

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 13TH-14TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

PARABLES (MATTHEW 13:1-17)

After Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees, He travels to the sea of Galilee, creates a makeshift podium/amphitheater out of the boat, and begins to teach a great crowd.

- Matthew 13 contains the 3rd of 5 large sections of Jesus' teaching.
- It's a collection of teachings called "parables" - a word that means "to cast alongside".

A parable is a story that is put alongside something else to help make the lesson clear.

- These parables contain, "the secrets of the kingdom of heaven" (vs. 11).
- In the NT, a "secret" is a spiritual truth understood only by divine revelation.
- "Secrets" can be understood by those who desire to learn from Jesus and obey Him.

The first parable Jesus gives is about a sower that throws out seed on various types of soil.

- The other parables that follow are specifically about the "Kingdom of Heaven", but this parable is about why Jesus spoke through parables and why some people respond in faith to Jesus and others don't.
- Upon receiving Jesus as "Messiah", the disciples were probably confused as to why not everyone recognized His identity.

They might've been thinking, "Why aren't people accepting the King & His Kingdom?"

- Jesus' first parable explains that there was no issue with the farmer (Messiah), or the seed (His message), but the problem was with the soil (the hearts of the people).
- There are more than simply two categories (believer & unbeliever) of people who have been exposed to the truth of Jesus.

There are a variety of reasons the unbelieving & faithless avoid trusting or fall away from faith.

- The problem isn't with the message or the messenger- it's that, "people love darkness instead of light" (John 3:19) and that darkness is deceptive and deceives humanity.
- Jesus even states that Satan himself is involved in this process (vs. 19).

In the parable, a farmer goes out to sow the seed.

- As he threw out seed, the seed fell on different types of soil.
- First, wild birds swoop down and devour the seed when it's barely touched the ground.
- Next some of the seeds fall on rocky soil, which couldn't sustain for long at all (vs. 5).
- Others fall on soil already choked with thorns (vs. 7).

Finally, some of the seed falls on good soil and produces a truly amazing harvest- some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (vs. 8).

- Jesus concludes this story by essentially saying, "If you don't really listen with all your heart & mind, you won't understand any of this" (vs. 9).
- His disciples want to know why He's chosen to teach through parables, so they ask Him for an explanation (vs. 10).

Jesus responds by telling them that "the mysteries of the Kingdom haven been given to them" (vs. 11), and parables are a way of giving even more understanding to those who already have understanding (vs. 12a).

- But parables also function in such a way as to take away from those who stubbornly refuse to understand, hear, or see (vs. 12b).
- Jesus wasn't purposefully trying to spiritually blind, deafen, or confuse people.

The parables reveal the nature of people's hearts in that they give light to those with trusting, searching hearts; and darkness to those with indifferent, uncaring, and unrepentant hearts.

- Another purpose is to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy, quoted in vs. 14-15.
- Jesus' parables would serve the same purpose as Isaiah's teaching- to further harden the hearts of unbelievers and bring light to those who receive the truth.

There's a way in which we can "hear" God's word without "hearing" it, and "see" God's work without really "seeing" it.

- The human heart is amazing in its capacity to convince itself of falsehood and justify itself in believing lies so we don't have to change or repent (Jer. 17:9).
- The same sun melts ice and hardens clay, and the Word of God either humbles or hardens the human heart.

AN EXPLANATION (MATTHEW 13:18-23)

So to those with humble, receptive, searching hearts- Jesus invites them to "hear then the parable of the sower" (vs. 18).

- The "sower" is Jesus, and the "seed" is the message of the Kingdom.
- The "soil" is the human heart (vs. 19b).
- These four kinds of soils that Jesus describes represent various kinds of hearts that will respond to His teaching.

SOIL #1: THE HARDENED HEART (VS. 19)

A "path" was soil that had been packed together and become hardened by foot traffic.

- This 1st kind of soil on which seed fell represents a hardened heart that hears the message of the Kingdom, but refuses to "understand" it and receive it.
- So the devil comes and snatches away what has been sown in the heart.

There are people in this life whose minds and hearts are hardened by pride, sin, rebellion against God, and self-worship.

- So when the message of Jesus is brought to them, they reject it, and Satan then plays an active role in removing and distorting the truth.
- This makes that person even less likely to accept the truth in the future.

SOIL #2: THE SHALLOW HEART (VS. 20-21)

The seed that falls on "rocky ground" receives the message & responds to it, but there's no root "in himself" enabling it to grow or develop.

- When pressure, persecution or difficulty come, that person falls away.
- Why? Because the truth of Jesus never really took hold of their heart and established roots in the first place.

It's pretty obvious that Jesus is talking about the culture of rampant "easy-believism" Christianity we have in so many places.

- Praying a prayer or getting baptized is simply an outward profession of inward faith.
- The Gospel has to actually take root in our heart- an external profession of faith void of true, saving faith will be revealed over time.

SOIL #3: THE DIVIDED HEART (VS. 22)

The seed sown among thorns represents the heart that hears the Word, but has no room for it because of the cares and wealth of the world.

- So gradually (and almost unknowingly), the thorns grow up and choke out the seed- leaving it fruitless and dead.
- There is a clear warning in this text for us as American Christians!

The desire for and consumption of money, material possessions, entertainment, popularity, and worldly success will slowly and gradually "choke out" the message of the Kingdom

- "No one can serve two masters": when we find ourselves caring more about the things of this world than the things of God- we're in grave danger.

SOIL #4: THE RECEPTIVE HEART (VS. 22-23)

The hearts that, "hear the word and understand it" are represented by "good soil".

- This is a heart that receives the truth, lets it take root, allows it to be cultivated, and watches it grow to maturity until it bears fruit.
- The measure of that fruit differs from person to person (vs. 23), but there is "fruit" nonetheless.

Fruit is ALWAYS the test of genuine salvation (Matt. 7:16). This "fruit" Jesus is referring to is-

- Holiness & Character (Rom. 6:22, Gal. 5:22-23)
- Good works & Generosity (Col. 1:10, Rom. 15:25)
- Making disciples of Christ (Rom. 1:13)
- Worship & praise (Heb. 13:15)
- Genuine believers will always be growing in these areas!

The closing admonition of this parable is vs. 9 is that we're invited to genuinely "hear" and receive God's Word with humble, repentant, and receptive hearts.

- And if we do, that Word will take root, grow, and begin to bear fruit in our lives that brings others to saving faith in Christ.
- It all begins with our hearts and if we're truly willing to "hear" the message

TWO TAKEAWAYS FOR US

1. Someone's **reception** of God's Word is determined by the **condition** of their heart- hardened, shallow, & divided hearts WILL NOT truly receive God's Word.
2. **Unless there is fruit in our lives, there is no saving faith in our hearts.** Salvation is more than a superficial profession with our lips- it must be proven in our lives!

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." (Prov. 4:23)

The condition of our heart matters.

Your ability to hear & receive God's Word is directly related to the condition of your heart.

Open Heart Surgery.