

Matthew 13:1-9 New Living Translation (NLT)

Later that same day Jesus left the house and sat beside the lake. **2** A large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat there and taught as the people stood on the shore. **3** He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:

“Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. **4** As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. **5** Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. **6** But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn’t have deep roots, they died. **7** Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. **8** Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! **9** Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”

18 “Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds:19 The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don’t understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. 20 The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. 21 But since they don’t have deep roots, they don’t last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God’s word. 22 The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God’s word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. 23 The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”

Leader: The Word of God for the People of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

Open Hearts

7.16.17

Opening Story

Jesus told many stories.

WHY did Jesus tell this story?

Why did He tell ANY stories?

He used real life situations to make a simple point.

Jesus told simple stories to teach a basic truth or principle.

“The parable is a short story, not an allegory, and ... is told to convey one basic point.”

“... a parable is a story to be heard... not a manuscript to be studied...”

“Stories have a way of separating people. Some hear and some do not; some catch the meaning and some miss it. Jesus chose the parable as a teaching method...(to) separate those who were honest and sincere about understanding the kingdom from those who were only curious or were critical of His ministry.”

(Communicator’s Commentary, Matthew, © 1982 Word, Inc; Myron Augsburger, NT Vol 1; ch. 5 “The Parables of the King”; pp. 166 - 183)

“Seeds of Love” - Arthur Maxwell

“One day as He was talking to a great crowd of people on the shores of Galilee, He tried to make them see why they should listen carefully to what He was saying...”

“As He spoke, in full view of everyone, a sower was going about his lonely task in a nearby field. This gave Jesus the idea for a story.”

“The seed... was the Word of God: the seed of Love (you might call it!) for that was the word that Jesus had brought from God.”

“(LOVE) was the heart of His message...the wonderful ‘seed’ He was scattering. But it would help none of them if they did not understand and believe it. So, they must listen, think, study and decide.”

“Some in the crowd had hearts as hard as the (Path). The moment a seed of love lodged in their minds the devil would snatch it away.

“Others would agree with His teaching and begin to put it into practice, but if someone laughed at them for doing so, they would (quickly) give it up. The ‘heat’ would be too much for them.

“Then there were those who would follow the better way for a little while, but the ‘cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches’ would choke their good resolutions as weeds choke good grain.

“Some, however, not only would accept His message but would try to understand it. They would study it, ... think about it, and pray about it. In so doing, they would catch a vision of God’s wonderful plan to save them, and this seed of love would produce a mighty harvest of good.

“As He scattered His seeds of love, He hoped that they would fall into many willing, friendly hearts and bring forth a (great harvest) [for] the glory of God.” (“The Bible Story,” Arthur Maxwell, © 1975, Review and Herald Publishing Association; volume 8, Part III; story 1 “Seeds of Love” pp. 103-105)

Interestingly enough, this story, commonly known as “The Parable of the Sower,” implies the work of the Sower or the Preacher. The interpretation a few verses later, however, focuses on the different soils.

“... the sower casts ... seed evenly over the ground...”

“Some (seed) falls on the paths which passed through the fields for ... travelers...”

“Some (seed) fell where the underlying limestone rocks were near the surface, limiting the amount of soil for plant growth;

“Some (seed) fell where cultivation had not destroyed the roots of thistles, and wire grass would grow rapidly and choke out grain;

“But some (seed) fell on good ground and yielded a good crop...” (Communicator’s Commentary, Matthew, © 1982 Word, Inc; Myron Augsburger, NT Vol 1; ch. 5 “The Parables of the King”; pp. 166 - 183)

Matthew 13.23 - “The four types of soil represent the different responses we can have to God’s message. We respond differently because we are in different states of readiness.

Some people are hardened, others are shallow, others are contaminated by distracting cares, and some are receptive.”

How has God’s Word taken root in your life?

What kind of soil are you? (NLT Life Application Bible, © 1990 Tyndale House Publishers; Matthew 13.23; p. 921)

The Four types of soil represent four types of persons.”

“First... the INDIFFERENT... allow the word to be lost from memory while other things receive more attention.

Second... the SHALLOW... have hidden agendas and other priorities which prevent in-depth understanding.

Third... the CLUTTERED... lives are filled with the interests of this world and whose materialistic ambitions choke out the convictions of the Kingdom.

Fourth... the RESPONSIVE... welcome the Word... hunger and thirst after righteousness...”

(Communicator’s Commentary, Matthew, © 1982 Word, Inc; Myron Augsburger, NT Vol 1; ch. 5 “The Parables of the King”; pp. 166 - 183)

“The parable shows that the sower expects fruit, knowing that the variety of soils will determine His crop.”

“We keep on sowing the Word, believing that the harvest will come, but recognizing the freedom of the hearer to be open and responsive to grace or ... to resist the Spirit.”(Communicator’s Commentary, Matthew, © 1982 Word, Inc; Myron Augsburger, NT Vol 1; ch. 5 “The Parables of the King” (pp. 166 - 183)

Matthew 13 ~

The seeds that fell on the PATH ~ HEARTS that are hard, unreceptive

The seeds that fell on ROCKY SOIL ~ HEARTS that are shallow, superficial

The seeds that fell among the THORNS ~ HEARTS that are divided, distracted (Worries of Life, Lure of Wealth)

The seeds that fell on GOOD SOIL ~ HEARTS that are fertile, fruitful, open, receptive

In what condition are we today to receive God's message? How is your heart?

HARD, SHALLOW, DISTRACTED, OPEN?

IWW will you respond to God's Message of love and grace?

As you examine your heart and your priorities...

In what ways will your life be different?

What will you start, stop or do differently?

As a congregation...

what is our primary purpose or mission?

why do we exist? for whom do we exist?

What does God want or expect of us?

On Whom are we focusing our resources ~ ourselves or the community and world around us?

How do WE, as a congregation, respond to God's Message of Love and Grace?

Are we HARDENED? SHALLOW? DISTRACTED? OPEN/RECEPTIVE?

Friends, God's Word comes to us in many ways. Spoken word. Sometimes printed word. Living Word. God is speaking to us... or trying to speak to us.

Some of us may be like the hardened footpath. Hard hearts. Closed hearts. Stubborn hearts

Some of us may be like the rocky soil. Shallow hearts. Lacking depth. Avoiding conflict.

Some of us may be like the weeds or thorns. Divided hearts. Distracted hearts. Conflicted hearts.

Some of us may be like the fertile soil. Open hearts. Receptive hearts. Disciplined hearts.

It is up to us to be open and receptive.

Therefore, Let us hear the Word, accept the Word, Believe the Word, Act on the Word, so that God might use us to spread the Good News of Love and Grace to anyone, anywhere in need. Amen.