

The Kingdom: Living Within: Part 8

Last week in our study of the parable of the *Sower and the Seed* we studied two of the four types of soil, the hard path and the rocky soil. I asked you to consider the possibility of these types of soil existing within your own heart because I believe that our hearts are the true context of this parable. It is critical for us to deal with the bad soil because we are called to be like Jesus. So, as we continue our study of the thorny soil and the good soil, be wise and listen carefully because just like I said last week, the Lord wants us to deal with unsightly soil and He does not want us to be complacent nor unconcerned. Let's get started by reading the passage.

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.”

I heard many of you were challenged by last weeks teaching to begin to break up your hard soil and clear rocks from the fields of your heart. This week's teaching is going to present what will be the most challenging soil for this body to face, the thorny soil. The seed on the thorny soil is a picture of what happens to God's word for those who hear and receive the message, but all too quickly allow it to be choked out by the thorns. This choking of the seed prevents fruit from fully maturing if it even produces at all.

Let's first turn our attention toward a general explanation of the thorns. We see them early on in **Genesis** where their emergence is a result of the judgment God places over the earth in response to Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 3:17-18**). Henceforth, throughout the Bible they are used as a reference for godlessness, scheming, darkness and things that are annoying, irritating, foolish, or catch on fire easily. For instance, God appeared to Moses in a burning bush of thorns (**Exodus 3:2-4; Acts 7:30,35**). The Hebrew word used for bush comes from a root word to "prick" as in a bramble bush. That is why I have said it was a bush of thorns. Further, Jesus had a crown of thorns placed upon His head as He was being crucified (**John 19:2,5**).

Thus, with the burning bush, we see God approach Moses from within the thorns burning with the judgment of fire. It is interesting to note that the bush was not consumed by this judgment, and that is because the law was not going to remove sin but judge it (**Galatians 3:19**). We also see Jesus taking a crown of thorns, covered in His own blood, to the cross to finish our sanctification process, judge the

fruit of our sin, and declare, "It is finished" (*John 19:30*). On the cross He would not just judge our sin but actually remove it as it would be consumed in His blood (*Galatians 3:13; Romans 3:20*). I believe the thorns are symbols of the wreckage of sin in our lives that pricks us through, and Jesus uses them as an illustration to show us that they have the power to choke out life and subdue the maturation of fruit.

In this parable, Jesus describes the thorns as two specific things, the worry of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth. He designates a whole type of soil for a discussion only on worrying and the deceitfulness of wealth. Obviously, these two things are very powerful or else He would not be warning us so specifically.

Let's discuss the thorns of worry. In the Greek "worry" is defined as anxiety. This is not good news as anxiety is the lifeblood from which many of you live. In our personal experience here at Pathway, we can confirm that anxiety is a poison that occupies mind time, sucks away spiritual and emotional energy, and leaves little to cultivate or access truth. Managing it day to day is exhausting. It is a terrible witness which mocks the peace of God. It divides, sets people against each other, and fosters paranoid suspicion.

The Internet had some interesting things to say about anxiety as well. It states that anxiety is exhausting, upsets digestion, causes breakouts, impacts your ability to remember things, causes weight gain and makes your back hurt. In more serious cases it produces edginess, headaches, trouble falling or staying asleep, nausea, twitching, diarrhea, sweating and rashes. What are the causes of anxiety? Stress at work, at school, at home, in relationships, with your finances and from emotional trauma. Emotional traumas, what are those? Abuse, neglect, unstable environments, death of a loved one, abandonment, divorce, and dealing with

substance abuse, eating disorders and self-mutilation. Experts state that severe anxiety will eventually interfere with normal daily functioning. Somehow, within the small group of fifty people sitting in this room, we have managed to experience every single thing that I listed. We have thorny soil in our hearts and the fruit of anxiety is the proof.

At face value, all of that information may come off as rather grim, but let's keep investigating what is really happening. If we step back a little bit we can see that anxiety is another piece of the battle we fight as believers to submit our lives to the truth that Jesus is the Lord our God Almighty and forsake the power of the lie. Anxiety thrives, thorns pierce our lives, because we do not believe the 3-basic components of true faith: 1) Jesus is the Lord; 2) Jesus is good; and 3) we simply do not belong to the kingdom of this world—we are aliens and strangers. If you abide with anxiety, then this is where you need to focus your time and attention; after all, each of those statements are the truth, you just need to decide to agree with God. Anxiety is the evidence that you may know the truth but do not yet believe the truth.

Let's look back to the basics of belief. **Hebrews 11:6** says that without faith it is impossible to please God. Consider this verse in **2 Corinthians**.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?

So we are to examine the fruit of our lives to see if we are in the faith. Anxiety is not the fruit of faith, but the fruit of fear. Fear is the antithesis of faith. In contrast, think about how God equips us to live a life of peace versus anxiety.

2 Timothy 1:7

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

Isaiah 41:10

‘Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’

Matthew 11:28–30

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

According to these verses, God equips us to put down our anxiety. It’s part of the plan of salvation that saves us and brings us freedom in ALL areas of our lives; and this freedom is based on who He is and therefore what He does. The question is will you put down anxiety by choosing to believe Him? I feel like I can already hear

most of you saying, "I can't" or "I don't know how to put it down." This is an attack of delusion. We received a word at prayer this week that was powerfully pointed at the delusions we hold tightly to and with which we snuggle. I realize that the specific attack of delusion we are dealing with now is a recent thing, but nonetheless I feel justified in saying that many have been living in delusion for years. Listen to this word.

"To find yourself out of this maze of delusion, pursue Me. Pursue Me as a person, not as some far away God who you've seen human renderings of. These human pictures portray me as some old man with a long white beard who could care less about anything other than small babies with wings playing simple songs on small harps. How far away from reality are those renderings! I have already told you that when you focus on Me you will not and cannot focus on yourself. I have also told you that when you have more of Me, you will have less delusion. To have more of Me, come to Me. Ask Me. Want Me. Talk to Me. Invite Me. Find Me. Search for Me. Let down your walls with Me. Prefer Me. Choose Me. Dine with Me. Live with Me. Dance with Me. Explore with Me. Enjoy Me and enjoy with Me."

God gives us a way out and it is through Him. When you focus on you, then you will abide in anxiety. It is the natural consequence of the powerless seeking power from the powerless (isn't that what delusion is all about). Yet, when you focus on Him you cannot focus on yourself—on the powerless. The reality is that slavery to anxiety is the same thing as slavery to wrong belief and unbelief. It is the pathway

of the foolish (**Proverbs 12:15**). You see I am not “special” if the power of God is real to me and you are “not special” if it is not real to you. The power of God is special on its own and it is effective for all those who will humble themselves and believe. The catch, however, is that to access the power you MUST put your delusion and personal wisdom aside and live in reality. Delusion is nothing but slavery to the wisdom of your own mind and limited experience (wrong belief and unbelief). Many people actually believe that they “know” the truth yet the anxiety in their lives proves otherwise; but again, their belief is such delusion and is not reality. Look at Jesus’ perspective on anxiety in these verses.

Matthew 6:30

And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

Luke 12:25–26, 31-32

“And which of you by worrying can add a *single* hour to his life’s span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters? Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need. So don’t be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.”

God never intended for us to carry the burdens of anxiety. He is our God and

He says He is fully and completely responsible for our lives. That is why in these verses He continues to ask us why we are wallowing in anxiety. But regardless of God's perfect provision of peace and rest, when the Kingdom of Heaven collides with the kingdom of this world, it is still our choice that gives us the opportunity to be free or to stay in a cage of delusion. Our being dominated by anxiety is not a reflection of our God, it's a sad dark statement about us. God is ready to carry this burden for you. He's been ready since the beginning of time. Look at what Peter says in **1 Peter 5:7**.

1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

In turn we need to be willing to do our part just as King David did in **Psalm 56:3**.

Psalm 56:3

When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You.

These verses are all nice in theory but you must be willing to take it out on the street and see that trusting Jesus is the solution you are otherwise looking for in your anxiety and control. If you are not willing, then you need to prepare to be choked. And "trusting" Jesus is not some impossibility. Again, God has shown us the pathway to choose. He says, "Pursue Me. Pursue me as a person." That is such

a powerful concept. Most of us still consider God to be that man up in the sky with the grey beard before whom we have to cower or for whom we have to accomplish great deeds in order to earn His favor and blessing. But that is all wrong. Wrong; wrong; wrong. He wants to be pursued and known as a person; just like we want to be pursued and known. He also says, "I have also told you that when you have more of Me, you will have less delusion. To have more of Me, come to Me; Ask Me; Want Me; Talk to Me; Invite Me; Find Me; Search for Me; Let down your walls with Me; Prefer Me; Choose Me; Dine with Me; Live with Me; Dance with Me; Explore with Me; Enjoy Me and enjoy with Me." That is so simple, beautiful, relational, and intimate. This is something you can do; this is not too hard and something only the type-A people can do. This is something we all can do. Remember, He is not just our God, He is our lover and He wants to be known and experienced as our lover.

Anxiety literally kills you and chokes out your life. It leaves you fruitless and in pain. You do not have to live this way any longer. You Don't! Pursue Him, get to know Him, and I believe you will understand why you can trust Him with complete care over your lives. Every moment, no matter what is going on circumstantially, He is only fulfilling His promise to you to be like Him. Rests in the beauty of this reality and let go of your delusion.

As for the other thorns, the deceitfulness of wealth, there are two ways we need to discuss this topic, literally and figuratively. Let's start with the literal discussion of wealth as it pertains to money.

Ecclesiastes 5:10–12

Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness! The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what good is wealth—except perhaps to watch it slip through your fingers! People who work hard sleep well, whether they eat little or much. But the rich seldom get a good night's sleep.

1 Timothy 6:10

For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

Wealth is like quick sand to the mind of man. It preys on every weakness we are born with. Our thoughts are fickle, easy to distract and deceive. We are so proud of our hard work as well as protective of our comfort, and it builds our ego and goodness apart from the TRUE goodness of the Lord. The actual role we play in obtaining our wealth is such a ruse, yet we guard it and protect it. ***1 Samuel 2:7, Deuteronomy 8:18, and Proverbs 10:22*** are crystal clear, God is the one who makes people rich. He is the one who gives you the power to be successful. Yet, in my experience, I have noticed that wealthy people who are not grounded in the truth of the Word of God have a very difficult time trusting people. I realize that is a blanket statement, but in my experience they behave as if they are convinced everyone is after the money; and I have seen many valuable relationships sacrificed

because of it. A rich man is more sought after for advice, more respected, more trusted and more praised. Sometimes it seems it doesn't even matter who they are on the inside because the money does all the talking. It is definitely a worldly cross to bear.

In spite of all of this slipperiness around this topic God does appoint believers as stewards of money. Our job is to be diligent to always understand that it is the omnipotent hand of God that gives us everything that we have. It is not hard work or good decisions that have produced wealth or given happiness; it is God's hand and His plan that determines where worldly treasure goes and where happiness comes from. Even in **Amos 4:6** God declares that He is the one who has given all the cities of Israel cleanliness of teeth. He is the provider and we are not. Should He choose to lift His smallest finger of mercy off of our fiscal prosperity, it would fail because He is in dominion over all things. Consider this passage in **Colossians**.

Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Literal wealth seeks to take us captive through its philosophy and empty deception because its value and promise is according to the traditions of men, just as Paul stated. Do not be foolish about this topic thinking that the power of wealth to corrupt your nature doesn't apply to you. Riches are by nature deceitful for they tempt you to trust yourself and not the one who provided you the wealth.

Therefore, our goal is to always follow the principles set forth by the Bible in the stewardship of all things. Wealth it is deceitful and will challenge fruit of the spirit from maturing and coming forth in your life. The principles and responsibilities regarding wealth that you should study and fully understand come from: ***Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 19:13; 1 Samuel 2:7; Malachi 3:10; Psalm 15:5; Proverbs 3:9-10; Jeremiah 17:11; Ezekiel 18:7-9; Matthew 6:19-21, 19:24; Luke 3:13, 6:24-25, 12:15-21,33; Acts 2:45; Galatians 6:10; Philippians 4:14-19; 1 Timothy 5:8, 6:17-19; and James 5:1-4.***

Let's move to the figurative perspective of the deceitfulness of wealth. This perspective represents the lie that we can be our own spiritual, mental and emotional providers. We can be our own wealth of wisdom, identity, help and even our own savior. Of course, none of us would actually go around saying this out loud, but this is what it looks like for the deceitfulness to live in the thorny soil of our hearts. Honestly, I do see the fruit of this thorny soil in many of our attitudes. The greatest lie that Satan ever sold to humanity is that they could be like God (***Genesis 3:2-5***). Satan says, "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat the fruit, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." This appealed so strongly to Eve that she didn't hesitate to partake. People love the idea that they possess the wisdom they need for their lives. And honestly, it's it so much easier when you can just agree with yourself and encourage yourself to go ahead and trust your own wisdom a.k.a. "Do what you feel and do what you want."

I remember having a meeting with someone who I would consider, in my years of experience, to be dying spiritually from the inside out. In response to my challenges of their conviction this person looked me dead in the face and said, "I

don't know what the big deal is, it's not like I'm having some kind of spiritual crisis or anything." I had to literally look this person in the eye and say, "Yes you are having a spiritual crisis." The deceitfulness of figurative wealth brings the same delusion and lie this person was blinded by. The thrones that we sit on in our pride are false and dangerously arrogant. We do not have what it takes to give ourselves everything we need to live a life of peace and rest. Worse off, trying to be your own spiritual, mental and emotional provision actually produces the anxiety Jesus referenced. The anxiety runs in tandem with the deceitfulness of wealth because we have never been able to be our own provision and we never will be. Truth and wisdom comes only from the one true God and we need to beware of the deceitful idea that it could ever come from within ourselves. Again, you are not enough—no matter how smart and savvy you think you are, no matter how many "concrete" examples you can list out about how you "know" and about how "it always turns out the way you have predicted." God is what we need and only He can give us peace that leads to freedom and fruit of the Spirit (***Psalm 37:25; Matthew 6:8, 2 Corinthians 9:8***). Look at this verse in ***Isaiah***.

Isaiah 58:11

"And the LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

The deceitfulness of wealth, whether literal or figurative is a force to be reckoned

with for those living their life according to the Word of God. Jesus is warning us because He knows that this is a snare for mankind.

Before we finish discussing the thorny soil let's touch on this issue of partially matured fruit. The reality is that it provides a false sense of producing. In this thorny soil people con themselves into believing they can have the best of both worlds. Be wise and listen to Jesus' words in **Matthew 6:23** where he states that if the light you think you have is actually darkness, that darkness goes deeper than you could ever imagine. If any of this partially matured fruit were to be served it would be undeveloped and bitter tasting which is exactly the experience people have with those of you that are trying to grow seed in the thorny patches of your heart. A lot of energy is wasted growing crops in a field where there will never be any fruit.

In my opinion, the thorny soil is equally as terrifying as the rocky soil. It is also another soil (in addition to the first two) with which many of us here need to seriously address. There is rampant ruling of anxiety and deceitfulness of self-sufficiency in this body. It is very difficult for the truth to be cultivated there; and, even if it grows, there is no yield of good fruit.

Like I mentioned last week when we were talking about the hard path and the rocky soil, every one of you who has God's Spirit, everyone who is the Beloved, has been given a new heart (the *New Creation*). He is ready to rip out all of those sharp thorns in these areas of your heart; but even more He is ready to lead you out of the thorny soil to a better field. Still, it is up to you, you decide if you will follow Him or argue with Him. I encourage you to please stop resisting this work with your stubborn pride and delusional self-wisdom, and let Him complete His promise of freedom to you. We will finish this parable with the good soil next week and move

on to the parable of the *Wheat and the Tares*.

Let's Pray