

## The Kingdom: Living Within: Part 7

After two weeks of introduction about why Jesus uses parables as a tool to communicate with His people, we finally started our study on the first of eight parables. Let's jump right in and get started with where we left off by reading the parable of the Sower and the Seed again.

### **Matthew 13:3-9**

And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. "Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. "But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. "Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. "And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. "He who has ears, let him hear."

### **Matthew 13:18-23**

"Hear then the parable of the sower. "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no *firm* root in

himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. “And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. “And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

When we first stared at this, we established some definitions: 1) The seed represents God’s word (**Luke 8:11**), Jesus uses the metaphor of the seed to represent a complete presentation of His Father, the Word, Himself and the gospel message with nothing left out; 2) The sower is Jesus; 3) The sower “went out” to plant and that included four potential surfaces: A) The hard soil/foot path; B) Rocky soil; C) Thorny ground; and D) Good soil. We discussed that the seed or God’s word is complete and perfect in and of itself yet it interacts and responds to its environment. The type of soil does not change that the seed/Word of God is absolute power, absolute, and harbors potential for life; however, it does impact the seeds capacity to thrive and be fruitful. Remember, in this parable Jesus is laying groundwork for us to understand the way the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world coexist and interacts.

Let’s quickly talk about soil in general. The soil is a metaphorical representation of where mankind is willing to meet God. It is not by chance that some pour sap walks on the hard soil when Jesus sows the seed; make no mistake, he doesn’t unfairly miss the goodness of the fruitful soil. No, the soil represents one’s

willingness to believe truth and it is indicative of the two way street of relationship with God. This is why Jesus keeps saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” because it is our choices which determine the soil upon which the seed is sown (**Matthew 13:9**).

Let’s step back for a moment. I have always heard these parables addressed through the lense of evangelism where each person is representative of each different type of soil, as if a person is one soil or the other. But I want you to consider the possibility of all these types of soil existing within your own heart; in fact, it has become very real to me that our hearts are the true context of this parable. All the soils have the potential to be present within our soul pushed up against each other and sewn together like a patchwork quilt. Our “hearts” are fenced off and divided into these different types of soil based upon our own individual willingness to receive the Word of God.

As we study these soils, think about how they relate to you. And remember, even in the presence of all of that unsightly soil (the hard, rocky, and thorny soil) there are patches of good soil. But we must not ignore the unsightly soil just because there are areas of our life where we are fruitful and productive. In fact, one of the reasons we do need to deal with the bad soil is that we are meant to be like Jesus not a shadow of Him (**Psalm 119:1-4; Romans 8:5-9, 29; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 4:11-13; Philippians 2:5, 3:8-11**).

### **John 13:15**

“For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

Another reason is that not dealing with this is the nature of someone who is lukewarm which is a very spiritually dangerous place to stay (*Ezekiel 13:5; 16:30; Hosea 6:4, 10:2; Matthew 7:26-27, 26:41; Ephesians 4:14; Revelation 2:4, 3:2*).

### ***Revelation 3:15–16***

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

So, as we study each soil, be wise and listen carefully because this message is about the condition of our very own hearts; and the Lord wants us to deal with unsightly soil and He does not want us to be complacent nor unconcerned.

The seed sown beside the path (or in *Luke 8:5* on the path) is a picture of those who hear the Good News about the Kingdom and don't understand it. In this lack of understanding the evil one comes and takes the word by snatching the seed away to prevent them from believing and being saved (*Luke 8:12*). Why does this happen? Because this soil is not fertile ground for the seed of God's word to penetrate. The path represents the "way of life" which a person chooses; and they traverse over that path again and again until it is a well-worn and hardened pathway (*Matthew 7:13, Acts 13:10; Hebrews 3:10; 2 Peter 2:15, 2:21; Jude 1:11*). So it is not only a tangible road of practical decisions and choices, but it also reveals your relationship with absolute truth.

Luke states that the seed on this soil was "trampled under foot" (*Luke 8:5*). In the Greek, trampled means to treat with rudeness and insulting neglect. So the

seed is inconsequential to those on this path; and it has no perceived purpose in this setting (**Matthew 5:13; Matthew 7:6; Hebrews 10:29**). The parts of your soul that have been hardened by your own will, your own wisdom, and your own sense of right, wrong, truth, and power have no need for the Word of God. The Word is inconsequential, it does not plant, and it is entirely ignored. You have what you want and your path is well trod and you will not leave that path.

Lastly, when it comes to the hard path we have the birds that come and steal the truth away. According to **Luke 8:12** the Devil is the one who comes and takes the seed. We know from our studies of the Kingdom that the Bible uses birds as a metaphor for demons (**Revelation 18:2; Mark 4:3-4,14-15; Matthew 13:4,19; Ephesians 6:12**). In this parable, the birds basically come to eat the seed because it is theirs for the taking. It's easy food for them and has been left behind. So this seed is falling on very hostile territory and has zero chance of propagation. The enemy has great victory here and this is a very spiritually dangerous place to dwell.

We have to ask ourselves why the Lord would drop His seeds in this place if this is the where the Enemy will have victory? I want to argue that this is because He is just. In His justice He gives everyone the opportunity to know Him in every part of their life even though He knows who will choose Him and who will not (**Romans 1:18-21, 2:11, 14-15**). I'm not even sure the people with the hard soil recognize the seed for what it truly is. They shrug their shoulders at it, not connecting to the treasure of truth that lies before them. Their minds are darkened by generational sin, self-sufficient arrogance, and ignorance.

**Romans 1:18–21**

But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. They know the truth about God because He has made it obvious to them. For, ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.

So even though their minds are dark the Lord keeps all of His promises to reveal Himself. Individually, God continues to drop the seeds of His word on the hard soil of our hearts because He wants us to be free from the bondage of that hardness. And when it is all said and done, everyone will know that they had the chance, they had the opportunity and God did not leave them out; rather, they just loved the security of their little path.

***Luke 13:6–9***

Then Jesus told this story: “A man planted a fig tree in his garden and came again and again to see if there was any fruit on it, but he was always disappointed. Finally, he said to his gardener, ‘I’ve waited three years, and there hasn’t been a single fig! Cut it down. It’s just taking up space in the garden.’ “The gardener answered, ‘Sir, give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I’ll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer. If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down.’ ”

God gives us room to change. We are His people and in making us His people He gives us the power to defy the spiritual odds of the hard soil and recover from that darkness if we so choose. I know that it's much easier to think about this soil as only applying to the thick headed people out there who will never call out to Jesus as their Lord, but this applies to us here and now. Pray and ask Jesus to identify the hard soil of your heart where God continues to throw the seed of the Word. The "farmer" from the parable of the fig tree is advocating for more time for us to change, but what responsibility do you take? Scripture warns us over and over again about the dangers of hardness of heart (***Exodus 8:19, Exodus 9:12, Exodus 10:20, Isaiah 6:10, Psalm 17:10, Psalm 95:8-9, Proverbs 28:14, Zechariah 7:12, John 12:40, Romans 2:5, Ephesians 4:18, Hebrews 3:7-15, 4:5-7***).

The hard soil/path is very spiritually deserted. Remember, the perspective of the hard soil although brutal does not actually render the Word of God powerless, it only perceives the Word as powerless. Our God has dominion over everything in and outside of all creation and time, and that power is not cancelled out or overrun by perspective or ignorance. If you want to change, He will bring forth the change; but again, you have to want Him to do whatever it will take to turn over this soil and make it into soil that can be productive (and keep in mind that is often a very violent process requiring a lot of digging and hoeing and preparing, and it takes some time). But you cannot legitimately say that the Word of God does not work for you even though you see it work for others. He will do the work if you want Him to, for that is one of His promises. And remember, He always does what He says. Consider this passage in ***Ezekiel***.

**Ezekiel 36:26–27**

And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.

Every one of you that has His Spirit, everyone who is the Beloved, have been given this new heart (the *New Creation*) and now He is doing just what He promised to do: take out your stony, stubborn heart. He is turning over the soil but you get to decide if you want to cooperate with Him or resist Him. I encourage you to please stop resisting this work and let Him complete His promise to you.

Let's move to the second type of soil in **Matthew 13:20-21**. The seed on the rocky soil represents what happens to God's word for those who hear the message and receive it with joy. Unfortunately, their joy is not enough to stand up against ANY pressure or opposition, and they end up getting "scorched" under the stress. The rocky soil was unable to hold sufficient moisture and when the seeds "sprang up" they had nothing to sustain their growth. Jesus uses the sun as a metaphor to describe both affliction and persecution, which He says is because of the Word; and in **Luke 8:13**, He refers to this pressure as presenting a time of temptation. In the Greek "affliction" is defined as pressure. This word is used to describe several different kinds of pressures: 1) Tribulation of believers (**Matthew 24:9, 21; Romans 5:3, 12:12; 2 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; Revelation 7:14**); 2) Time of famine (**Acts 7:11**); 3) The trouble that accompanies getting married (**1 Corinthians**

7:28); 4) The anguish of child birth (**John 16:21**); and 5) Emotional pain of the heart (**2 Corinthians 2:4, Philippians 1:17**). The other scorcher, persecution, turns out to be just plain old persecution for believing the truth. So this affliction and persecution wear one down to be pushed too far and be tempted to give up. Affliction and persecution are a part of life, especially as believers.

### ***Romans 8:35-36***

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.")

### ***Luke 8:13***

***"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away."***

In this particular situation it may seem like these people are set up to fail but they are not. It is part of our responsibility to fight against temptation and to fight for what we believe. When Jesus says, "they believe" this is a *present active indicative* response. They actually believe and that is a statement of fact. But, both "receive the word" and "fall away" are in the *middle voice* meaning that the people made a decision to go ahead and receive and to go ahead and fall away. However, when they believed, they truly believed and that was a bona-fide act of faith for

these people. Yet in the time of temptation they fall away. Of course discouragement and disillusion will come along attempting to dismantle your constitution to press on, that is why Jesus consistently warned His people of this reality.

***Matthew 26:41***

“Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

***1 Corinthians 10:13***

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

In light of these verses, we need to take personal responsibility for fighting against the temptation of “falling away” in our own lives. Everyone loves to be saved. It just feels so good, warm and safe. Of course the seeds “sprung up.” The Good News is really good news! But no true belief can be sustained if it is founded on an emotionally charged experience. The components of faith are knowledge and active belief not good feelings. And that is why the seed on the rocky soil fails. There is no depth of soil; there is no real foundation. So then what? Life is difficult, challenging, and it always will be especially for believers who have been appointed

to share in the sufferings of Christ (**1 Peter 4:12-13; 2 Corinthians 1:5; Romans 8:17**). This is all very inconvenient and exhausting to people who really enjoy the euphoria of a joyful moment but give out when things aren't comfortable or easy. Typically, they checkmark God off as another thing that didn't work for them and they willfully fall away because it's too hard and the temptation to give up overwhelmed the will to persevere.

In my opinion, the rocky soil is the most terrifying soil of all. It is SO conditional. Life and death flip flop too carelessly for the ground to foster anything long-term. Unfortunately, I believe the rocky soil is one of the most prevalent soils in the hearts our body right now. Some of you have an archive of false starts when it comes to letting God's Word have power in your life. The springing up of seeds can create an illusion of a life lived for God because of the abundance of short lived euphoric experiences, but in reality it's just a field of burned up seedlings. Cultivated truth produces consistent and reoccurring fruit of the spirit. This soil is serious business for us right now especially with the attack of delusion on our body. It is critical to understand if you know what you believe or if you are riding the wake of everyone else's belief? Do you make others lead because it's too hard to actually live a convicted life? Are you quick out of the gate with the "concept of the week" at Pathway and then piddle out quickly thereafter? The answer is yes; and I can say that because I have watched it. Many of you have heard me say that anything that is truly valuable takes hard work and fight. Precious things don't come easily and if they do they are a sham. It doesn't take a hero to fight for something valuable and special it just takes someone who will not give up on what is true.

**2 Corinthians 12:10**

Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

**James 1:12**

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

Let's think about the rocks preventing the seeds from getting a firm root. I believe these are all the areas of wrong belief about God that are strewn all over and seriously clutter up your land. And with all that wrong belief lying everywhere, it is no wonder you don't believe in His Name. You know the truth, you can quote the truth, but the truth does not produce in you the fruit of sustained life. Your land needs to be excavated and you need to remove every one of those stones no matter how big they may be. Like the turning over of the hard pathway, this is a laborious process; hence, the temptation to quit and give in. What you need is endurance. The ironic thing is the Bible says that these very pressures (the affliction and persecution) are the very tools which God uses to build in us endurance. Consider this passage in **Romans**.

**Romans 5:3-5**

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Thus, we must stop running from the pressure of persecution and affliction. These are God's beautiful tools to build in us the very endurance we need to remove the rocks in our soil.

***Hebrews 10:32-36***

Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever. So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! **Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will.** Then you will receive all that he has promised.

You need endurance; thus, you need affliction and persecution. You need the pressure, for if you let it have its way in your life you will receive all that He has promised. This is so wonderful. I hope you agree with me and agree with the Lord.

The Lord gave us a word on Thursday night that I believe is right on target with

this whole concept. It said:

Jesus takes me to a time and a place that seems to be both in the past as well as the future. He tells me about how so many people that truly love Him have always been (and will be) physically hurt, beaten, whipped, thrown into prison. He tells me that this may be some of our realities. He wants us to be prepared for anything, so that we can find our strength and identity in Him, no matter what may happen. He wants even this delusion of what our lives could look like on earth to be lifted.

We all know that our “delusion” is based on all manner of wrong belief about God—the rocks. Thus, we choose to believe the lie of delusion instead of betting our lives on the truth. As a result, we simply do not grow up to be fruitful and productive in His Kingdom. And I believe that we love our delusion because we hate the pain that comes with the pressure of affliction and persecution. But this is what Godly people have always experienced and yes some of us will as well. This is a privilege. As Paul says, we get to fill up, or complete, the sufferings of Christ (***Colossians 1:24***) as we suffer in our physical bodies. I believe it is time we accept and embrace this wonderful privilege. It is clearly the destiny of some of us here, so one-way-or-another we are going to have to accept it. Let’s wrap our minds around this reality.

You don’t have to remain as one of those people who never seem to produce any kind of lasting fruit. You can let the pressures which God brings into your life

accomplish their purpose. You can choose to take each circumstance and consider God. What does His Name reveal about His character and about who He is to you? Then you can choose to bet your life on it instead of continuing to let His Word be squeezed out in your life by all the rocks. When you choose to believe His Name He will remove these rocks, you will remove these rocks, and His Word will be able to drive its roots deep into your heart and you will grow and experience the joy of life. Not just the temporary joy and euphoria of an “experience” with God, but the joy that is a lasting fruit of the Spirit. As I look around this body, we have a lot of work to do and there are a lot of stones that need to be excavated and removed. Going back to that verse in *Romans*, I want you to see how it concludes:

***Romans 8:35-36***

Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”). **No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.**

Overwhelming victory! That is what I want to know and that is what I want each of you to know. Christ is our victory for He loves us. Let’s agree with His goal for our

life—to be found in His image—and gladly remove those rocks and every area of wrong belief and unbelief that is in contention with this goal.

We will pick up next week with the thorny soil.

Let's pray.