

- 1 **What Soil Are You? (Part 2)**
Mark 4:13-20 NLT
- 2 **First things first: Notice the title of this message.**
 - As I emphasized in part 1, the title should read, "What Soil are You?", not "What Seed are You?"
 - I thought I made a mistake once, but I was wrong.
- 3 **In Part 1 we learned about parables.**
- 4 **We asked "what" are they and "why" did Jesus use them.**
 - Are they just interesting stories used to hold interest?
 - Or, are they something more?
- 5 **The word "parable" literally means "to set alongside".**
- 6 **As Jesus used parables, it means to set a spiritual truth alongside a daily truth of living.**
- 7 **Yet, parables, are different. In their spiritual use, they are more like riddles or puzzles than easy illustrations.**
 - Think about illustrations compared to parables: A good teacher illustrates by stating a truth, and then *illustrating* the truth through a story or an analogy.
 - But when Jesus used parables, He didn't start by stating a truth but with the story itself.
 - The story was like a doorway. Jesus' listeners stood at the doorway and heard Him.
 - If they were not interested, they stayed on the outside. But if they were interested, they could walk through the doorway, and think more about the truth behind the parable and what it meant to their life.
 - Jesus had this in mind when he said ...
- 8 **12 ... 'When they see what I do, they will learn nothing. When they hear what I say, they will not understand. Otherwise, they will turn to me and be forgiven.'**
- 9 **By quoting this passage from Isaiah 6:9, Jesus explained why He used parables.**
 - Parables offered His hearers the opportunity to dig deep and find the truth, or to turn a blind eye to an interesting story.
 - And here's the important point: Jesus didn't use parables to blind people, but because they were blind.
 - As the great New Testament scholar, G. Campbell Morgan said, "Jesus used the parabolic method, not in order to blind them, but in order to make them look again; not in order to prevent them coming to forgiveness, but in order to lure them toward a new attention."
 - So that's the first thing – parables were meant to lure people to a new attention.
- 10 **And here's the next thing: if you don't understand the *key* to the parable, you don't understand it at all.**
 - They can only be understood by those who have right "key."
 - And none of them could understand the *spiritual* meaning until Jesus explained the key to them.
- 11 **And what is the key to the parable of the sower and the soils *The sower sows the Word (Mark 4:14)*.**
 - If you miss this key, you miss the whole thing.

- If you think the seed represents money, you miss the parable.
- If you think the seed represents love, you miss the parable.
- If you think the seed represents hard work, you miss the parable.
- You can only understand it by understanding the key: *The sower sows the Word.*
- And what is the Word? The whole message of Jesus and his kingdom.

12 **Now Jesus explains what this parable's about?**

13 **14 The farmer plants seed by taking God's word to others.¹⁵ The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away.**

14 **Some people are like the ground on the pathway.**

- This was hard ground because people walked on it all the time, and beat it down into a path or a road.
- People like the footpath are hard to the Word of God, and they allow no room for the seed of the Word in their lives - it never enters.
 - Take note: It is important to see that Satan doesn't want the Word of God to take root in a person's heart.
 - Like a bird swooping down and snatching a seed, he wants to "remove" the seed of the Word from the "soil" of a person's heart.
 - This is Satan's preferred result. He wants to keep the Word from ever taking a place in a person's life, so they can never be fruitful to God.
- As Warren Wiersbe says, "Hard hearts must be 'plowed up' before they can receive the seed, and this can be a painful experience (Jeremiah 4:3; Hosea 10:12)."

15 **So what kind of soil are you?**

- Are you the kind where the message of Jesus can't even get in?
- Hard soil. The seed of the Word just stays on the outside.
- Jesus says, "Satan soon swoops in like a bird" and pecks up the seed.
- And off he goes with it.
- The Word never even penetrates.
- What kind of soil are you? Does the Word stay on the outside, never having a chance to penetrate your heart?

16 **16 The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy.¹⁷ 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.**

17 **Some people are like the ground that is rocky, but covered with a thin layer of topsoil.**

- They receive the seed of the Word with a flash of enthusiasm that quickly burns out.
- When tribulation or persecution arises for the Word's sake, immediately they stumble: The "stony ground" hearer isn't attacked directly by Satan, but by tribulation or persecution.
- Jesus knew that many have an immediately favorable reaction to the word of God, but they give it up quickly when it becomes tough to follow Jesus.

18 **Notice that Jesus says they "don't have deep roots."**

- Some professing Christians have no root in themselves. Their root is in their parents, or in the Christian friends, or in the pastor, or in enthusiastic surroundings.
- As Charles Spurgeon, the great British preacher said, "They seem to have been baptized in boiling water; and unless the temperature around them is kept up to that point, they wither away . . . the religion that is born of mere excitement will die when the excitement is over."

- 19 **So what kind of soil are you?**
- Are you the kind mixed with rock and just a thin layer of soil?
 - The Word springs up quickly, only to quickly die when trials come.
 - Do you have faith, only when conditions are favorable?
 - Do you follow Jesus, only when others are following?
 - What kind of soil are you?
- 20 **18 The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's word, 19 but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced.**
- 21 **Some people are like the seed that fell among the thorns.**
- They receive the Word but allow the interests and cares of this world to choke it out.
 - We might say this ground is *too* fertile.
 - The word of God grows there, but so does everything else.
 - This is "equal opportunity soil". It needs a good dose of Preen, wouldn't you say?
 - The problem is, soon everything else begins to crowd out the Word of God.
- 22 **Are you like this kind of soil?**
- You listen to the Word, the message of Jesus – but you listen to everything else as well.
 - You give equal attention, or even more attention, to the worries of this life. Your focus is mostly there.
 - You give equal attention, or even more attention, to those sparkly, shiny things – things that seem to offer security and significance.
 - Most of your attention goes there: So the Word of Jesus has little chance to take deep root, to grow and flourish. It's choked out by other things.
- 23 **20 And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's Word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"**
- 24 **Some people are like the good ground, and they accept the word, and bear fruit, thus fulfilling the purpose of the seed.**
- This parable shows that when the Word is received as it should be, *something happens - fruit is produced*.
 - If nothing happens, then the Word is not being received as it should.
 - The message of Christ is meant to grow and even multiply in our lives.
- 25 **So, Jesus asks the deepest and most personal of all questions: What kind of soil are you, you, you, and you? What kind of soil are I?**
- This parable applies to those who are hearing the gospel for the first time but also applies to those who are already saved and who continually hear the Word of God. How do you hear it?
 - Do you let Satan take it right away?
 - Do you take it in but then immediately ignore it?
 - Do you allow the cares of this world to make your hearing of the Word of no effect?
 - Or, do you keep the Word and see it bear fruit in your life?
- 26 **As Cole says, "This parable deals with the problem that is greatest of all to the thoughtful mind: how is it that the scribes and Pharisees can so misrepresent Him? And how is it that His kindred and disciples can totally fail to comprehend Him? Why does not the hearing of the doctrine produce the same result in every heart?"**
- 27 **What kind of soil are you?**