

WHAT KIND OF SOIL ARE YOU?

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 Text vs. 23 *“The seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”*

One day, Jesus was walking along the seashore of Galilee when joined by a lot of people. In fact, there were so many He had to get into a boat and go offshore to teach them. He began with the *Parable of the Sower*. And the people along the shore appeared to Him to be good examples of the different types of soil He was about to describe. So, He began. He described the Sower of the seed as Himself. The seed was the Word of God. And the different types of soil represented the different kinds of people who would hear His Gospel. And whether they would accept what He was saying. The first three soils represented *lost souls*. The fourth kind of soil of which He spoke represented someone who had truly been saved. Jesus said, some seed sown by the Sower fell along the *wayside*. Meaning the path of life that was so hardened by foot traffic that it was hard for the seed to get into the ground.

What He was saying was, those standing along the side of the road were like what's called today as *'Sunday Believers'*. They believe in God. But their faith isn't rooted deep enough in His Word to produce any good thing for the Lord. They hear the Word. But then they don't do anything about it. Because what they hear, they don't understand. Now the word *“understand”* means, *to put together, or to comprehend*. To them, the Gospel makes no sense. So, it's rejected.

Then, some of the seeds fell onto stony ground. Hard ground. Like walkways and driveways paved with gravel. The seed falls in between the gravel. Takes root. A plant springs up. But the sun kills the plant because its roots are not deep enough to get the nourishment it needs to survive. Jesus said this was like someone who heard the Word, received the Word, but didn't grow spiritually because of troubles. The Greek word for this is *“skandalizo”*. It's where we get scandal. Something morally or legally wrong which brings shame or causes public outrage. We're seeing a lot of that in our politics today! And because of it, a person becomes ashamed, and literally falls away. They backslide.

Then, Jesus said some seed fell among thorns. Thorns are *predator* plants that kill other plants. Their roots move in and steal the nutrients in the soil away from the roots of other plants. Jesus said this is like one who hears the Word, believes the Word, receives the Word, but because of *worldly cares* turns away from the Word. They become *unfruitful*. Indifferent. And *indifference* can choke out excitement for the Lord.

It's like where we are now! On the edge. Like British author Aldous Huxley wrote in *Brave New World* about what could happen to society if things go wrong. Or the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas who in his poem *“Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night”* wrote that you meet death not peacefully, but with righteous rage! Maybe that's where we are? Entering the *Great Apostasy* at the *End Times* spoken of in the Bible. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 calls it the *“falling away”* - - *“the rebellion.”* And that's what apostasy is. An abandonment of the Truth. The Bible says *end times* will include a wholesale rejection of God. A *“falling away”* of an already fallen world.

It's when people don't go to church like they used to. They don't call on the Lord like they used to. That is, until something really bad happens to them. They get sick. A loved one dies. People don't come to church because they have to work. Then they don't come to church, because they're too tired from working. They don't come because they must wash the car. Wash the clothes. Clean the house. Mow the lawn. Go fishing. The question is, why can't those things be done during the week?

Then, Jesus taught about the *good soil*. Soil that's tilled. Watered. Ready to receive the seed. Free of rocks and thorns so it will produce a *bumper crop*. One hundred times more than what was planted. Jesus told them *that's* the kind of soil the one who *hears* the Word should be. One who *Believes* in the Word. *Receives* it. And lives by it. But why don't people want to spend time with God? Why don't they want to come to church? Why don't they want to serve Him? To give? To praise? To witness? They don't read the Word. They don't spend time with God, now. But when they die, they hope to make it to Heaven. Somebody's fooling themselves! If someone can't make time for God now, how can they expect Him to make time for them, then?

Bill Broadhurst was a great long-distance runner. He entered a 10k race in Omaha, Nebraska. (That's a little over 6 miles.) It was a race Bill Rodgers could win in less than 30 minutes. Bill Rodgers was an American Olympian runner. A former marathon record holder. Best known for his victories in three straight wins in the Boston Marathon. And four straight wins in the New York City Marathon. But Bill Broadhurst had a handicap. He was paralyzed. His entire left side was paralyzed from an aneurism early in his life. But he still loved to run! And for him, to be in the same race as his hero Bill Rodgers, well, it was the greatest thing he could imagine. Now, banners that had been put up before the race, had been taken down. Traffic that had been stopped for the race began flowing again on the roads. Nothing was left that would tell you a race had just been run. Except for one thing! Bill Broadhurst was still running. The race had begun two hours earlier. And Bill Rodgers had finished the race. But as Bill Broadhurst was nearing the place where the finish line would have been, a

couple of kids on bikes riding alongside Bill said, "Hey mister, are you still running the race? It's been over for two hours. Someone's already finished and won. Why don't you quit? The race is over!" Bill Broadhurst replied, "I can't. I have to make it so I can see my hero at the finish line". And he kept on running!

As he approached the place where he knew the finish line would be Bill Rodgers, and about thirty people stepped out from an alley and placed a banner up in the street. They strung a ribbon across it. And as Bill Broadhurst stumbled across that makeshift finish line, there stood his hero, Bill Rodgers. He took the winner's ribbon from around his neck and placed it around the neck of Bill Broadhurst and said, "you are a winner!"

Now, back to Jesus. What type of "soil" are you? What type of soil best describes you in Jesus' story? Maybe you're like that hardened path. You've never really understood what Christianity is all about. Sure, you've gone to church. Yes, you've heard sermons. But they just don't seem to connect with anything in your life. If that's you, then you need to ask God to help you understand the Gospel. Ask Him to open your spiritual eyes so you can embrace Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. He will answer that prayer!

Or perhaps, you're like the rocky soil. At one time in your life, you made a profession of faith in Jesus. But since then, you have come to realize you were just going through the motions. Maybe you repeated a prayer someone asked you to pray. And you went forward in a revival. Maybe you were baptized. But you've never really trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Is it too late! No! Turn to Jesus today! Maybe you're like that thorny soil. And if asked, "Are you a believer?" you would say, "Yes, I'm a believer in Jesus Christ. I'm a Christian." But, if you are really honest with yourself, you would have to admit, Christianity is way down on your priority list. There are a lot more things that take up your time and energy. You just don't have a lot of time left for anything. Your faith has been choked out. The worries of your life have weighed you down. If that's you, it's not too late! With God's help, you can start cutting away some of those thorns. You can begin getting your priorities straight. It's not always easy to do that. But you will be glad you did!

Now, if you're like the good soil that's producing a crop. And if you're the good dirt living for the Lord. That's great! Praise God for that. But if you're like any of the first three soils, come to the Lord today. God will give you all the benefits and rewards which come from your commitment. It goes back to that verse in Matthew 13 where it says, you must first *hear the word. Grasp it. And then understand it.*

But there are still people like that man who saved up enough money to take a cruise across the Atlantic. The trip cost him his entire savings. He had only enough money left for peanut butter and crackers to take on the trip. When he arrived in England, the ship's steward was at the gang plank thanking people for coming. He shook the man's hand and thanked him. The man said, "It was a great voyage. Next time, I am going to save enough money so I can eat the food I saw in the dining hall." The steward looked at him! In somewhat of a shock, he replied, "Didn't you know, sir? The fare you paid for your passage, paid for all your food as well?"

In the movie *The Natural*, Robert Redford's character is lying in a hospital bed. Sick. Discouraged. About to give up. It's the last game in the play-offs. And he's not there! In the story, he was poisoned by the woman he thought he loved. Then, his childhood sweetheart, played by Glenn Close, comes to visit him. Bob's feeling sorry for himself. Baseball's his life. He's thirty-nine years old. He just made it to the majors. The doctor just told him he will never play baseball again. Glenn Close tells him, "I believe we have two lives. The life we learn with. And the life we live with."

So, ask yourself. Which life are you living? Are you living the wonderful life you learned that God has planned for you? Or are you like the man on the cruise ship? You're not living the life Jesus planned for you, because you haven't understood! Ask yourself, "What kind of soil am I?" "*The one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.*" Well, if you are, hang on because you ain't seen nothin' yet! Be like Bill Broadhurst who said, "I can't give up. I have to make it so I can see my hero at the finish line". Live so you will see your Maker when your life is over!

Be like the soil that's well watered by God's Word. Well prepared by your personal trials. You've been walked on. You've been worked over. And now you can say, "I am ready for planting!" Be the best soil that's ever been made. Because when you're mixed in just the right proportion you can be molded by hand. God's hand. Let the Lord mold you, so that when trials come your way, you don't crumble. Let God constantly reshape and mold you into the good soil. Then, you will be prime soil. Ready for His life to be lived through you. Have a willing heart. Have a committed will. Have a sincere confession. Have an abiding devotion.

Then, you will be the soil that lets God not only sprout and grow in you, but you will produce a ton of spiritual fruit for God. Be "*someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.*" AMEN