

Soils

Luke 8:4-15

Central Idea: We must receive God's word with great joy and stick with it.

Introduction

As we start our evangelism series this week, I want to focus on the characterizations the Bible gives for the lost. I Believe that if we took to heart with the Bible says about the lost, we would make more of an effort to reach them for Christ. Today, we will focus on the four different types of soils that the word as a seed must be implanted in.

Now I'm not much of a green thumb, but I know that soil is one of the major factors in how a plant grows. Jesus tended to use images that were familiar to his audience, and there Were many farmers there to hear him teach. Through the image that the farmers would understand, he taught them about the different ways the word of God is received among people. Let's take a look at the only parable in the Bible that has its interpretation with it. This parable is given interpretation, and all other parables are understood through this method that Jesus gives us to read the parables.

Text – Luke 8:4-15

⁴ And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, ⁵ “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶ And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. ⁸ And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” ⁹

And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, ¹⁰ he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’ ¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. ¹⁴ And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and

riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵ As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

I. The Trampled Word

A. The Word is given to those who hear.

- i. As one of the first parables Jesus ever taught in His ministry, this parable is important to us because it outlines how the parables are to be interpreted in the future.
- ii. In fact, He actually tells the disciples the reason He teaches through parables between the parable and its interpretation. The interpretation shows us how we are expected to understand the spiritual meaning behind the images of the parable.
- iii. It starts with Jesus' outline of four different types of soils that a farmer sows his seed in. Each soil has different circumstances that change the result of the crop.
- iv. Jesus goes on to explain that parables are what He will use to dispense spiritual truth so that the people will hear, but not understand. This is a quote from the prophet Isaiah.
- v. The idea of hearing and not understanding sounds counter-productive, but that is not the reason Jesus uses parables. He uses them because they have familiar images for the common people in Israel, and because these concrete images demonstrate in the natural spiritual truths.
- vi. Part of the goal of a parable is to weed out those who cannot see the spiritual truth or the implications of the natural truths that lead to the spiritual truth. It is not that the parables are impossible to interpret, but that those who do not see spiritual truth will "hear and not understand."
- vii. So Jesus gives us the key to the whole parable when He defines what the seed is. The seed the farmer sows represents the Word of God, the Gospel. The farmer, then, is God Himself.
- viii. Jesus wants people to hear and understand, for at the end of the parable, he calls out, "He who has an ear, let him hear." This is a call to everyone, since everyone has ears!
- ix. **Application:** How often do we allow God's Word to go in one ear and out the other? As people of God's Word, it is imperative that we give it priority in our lives and that we cherish what He has to say to us. Time and effort spent in hearing and understanding God's Word is never wasted!

B. The devil steals the Word so they don't believe.

- i. Isaiah 55:11 tells us that God's Word does not return void. The Word of God does not fail. It accomplishes what God wants it to. Not one of these types of soils denies that the Word is preached.
- ii. But they all demonstrate different circumstances that cause the Word to not last. The first is the most harsh in that the Word does not even get a response.
- iii. The Word of God is heard, but it goes in one ear and out the other. The people don't really respond to it, other than passively hearing it. It's not interesting to them. It doesn't tickle their ears or their fancy.
- iv. The Word of God is not given to entertain us. It is the truth about us and our situation before a holy God. It is a wake up call, a subtle noise that brings us out of the haze of our lives. It enlivens us so we can respond to God.
- v. These that don't receive are along the beaten path. They're the ones looking for something new and interesting. They're not looking for commitment.
- vi. The devil is credited with their lack of desire to respond to the Word. These are people who have had an opportunity to hear the gospel, and yet, the devil has stolen it from their hearts. They react to it as foolishness.
- vii. In our day, these are the hard-line atheists, the ones who not only refuse to listen to the Word, but actively fight against it and make fun of it. They are held back from believing, and they are lost forever.
- viii. **Application:** There are people in the world who will not accept the Gospel, and more than that, they will fight against the Gospel. They refuse to hear it and are blinded by the enemy, working on his side, and sometimes willingly. We must be aware that this is a possibility, even though we have such good news to share. Don't allow them to destroy what God is speaking through you!

II. The Withering Word

A. The Word is received with joy and for a while.

- i. The second image is that of the seed that is sown among the rocky ground. This is also not an ideal situation for the seed to take root and grow in the listener.
- ii. There is a bit more of an opportunity for the seed here, for there is not constant traffic and interchange of competing ideas or religions, as on the path.
- iii. Yet there are two key necessities lacking among rocky ground. The first is that there is no way to take root, for the rocks crowd the roots that go into the soil.

- iv. Another reason for this is that there is no moisture among the rocks. The needed water to keep the plant growing and developing is missing, and the plant has no choice but to wither away in the scorching heat.
 - v. These are people who receive the Word of God with great initial joy. They are zealous for God early on and their passion for Christ puts others to shame.
 - vi. They are like a brightly burning nova star that has just begun, and yet without the proper nutrients, water, and deep roots, their flash is short lived, and they cannot withstand the challenges ahead.
 - vii. Introduce adversity, and they crumble like a house of cards. These Christians lack the firm foundation a root system would give them, and the nutrients from rich soil. The rocks keep them from truly digging in.
 - viii. **Application:** We should never allow anything to distract us from digging deep roots in the Word of God and in our faith in Christ. Don't let someone destroy your faith with erroneous and deceptive arguments. Stand your ground and fight for God's Word! Look for resources that help you give an answer for the faith you have in Christ.
- B. Circumstances help them to fall away later.
- i. Because they lack a strong foundational root system and the nutrients like water, the scorching sun destroys the plant, and it withers and fades away until it is dead.
 - ii. There are many distractions in our world, and if we are not careful, we could find ourselves in rocky soil. So many storms and temptations and trials could derail the work of God in us!
 - iii. These are like giant towers of a plant that seem strong and fortified, but with such a small root system, a wind will blow them away. Without constant nutrients and resources, they are destroyed by the battering of adverse winds and powerful waves.
 - iv. They can't take the heat because they are not prepared. So how do you keep from becoming a withered plant in Christ? There are several ways to resist trials and stand fortified against what may come.
 - v. First, your root system must be a priority. There is no better root system than being disciplined to read and study God's Word regularly and often, to pray and have a rock solid (no pun intended), living and breathing, vibrant relationship with Jesus, and to be connected with other saints who are going through the same things you are.
 - vi. Second, you need moisture and the proper resources to be prepared for the storms that will come. These come in the form of resources that help you not only strengthen your own faith, but to know what you believe and why.

- vii. Without the foundation and resources, you will encounter a trial, and you will find yourself slowly withering away, being eaten up by the arguments that nag your mind, and beaten up by the waves of trials and persecutions.
- viii. Without a good foundation, you will be knocked out before the fight ever begins. You cannot stand if you don't have a foundation. You cannot fight if you don't have energy and resources.

III. The Choked Word

A. The cares of life choke the Word.

- i. The third type of soil that the seed is sown is a soil that is more rich in nutrients, and yet because of the thorns and weeds, the plant is stunted in its growth and eventually is choked out.
- ii. The thorns are with the plant the whole time it grows. They are a hindrance from the moment the seed is sown. They represent the cares of this life, the problems that we all have, the struggles of our walk with God, the entangling sins.
- iii. And these hindrances are everywhere in our world. The cares of this life are important to us, and present a true struggle, such as surviving in this world, our job, our schedule, our families and all other things that are part of our life.
- iv. These things are not evil, but they can choke our relationship with God if we give them more of a priority than God wants us to. This does not mean that we can ignore them at all, but that we must not make them competitors with God in our lives.
- v. There are other weeds that can choke our relationship with God, such as Jesus specifically mentions riches and pleasures as well. These are a struggle because we are all seeking blessing and prosperity, especially in America.
- vi. But these things can become idols, or at least impede our growth in God. When we allow one of these other things to take precedence, we let them hinder and destroy our relationship with God.
- vii. **Application:** What are you chasing today? If it's not a deeper relationship with Jesus, then it's probably not worth the time and effort. It won't last. The pleasures of this life pass away with this life. They don't follow us into eternity, but they make great weeds to choke our walk with God!

B. The fruit does not mature.

- i. This hindrance is deeper than just a surface distraction. It makes sure that the normal fruit that we would bear is either not present or minimal at best.

- ii. They hinder every part of growth, not just distract in one area. They are so ingrained into who we are that they can hinder our walk on a deeper plane than just keeping us from doing something.
- iii. They constantly hinder us. Every time that we want to volunteer for something or minister in some way or help others, they are the things that keep us from doing that on a consistent basis.
- iv. Some of these can be evil, such as a sin that entangles us, continues to impede our ability to grow and serve. But others are situations that we must maintain.
- v. **Illustration:** I'm reminded of the rich young ruler who could not give up his wealth to completely surrender to God. He thought he was a master of his walk but found that his riches kept him far from God's complete and whole destiny for him.
- vi. The fruit is both the character God is developing in each of us, and the deeds that we do to glorify His name. These weeds will choke and malnourish the plant so that it cannot reach its full potential.
- vii. **Application:** Let go of the cares of this life. They are not as important as Jesus. They will not take you as far as Jesus will, and they do not last. Don't waste your best years of growing in God on the things that keep you from reaching your full potential in God. Get rid of sin. Arrange your schedule according to godly priorities. Make God and time with Him first in your life, and you will not be hindered in going deeper in Him.

IV. The Growing Word

A. The Word is accepted and cherished.

- i. The final type of soil is a nutritious and healthy soil, a good soil that fosters growth and development. It allows the proper environment for the plant to grow into its full potential and be complete in Christ.
- ii. When the environment is right, the fruit is certainly there, and not only mature, but multiplied. When we are in that sweet spot with God, our fruit shows it. We're "in the zone" in our service to God.
- iii. We're like a sponge, sort of like when we first came to Christ. We soak up every good teaching and are careful to not burn ourselves out. We balance our service with our study and while being fed, we feed those who are where we used to be.
- iv. There seems to be a grasping or seizing of the gospel for those who are in good soil. Their heart is open to the Word and they respond with fervor just as much now as they did at first.
- v. This soil allows us to "become perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Perfection is not some unattainable goal, but rather the full maturing in Christ that God predestines us to as we are conformed to Jesus' image.

- vi. In other words, perfection isn't about not able to ever get there, but about being complete in God's plans for you and your life. Each of us will have a different "perfection" in God, because He tailors His plans to your person and uniqueness.
 - vii. Perfection is exemplified in Jesus Christ, not in other saints or any other place. If you want to see what God's finished product looks like, look to Christ.
 - viii. In the growing process, we are not complete, not fully what we will be. But the environment of the good soil fosters our growth into that destiny. It nourishes us at just the right moments in just the right ways.
- B. The fruit is borne with patience.
- i. As we develop in Christ, the outer fruit will become evident, like the fruit of the Spirit, our character and our actions becoming those of Christ. When people see us, they can't tell the difference between us and Jesus.
 - ii. This is the maturing of our fruit, both inner character and outer works. The works are not done to save us, but are byproducts of our passionate and vibrant relationship with Jesus.
 - iii. So we find ourselves in just the right soil for such a time as this. And we enter into our world and we influence it for Christ. We show Him in every aspect of our lives.
 - iv. The Word so readily accepted is cherished, honored, treated with the utmost respect, because it introduced us to Jesus. Our love for God is not just talked about, but demonstrated.
 - v. We come to a place in our walk with God where we are fully efficient for His kingdom. He can use us easily and readily. And in this time, we are still growing and learning!
 - vi. Jesus wants to use each of us, and while it's true He will use us in virtually any state that He finds us in, He doesn't want to keep us there. There is growth in Him and development. He doesn't want to use a blunt instrument. He wants to use a finely crafted tool that produces the Master's work just as He sees fit.
 - vii. **Application:** Jesus is looking to make you and me His crafted instruments. Paul put it like this: We are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. Can Jesus readily use you? Are you ready to come in off the bench and play your heart out until Christ returns? Have you gripped God's Word so firmly, and bought into His plan for your maturity so much that nothing will deter you?

Conclusion

This teaching of Jesus calls us to excellence and depth in God. This message of Jesus in this parable doesn't say that you can just wade in the water of Christianity up to your ankles or even your knees. Nope. Even going in to your waste is not enough. Jesus wants you to dive into God's plans for you and immerse yourself in His Spirit and His Word and grow furiously toward His purposes for you. He needs you in the fight now. The training will be on the job and the teachers will be everything from your trials to other believers that God will use to deepen your perfection in Him. Are you ready to serve? Are you ready to go deep and commit yourself unabashedly and recklessly to Jesus' cause?

Perhaps you are not in the good soil right now in your life. You have struggles and you find distractions everywhere. I want to encourage you today to focus on Christ and to make an active decision to let nothing deter you. Commit to one thing beginning this week. Like lifting weights, you don't start at 250 pounds. You start where you can, and you add a little weight when you get stronger. So start with one area, like Bible reading, or service, or prayer. Do it consistently. Once you've mastered that, cut out a little more time for it, and let it become part of who you are. Let it become indispensable.

Finally, maybe you're not even a believer. Maybe you're one of those that Jesus first mentioned, where the Word doesn't even have the time to truly take root in you. I want to pray for you today, and if Jesus is using this to call you into a relationship with Him, then I'd love to talk with you and become part of your root and resource to grow deep in Him!

Action Points

- Don't ignore the Word of God, but rather hear it with an open and humble heart, trusting in God to guide you every day.
- Don't wither in the wind. Stand firm for your faith and develop a firm foundation to stand against the storms of life.
- Don't allow the cares of life to choke the promises of God away from you. Kill those weeds before they kill your relationship with God.
- Look for good soil and bear much fruit. Apply God's Word to your world and don't back down.