Jesus said clearly these weeds will **choke out** the place of the Word if you're not careful. But the Word of truth, properly received, will bring unlimited blessing into all of your life - “**in whatever he does he prospers.**” That's because the Word is the seed that brings growth.

2) **THE WORD WILL LOSE ITS POWER IN MY LIFE IF I BECOME TOO ENTRENCHED IN MY OWN STUBBORN PATTERNS OF LIVING**

Matthew 13:3-4 - “And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. [4] And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.”

Matthew 13:18-19 - “Hear then the parable of the sower: [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.”

Jesus tells us the enemy will steal away the seed - the Word - from our lives if it is not received with understanding. But there's a particular **kind** of understanding He has in mind. These people weren't **too stupid** to grasp the meaning of the Word. The problem was of a different **kind**.

Jesus said their hearts had **grown** dull. He said people's lives can **become** hard to God's truth. Like a path that has been packed down by lots of traffic, people get busy with the thoughts of their minds and the dreams of their hearts. The seed of God's Word is just one more thing bouncing off the surface of their lives.

Remember, Jesus isn't dealing with **atheists** here. He's talking about how people give their attention to His Word. He's talking about the crowd who have **exposure** to the Word - the crowd that goes to church. He's saying hearing God's Word is going to be a fruitless experience for many people because, while their bodies are in church, they've already become **distracted and cluttered in their affections and aspirations**.

People can become ***desensitized to spiritual truth***. People can actually pride themselves that they are not easily moved spiritually. They can hear God's truth in a ***detached*** manner.

And so, in the mind of Jesus, the first obstacle to overcome if I want to hear the Word of God unto fruitfulness, is ***lazy, indifferent, presumptuous listening***. The Word needs to ***penetrate*** my heart, not just ***land*** on my ears. This takes incredible work - ***more*** work the longer I have followed Jesus and the more I already think I ***know*** His will and way. Self-reliance can creep in. Just stay attentive at the feet of Jesus. You can't help but grow there.