

Our Place at His Place

Loyal Soil
October 4, 2020

Welcome to where we're learning to give God a good and noble heart!



Do you have a green thumb? Or do you struggle to keep your plants alive?

Well, as *good* gardeners are well aware: **it's all about the soil.** I like *plastic* plants ... they thrive in my neglect! Once, when Jesus was speaking to a large crowd, He told them a parable about a farmer who sowed some seeds in four different types of dirt ... but only one produced a healthy crop.

In the parable of The Sower, Jesus simply and brilliantly portrays all those who hear His Word as four kinds of soil. And in so doing, simultaneously reveals Satan's deception regarding our reception regarding God's Word. And, it makes sense that we're the dirt; because the Lord formed Adam from the ground, and ...

He is mindful that we are but dust. – Psalm 103:14 NAS

So when it comes to the “soil” of your heart, **what are you giving God to work with?**

Hindsight being 20/20, most believers mistakenly believe that Jesus always used parables to make His message simple and clear. But, clearly the opposite is quite often the case. Just after Jesus told the crowd the parable of The Sower, the disciples privately asked:

“Why do you speak to the people in parables?” He replied, “The knowledge of the **secrets of the kingdom of heaven** [what you and I might call the “deep wisdom” that God enjoys concealing, and that His children are called to seek and find like treasure (Prov 25:2; 2:4-5); the knowledge of the secrets] has been given to you, but not to them. **Whoever has** [this knowledge] will be given more, and he will have an abundance. **Whoever does not have** [this knowledge], even what he has [which isn't this knowledge] will be taken from him. [Because it's his own thing] – Matthew 13:10-12 NIV

And this “**abundance**” only comes through **desire** and **pursuit** and **perseverance**. Therefore:

Anyone who comes to [God] must believe that He exists *and* that He rewards those who *earnestly* seek Him. – Hebrews 11:6 NIV

Jesus is into com'parables, because **parables require pursuit**. They seem disarmingly simple, till you really try to make all the pieces fit. For instance, in the parable of The Sower, it's very easy to forget that **we're the dirt, and not the plant**. It's recorded in three Gospels, with each version containing unique bits that must be taken into account.

Not to mention Jesus' explanation, which occurs at a different time and location; and this is *also* recorded in three Gospels, with each containing unique but oh-so-necessary pieces. So, I harmonized the three accounts of the parable. Then I harmonized the three accounts of Jesus' explanation. And then I synthesized the explanations within the illustration of The Sower. You see, **spoon-fed religious head-knowledge is for Pharisees!** Where's the fun in *that*? **For Dad's kids, it's got'a be an adventure!** So let's read the parable (Mark is blue; Luke is green), with Jesus' purposely piecemealed explanations inserted in real time throughout.

He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching [or should we say: sowing] said: "Listen! [Know why? Because He's sowing God's Word in their ears; to see what it does in their heart] A farmer went out to sow his seed [the Word of God (Lk 8:11)]. As he was scattering the seed [God's Word], some fell along the path, and it was trampled on, [because the dirt on the path is hard and impenetrable] and the birds of the air came and ate it up. [And snatched away what was sown in their heart, (Mk 4:15; Mt 13:9) and so goes God's Word on the hard-hearted] Some [of God's Word] fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. [They receive the faith immediately and joyfully (Mt 13:20)] But [impulsively, emotionally, and superficially (Mk 4:17)] when the sun came up, [trouble or persecution, because of God's Word (Mk 4:17)] the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no moisture because they had no root. [And so goes God's Word in the hasty heart of those who quickly fall away (Mk 4:17)] Other seed fell among thorns, [life's worries, riches, pleasures, and desires (Lk 8:14; Mk 4:19)] which grew up with it and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. [You see, the ground is fertile, but mismanaged, in the distracted heart; so they fail to mature, and God's Word fails to bear fruit (Lk 8:14; Mk 4:19)] Still other seed fell on good soil. [Those, Jesus says, with a noble and good heart (Lk 8:15)] It came up, [because, unlike the hard heart, their heart received it (Mt 13:23), and God's Word] grew [because, unlike the hasty heart, their heart retained it (Lk 8:15)] and produced a crop, [because, unlike the distracted heart, their heart persevered (Lk 8:15); and God's Word matured in their noble heart] multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times more than was sown." Then Jesus called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." [And we'll see where it goes from there] – Mk 4:2-9; Lk 8:5-8 NIV

So now let's put this analogy into action, by applying it to our heart.

Some people are like seed along the path, [from their ears to their heart] where the Word is sown. As soon as they hear it, [it's in one ear and out the other!] Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. – Mark 4:15 NIV



Closed heart. closed mind. Concrete path. **Do you have an impenetrable heart?** A result of your past? Your pride? Maybe a misguided sense of self-protection? Oh, **how much they lose, who refuse to consider** what might just lie outside the lies they've chosen to blindly trust. And the enemy swoops in – in different forms – and says, "You're not seriously considering something so beneath your dignity and intellect? Do you need a crutch?" Or whatever. And the heart puffs up and pushes God's Word aside. And then the enemy says, "Hey, if you're not gonna eat that, mind if I have it?"

Is that *you* in any way, shape, or form, with anything concerning the Lord and His Word? If so, you should really think about **softening your heart** and **opening your mind** to His voice.

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” – Psalm 14:1 NIV

Are you sure there’s nothing more than what we can perceive with our five senses and limited perspective? Sure there isn’t a greater reality? **Sure enough to bet your eternal life on it?** Even now the enemy’s swooping down to try and extinguish that spark of life knocking at your heart.

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the Word planted in you, which can save you. – James 1:21 NIV

‘Cause **you’re about to be robbed of all that could’ve been**, without ever even knowing; because, so goes God’s Word from the hard-hearted, before it’s ever even given a chance.

Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. **[It tickles their ears]** But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the Word, they quickly fall away. – Mark 4:16-17 NIV



It was common for shallow soil to conceal the stone beneath the surface. This dirt holds the heat, causing the seed to sprout quicker, but also water to *evaporate* quicker, and plants to *wither* quicker. These are those who emotionally, impulsively, welcome God’s Word with open arms and short-lived enthusiasm. Sound familiar? Well, **is your soil a bit shallow?** You know, truth has sunk in a bit, but **its roots haven’t reached the core of your being** and your identity. That’s why **the first to germinate are often the first to terminate!** I’ve learned all too well, that whatever we receive out of emotion alone, we’ll soon reject out of emotion alone.

Know how to tell how deep you’re roots reach? Turn up the heat! The depth of the genuineness of our faith is revealed in **how we respond when the heat is on**. That’s when those around you get to see firsthand whether He’s just **part of your life** or **Lord of your life**.

Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. – James 1:22 NIV

Listen carefully *and* take to heart *all* the words I speak to you. – Ezekiel 3:10 NIV

Anyone who listens to the Word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ... goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. – James 1:23-24 NIV

If faith is based on feelings, and not rooted in His Word, then just as **the heat that germinates, terminates**, so too the trials and troubles that drive us *to* the Lord can drive us *from* the Lord. Which is why **we must train our roots to reach for truth before that next trial comes**; that way our faith will not only survive but thrive under all conditions and in any circumstances. **Cultivate your faith**. And **increase your depth**. And **extend your roots**. Or you’ll die on the vine right when it was time for you to blossom.

Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but **[there's too many things ringing in their ears]** the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. – Mark 4:18-19 NIV



These folks haven't *lost* their faith, just misplaced it under all the urgent distractions that try to smother us on a daily basis. **Is your soil overcrowded?** Does it need some weeding? Daily pressures, preoccupations, and problems will always tempt us to supplant the **truly important** with the **loudly urgent**.



So, beware of the busyness of the briar patch. Remember making a land-line call and getting the dreaded: "We're sorry, all circuits are busy now. Will you please try your call again later." If you're old enough to remember it, aren't you glad *that's* a thing of the past?! Sadly, **Dad still gets that recording**. From you, and me, **unless we assign Him a personal, high priority, private line**.



Wealth isn't bad, just distracting. As are families, hobbies, and sports – they bless ... *unless* they crowd in, crowd out, and take over. **We each have a limited bandwidth**. Where's the Lord at on your priority list? **Are you giving Him proper attention?** Or do you need to pull some weeds?

I passed by the field of a sluggard, by the vineyard of a man lacking sense, and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles ... I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction. – Proverbs 24:30-32 ESV

In a nutshell: **we must prune them or they'll ruin us**. Because I can guarantee you this: **if He's not supreme, we will be distracted**. Whatever we're doing in our day-to-day lives – family, friends, job, school, sports – we must approach and embrace *without* losing our focus on our faith in the shuffle; but **always in all things keeping Him first and foremost in our heart**. And in this way, **"normal" life becomes a loving partnership with Jesus**. Easy to say. Hard to do. *But ...*

We are God's fellow workers; **[and]** you *are* God's field, – 1 Corinthians 3:9 NIV

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way **they** **[the seedling verses of God's voice struggling to grow in our heart]** **are choked** by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and *they* do not mature. **[And therefore, neither do we]** But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who **hear** the Word, **retain** it, and by **persevering** produce a crop. – Luke 8:14-15 NIV

[So] Love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of the Lord stands forever." – 1 Peter 1:22-25 NIV

If, that is, you have the heart for it. **The hardened have no desire to grasp what they hear**. Do you? How so? **The shallow have no plans to grow what they grasp**. Do you? How so? **The distracted have no discipline to tend what they grow**. Do you? How so? So when regarding His sowing, **beware** of what keeps it from sinking in. **Prepare** for the heat by *digging* in. And **declare** it *supreme* over everything that day by day comes creeping in.