

LESSONS FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH- The Parables - Pt 6
Sunday, August 1st, 2021, 6:30 p.m. - Teaching # 2126
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FOUR PEOPLE WHO WENT TO CHURCH - Continued

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."

Here are two more points of application from Jesus' most famous parable. We're picking up on point number three from last Sunday night's teaching:

- 3) **I CAN'T RECEIVE THE WORD IN A FRUITFUL MANNER UNTIL I AM WILLING TO DISPLACE WHATEVER IS IN MY HEART THAT IS CONTRARY TO ITS TRUTH**

Matthew 13:5-6 - "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, [6] but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away."

Matthew 13:20-21 - “As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, [21] 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.”

Notice that Jesus uses the word “*immediately*” twice in describing these people. They receive the word with joy *immediately* (13:5, Mark 14:16 - “...receive it *with joy*”). Then, Jesus says they “*immediately fall away*” (Matthew 13:21).

Here we have Jesus dealing with the problem of *short-lived spiritual experience and commitment*. Why do Christians backslide? Why don't all our aspirations and goals materialize? Why don't people *end up* as well as they *start out*? That's the issue Jesus is dealing with in these verses.

You can picture the problem Jesus is addressing. The seed enters and begins to germinate. There is the *emotional excitement* that comes from that inner awareness of new life and spiritual transformation.

But just as surely as the germination was **rapid**, it was also **shallow**. The roots went down into the soil, but only a short way. Then they hit solid rock. Now, nobody **saw** this going on. The leaves stayed green for a while. The **outward appearance** of the life was unchanged. But all the while, **spiritual drought and death was in the making**.

Soon the holy honeymoon was over. Trials came. People poked fun. Old friends who didn't like the look of the new life began to desert. And the new plant shriveled and died.

But the problem wasn't the persecution. This is a frequent **misinterpretation** of this part of the parable. The cause of the shriveled life **wasn't** the trial or difficulty. Those things only **manifested** what was already going wrong in the life.

Here's what happened. Somewhere, amid all the excitement of new spiritual life, the Lord began to deal with something under the surface of the life. All the while the new convert was singing choruses and giving testimony, God was trying to reach a level of sacrifice way down deep - under the emotions.

And for whatever reason, while the emotions were stirred, this person's ***will wasn't dethroned***. There are whole churches who teach people to just live by their feelings and impulses. There are whole churches who thrive on keeping people on the edge of their seats with emotional excitement. ***And there is nothing wrong with an emotional quality in our Christian walk***. But sooner or later, God's going to come to some area of my stubborn will that is as immovable and unbreakable as a rock.

Nobody else will know whether I have listened to the Lord or not. Nobody else will see how real Christ's Lordship is **under the surface of my life**. But that one issue - that one part of life where I refuse to budge, will determine my future survival.

Jesus explains why in **Matthew 13:12** - ***“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.”***

Most of us understand that Jesus, through the inward work of the Holy Spirit, speaks to our lives and plants truth in our hearts. It's the last part of that twelfth verse that's a bit harder to swallow. Did you know that Jesus will actually **take away previous benefit from His Word in your life when you cease to live in obedience to what He has revealed?**

It's not just that you won't make any further progress. That seems fair enough. But He actually **removes** what has been gained in previous years of discipleship. You don't stay at the same level. You can't.

People fail and fall in all sorts of ways spiritually. God is patient, merciful, helpful and forgiving with repentant sinners. But He is absolutely intolerant of the ***stubborn refusal to yield***. Any area of persistent unwillingness to heed the Word, will shrivel the life of the seed and destroy the possibility of abiding fruit.

4) **INTAKE OF THE WORD IS NOT ENOUGH TO ENSURE ITS GROWTH IN THE HEART**

Matthew 13:7 - "Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them."

Matthew 13:22 - "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."

When I was a kid, we used to sing the Sunday School chorus, "Read your Bible, pray every day and you'll grow, grow, grow." All in all, it was a pretty good song. But it didn't quite tell the whole truth. It isn't enough to read your Bible and pray every day. You have to be doing something else with quite a bit of courage and diligence.

You have to ***pull out weeds and thorns by the roots***. Jesus identifies two parasites that, if left to grow along side the Word, will win every time - ***the cares of this world***, and ***the deceitfulness of wealth***.

You can't just put the Word ***in***. You have to take these two parasites ***out***. Those two weeds are deeply related. They are ***immediate family members***, not ***distant cousins***. The cares of this world are the obvious centers of worldly attention - ***security, happiness, popularity, pleasure, and all-round well being***. Those are the goals of all citizens of planet earth. We all ***feel the pressure*** to achieve them.

The deceitfulness of riches comes in precisely at this point. We live in a world that is under the sway of the ***father of all lies***. And the biggest and most successful lie he tells is that ***riches is the answer to those cares of this world***. Wealth will answer to those concerns in a way nothing else can.

And here's the punch-line from Jesus. ***If you believe that, put your Bible away. It will do you no good. You can't spread the seed of the Word over the soil of that colossal lie***. Before the Word can bring its fruitful life into the soil of your mind, you must set a brush fire to the lies of the age.

This is what the life of faith is all about. Faith means rejecting anything else as ultimately satisfying or meaningful. Faith means carving out all false affections. Faith means building the goals and aspirations of your whole life around the promises of God's Word.

Faith means saying with David - **"....the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; [9] the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. [10] More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. [11] Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward."**

Without that attitude there is no point in taking up God's Word because it will constantly be ***telling you things you won't believe***. It's going to tell you to lose all of the paltry rags this world calls life. And they won't seem like rags to you. It will tell you that true joy is found in giving every ounce of energy and strength to spending your life in sacrificial, time consuming effort for Christ's kingdom. And that will seem like nonsense to you.

This Word will tell you that dying is gain for Jesus. It will tell you that you are blessed when people persecute you for Jesus' sake. It will tell you that the hunger for God is better than the hunger for riches.

None of the central truths of the Word is believable to the worldly mind. None of it makes sense to those who give as much time to the world's weeds as they do to the seed of God's truth.

Jesus says that, until the weeds are rejected as lies and ripped up by the roots, they will choke out the preciousness of God's life giving truth.

Paul says the same thing with equal forcefulness: **1 Timothy 6:9-12** - **“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. [10] For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. [11] But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. [12] Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”**

Those are such scary words for prosperous people like us. They are designed to shake us up. We're supposed to assume **we** can be blind and deceived like that. It doesn't happen over night. You don't wake up one morning and renounce Jesus because you want to become a millionaire. It happens slowly, gradually, the way weeds grow.

5) **IN A GOOD HEART, THE WORD CAN PRODUCE RESULTS FAR BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL'S OWN STRENGTH OR ABILITY**

Matthew 13:8-9 - "Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. [9] He who has ears, let him hear."

Matthew 13:23 - "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."

I used to think those measurements of fruitfulness (100, 60 and 30 fold) were fixed limits. So pastor Kent is a hundred folder, pastor Bryan, a sixty folder, and pastor Don, sorry - thirty fold. I don't think that's what Jesus was trying to say. And the fact that Mark reverses those numbers in his gospel shows that the order isn't the issue either.

Here's what I think Jesus was saying. It answers to an old fear that all of us have. And Jesus relates the power of His Word to deal with this fear: "God has things for other people, but they will never develop in my life. Other people might move on to great spiritual heights, but I'll never get out of this rut."

And then, to make matters worse, the Devil comes along to cement those feelings in our minds: “That’s right. You’re a single parent. Your kids never will turn out any good.” “That’s right. Your marriage wasn’t established on Biblical grounds. You never will find happiness with your present spouse.” “That’s right. You never will beat that battle with pornography. You’re too weak. You’ve tried before and you failed. You’ll fail again.” “That’s right. This sermon will work for other people. But it will never work for you.”

I wonder, how many millions of times in millions of ways, in churches around the world today, those words will be whispered - **reinforced** - in the minds of Christians all around the world as the Seed of the Word is planted into their circumstances. I wonder how many people will lose hope before they even start.

Please take this truth into your heart. The Word has power to multiply in your heart. True, it has to be received in faith and obedience. True, you must root out all competing counsel that would argue with God’s revealed truth. But for those who will humbly receive the engrafted Word, James says it will **save your soul!** It will multiply in power beyond all your imagination.

No wonder, at the end of His parable, Jesus says, **“He who has ears, let him hear!”** (9) That’s not just Jesus’ way of saying, **“OK fellas, listen up. I want to tell you something.”** This is Jesus telling you and me that this is the starting place for everything. It isn’t your strength or will power that will win the day. Welcome the Word. Hear it today. Embrace it with all your might. Don’t second guess your obedience to Him.

And watch the fruit grow!