

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23: That same day Jesus went out of the house & sat beside the sea. ² & great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat & sat down. & the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ & he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. ⁴ & as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, & the birds came & devoured them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, & immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. & since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, & the thorns grew up & choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil & produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear." . . . ¹⁸ "Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom & does not understand it, the evil one comes & snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word & immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, & when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world & the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, & it proves unfruitful. ²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word & understands it. He indeed bears fruit & yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, & in another thirty."

Intro: Last Lord's Day, we saw Jesus define for us what it means to be a part of His family. We must be born again, trust Christ, repent of sin, know God, & live for Him. This is how we know we are in Jesus' family! But many people in Jesus' day did not receive Him. Many rejected Him, & many today still reject Him. Why? Jesus tells this parable about the different kinds of soil to teach His disciples that there are different kinds of hearts out there in the world. There are 3 kinds of hearts (soils) that end up rejecting the Word of God (the seed) & there is one kind of heart (soil) that receives the Word of God. What kind of soil is your heart? See God's mercy on you!

1. Jesus Taught The Crowds Using Parables

Matt 13:1-3: That same day Jesus went out of the house & sat beside the sea. & great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat & sat down. & the whole crowd stood on the beach. & he told them many things in parables

- a. Great crowds gathered around Jesus:** Crowds came to see miracles; crowds came to be healed; crowds came to hear teaching like never before; Some in the crowds came to be saved; Some came to test – Pharisees & scribes
- b. Jesus taught the crowds:** Jesus is called "Teacher" twelve times in Matthew's Gospel. Eight times the word "teaching" is used to describe what Jesus was doing to communicate truth in Matthew. He came preaching! Jesus is the supreme Sower, Seed, and Soil simultaneously! Who was the Sower in the Old Testament?

The LORD God: Hosea 2:21-23: And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, ²² and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, ²³ and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'" **(Jesus is God!) (We should be sowers too!)**

- c. Jesus taught using parables:** Earthly stories with a heavenly (spiritual) meaning – they teach & instruct using common, everyday cultural events – like a farmer sowing seed in his field. They also reveal and conceal!

2. Satan Steals The Seed From The Stony Heart

Matthew 13:3-4, 18-19: A sower went out to sow. ⁴ & as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, & the birds came & devoured them . . . ¹⁸ "Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears **the word of the kingdom** & does not understand it, the evil one comes & snatches away what has been **sown in his heart**. This is what was sown along the path.

- a. The path:** The illustration is of a dirt path that people have walked on over & over again & packed the soil down so much that it is hard, hard as rock, and no seed thrown on it can actually penetrate the soil & sink down. Therefore, the seed is exposed to the hungry, devouring birds, and they eat up the seed. There's no grain produced!

b. The word of the kingdom is the seed: The seed is the Word of God, specifically the good news about the kingdom of God that has come near in the Person and work of Jesus Christ! The King is here!

c. This kind of soil, which is a kind of human heart, does not understand the word of the kingdom: V. 19: they hear but do not understand, and the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in the heart. Every human heart starts out this way:

- **Jeremiah 17:9:** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

- **Romans 3:10-11:** None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.

- **Romans 5:10:** while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son **GOSPEL!**

d. Satan is the evil one: The Devil or Satan or the evil one – all the same evil spirit. He comes to steal!

- **John 10:10:** The thief comes only to steal & kill & destroy. I came that they may have life & have it abundantly.

- **1 Peter 5:8:** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

e. What should you do? James 4:7: Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, & he will flee from you

Ephesians 6:16: In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one

3. Rocky Roads Prevent The Root Of Righteous Religion In The Shallow Heart

Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21: Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, & immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. & since they had no root, they withered away . . . ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word & immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, & when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

a. The rocky ground: This is ground is full of rocks or very shallow soil that has rock underneath it. The seed springs up quickly, but its roots can't dig down deep so that when the sun rises, the plant dies.

b. The superficial, shallow heart, temporary follower of Jesus (who is really no follower at all): They hear the Word, they receive it with joy, but because there is no root, they only endure for a little while. Tribulation & persecution happen to them because of the Word, and they fall away as quickly as they came.

c. People can come to Jesus in a superficial way for all the wrong reasons:

Joy in being a better person is not joy in Jesus!

Joy in Jesus to get the girlfriend he always wanted!

Joy in how well a particular preacher speaks is not joy in Jesus!

Joy in the food at the church is not joy in Jesus!

Joy in the music style of the church is not joy in Jesus!

Joy in the hope of being healed is not joy in Jesus!

Joy in the promise of prosperity if you just follow Jesus is not joy in Jesus!

d. True believers who come to Christ for Christ endure to the end:

Desiring God: "“THANK YOU, NATASHA, WHEREVER YOU ARE”

One of the most moving and incredible accounts of suffering filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions is found in Sergei Kourdakov's autobiography, The Persecutor. Kourdakov was commissioned by the Russian secret police to raid prayer gatherings and persecute believers with extraordinary brutality. But the afflictions of one believer changed his life:

I saw Victor Matveyev reach and grab for a young girl [Natasha Zhdanova] who was trying to escape to another room. She was a beautiful young girl. What a waste to be a Believer. Victor caught her, picked her above his head, and held her high in the air for a second. She was pleading, “Don't, please don't. Dear God, help us!” Victor threw

her so hard she hit the wall at the same height she was thrown, then dropped to the floor, semiconscious, moaning. Victor turned and laughed and exclaimed, "I'll bet the idea of God went flying out of her head."

On a later raid, Sergei was shocked to see Natasha again.

I quickly surveyed the room and saw a sight I couldn't believe! There she was, the same girl! It couldn't be. But it was. Only three nights before, she had been at the other meeting and had been viciously thrown across the room. It was the first time I really got a good look at her. She was more beautiful than I had first remembered — a very beautiful girl with long, flowing, blond hair, large blue eyes, and smooth skin, one of the most naturally beautiful girls I have ever seen . . .

I picked her up and flung her on a table facedown. Two of us stripped her clothes off. One of my men held her down and I began to beat her again and again. My hands began to sting under the blows. Her skin started to blister. I continued to beat her, until pieces of bloody flesh came off on my hand. She moaned but fought desperately not to cry. To suppress her cries, she bit her lower lip until it was bitten through and blood ran down her chin.

At last she gave in and began sobbing. When I was so exhausted I couldn't raise my arm for even one more blow, and her backside was a mass of raw flesh, I pushed her off the table, and she collapsed on the floor.

To Sergei's shock, he later encountered her at yet another prayer meeting. But this time something was different: There she was again — Natasha Zhdanova!

Several of the guys saw her too. Alex Gulyaev moved toward Natasha, hatred filling his face, his club raised above his head.

Then something I never expected to see suddenly happened. Without warning, Victor jumped between Natasha and Alex, facing Alex head-on.

"Get out of my way," Alex shouted angrily. Victor's feet didn't move. He raised his club and said menacingly, "Alex, I'm telling you, don't touch her! No one touches her!"

I listened in amazement. Incredibly, one of my most brutal men was protecting one of the Believers! "Get back!" he shouted to Alex. "Get back or I'll let you have it." He shielded Natasha, who was cowering on the floor.

Angered, Alex shouted, "You want her for yourself, don't you?"

"No," Victor shouted back. "She has something we don't have! Nobody touches her! Nobody!"

. . . For one of the first times in my life, I was deeply moved . . . Natasha did have something! She had been beaten horribly. She had been warned and threatened. She had gone through unbelievable suffering, but here she was again. Even Victor had been moved and recognized it. She had something we didn't have. I wanted to run after her and ask, "What is it?" I wanted to talk to her, but she was gone. This heroic Christian girl who had suffered so much at our hands somehow touched and troubled me very much.

The Lord later opened Sergei's heart to the glorious good news of Jesus Christ. As he later reflected on Natasha, whom he never saw again, he wrote:

And, finally, to Natasha, whom I beat terribly and who was willing to be beaten a third time for her faith, I want to say, Natasha, largely because of you, my life is now changed and I am a fellow Believer in Christ with you. I have a new life before me. God has forgiven me; I hope you can also. Thank you, Natasha, wherever you are. I will never, never forget you." (**Job; Woman in Eritrea; Our members**) (**Pray that God would keep you!**)

4. Thorns Threaten Thrifty Thanksgiving & Thrust Aside Thirst For God On The Throne In The Strangled Heart

Matthew 13:7, 22: Other seeds fell among thorns, & the thorns grew up & choked them . . .²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world & the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, & it proves unfruitful.

a. The seed that fell among the thorns: This seed fell on soil that was infested with thorns so when the plants grew up, they were choked out by the thorns and died.

b. The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word of God:

1) Cares of this world: What cares do you have? Job; children; money; rent; food; house; bills; school; etc.

2) The deceitfulness of money: **1 Timothy 6:6-12:** Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment,⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.⁸ But if we have food and clothing,

with these we will be content. ⁹ 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.

- **1 Timothy 6:17-19:** As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Ligon Duncan: I had the privilege of hearing Howard Deaton speak at a retreat this weekend and he told a story that was so intriguing, I had to ask him about it afterwards. He said that a friend of his had recently been approached. He'd built up a business from a small business to a large business, and he had recently been approached by a would be purchaser who offered him \$5 million for his business. Now Howard said, if someone came up to me and offered me \$5 million for my business, I probably would take it without thinking about it, but he said, "I want to think about it for a while. I want to do some research on that." And so his friend decided that he would go around and ask other people who had had their personal businesses sold for \$5 million or more, he would ask them what life had become like, or been like, after the sale of their businesses. It was interesting. He went to 19 people, all of whom had sold their businesses for \$5 million or more. Each of them had sold that business in order to spend more time with their families, in order to enjoy the fruit of their labor, to be around their wives and their children more, in order to enjoy the blessings of this life. Seventeen of the 19 were divorced; 12 of the 19 were divorced within the first year of the sale of the business. Nine of the 19 were professing Christians, 3 fairly committed Christians; 8 of the 9 Christians were divorced, 4 in the first year. Now, I don't know those folks and I don't know what was going on there, but I do know this – for those Christians at least – something looked like it was going to bring happiness and satisfaction that didn't. I don't know anything else about it. I pass no judgment about anything else, but I do know that something looked like satisfaction but didn't bring it. Preoccupation with this world and the deceitfulness of riches choked out the root of faith and, my friends, the tragedy of that story is – the horrors that have happened to those families are only symptomatic of deeper problems of eternal significance.

c. None of these soils are Christian soils: They all hear, but none of these hearers truly & genuinely follow Christ

If you truly repent of your sins, believe in Jesus, and follow Jesus, you will keep trusting Him, keep obeying Him, keep following Him and bear fruit until you die.

- **Hebrews 3:14:** For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

- **1 John 2:19:** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

5. Good Hearts Happily Hear, Humbly Heed, Heartily Hope, And Bear A Heavenly, Hundredfold Harvest

Matthew 13:8-9, 23: Other seeds fell on good soil & produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

⁹ He who has ears, let him hear." . . . ²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word & understands it. He indeed bears fruit & yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, & in another thirty.

a. The seed that falls on good soil: It produces a great harvest of grain: a hundred, sixty, and thirty fold.

b. The good soil: those who hear the Word of God, understand it, and bear fruit: They hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, are born again, repent of their sins, & believe on the Lord Jesus Christ & are truly & genuinely justified! They are united to Christ, adopted into God's family, filled with the Holy Spirit, & bear fruit!

c. God will use His Word to save all He intends to save: Jeremiah 23:29: Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

- **Isaiah 55:11:** so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Charles Ray: A woman in Scotland, who was determined as far as possible to have nothing to do with religion, threw her Bible and all the religious literature she could find in her house upon the fire. One pamphlet fell out of the flames, and the woman hastily threw it back. But it fell out a second time, and again the woman committed it to the flames. Half the pamphlet was consumed when the remainder slipped into the hearth again, and the woman, picking it up, exclaimed, "Surely the devil is in this tract, for it won't burn." Out of curiosity she glanced at the paper, found it was one of C. H. Spurgeon's sermons, read on, and was converted by its means.

d. What does the fruit of the believer look like? 1) Repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

2) The fruit of the Holy Spirit: Galatians 5:22-23: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control . . .

3) The fruit of obedience to God's Word: John 14:15: If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

4) The fruit of reproducing: Matthew 28:19-20: Go therefore & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

5) Abide in Christ: John 15:5: I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Andreas Kostenberger: Abide in me means to continue in daily, personal relationship with Jesus, characterized by trust, prayer, obedience, and joy.

John Piper: you're called to something awesome! It's what this text is all about! Hearing! . . . Think about how you hear! Think about how you hear! Think about how you hear! Think about how you hear! Think about how you hear! Don't assume hearing is easy! Don't assume hearing is a small thing or a simple thing or an easy thing or that it just comes naturally. It doesn't! Hearing is huge! It's just as huge as preaching! There's a calling on your life on the weekend! Hear the Word of God! There's a calling on your life! You think I've got a calling on my life on Friday & Saturday? You've got a calling on your life on Friday & Saturday! What do you do on Friday & Saturday to get ready to do this great thing?! Sure I've got to do my job, but this text is all about how my job is futile if you don't do your job. Do you see that? This text is all about you! This text is all about your high calling to hear the Word of God!

In John 12:21, some Greeks came to Philip and said: "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Jesus is the supreme Sower, Seed, and Soil simultaneously! And He is that Seed that would die, be put into the ground and rise to produce much fruit!

Christ Jesus Is And Sowed The Seed
He Is The Word We Are To Heed
The Greatest Sower Who Will Plead
Repent And Trust And You'll Be Freed
From Sin And Hell, It's True Indeed
For Jesus Took God's Wrath Decead
To Save Our Souls He'd Die And Bleed
Then Rise Again To Life He'd Lead

He Won't Let Satan Truth Impede
The Rocky Soil He'll Change With Speed
All Thorns He'll Crush And Cleanse And Weed
He'll Make Good Soil Guaranteed
By Faith Alone We're Just And Feed
Upon His Word, He Is Our Creed
We'll Bear Much Fruit In Word And Deed
For Christ Is All! Our Every Need!