

### Focus Text

"That same day, Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose, they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear." **(Matthew 13:1-9, ESV)**

"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 what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." **(Matthew 13:18-23, ESV)**

### 1. The Seed

Jesus begins by revealing in Matthew 13:18 that what the seed is is the "word of the Kingdom." Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. In essence, we can now deduce that accepting the kingdom comes first by accepting Jesus as the savior promised by God. Once we have accepted Jesus' station as the chosen Messiah, we will take his message to repent, turn away from sin, and embrace Jesus' teachings and His saving love.

## **2. The Path**

Those who don't pay attention. The Greek word here for "Understand" can also, in this context, mean to pay attention. I have to admit that mathematics is my worst subject, and I would often doodle and daydream while the poor instructor was trying to drill calculus into my mind. Jesus is referring to those who hear the message to repent, but aren't paying attention. This may include those who saw the miracles performed and heard Jesus preach but didn't pay attention to what was happening. Satan is the deceiver and schemer, and when the word of God comes, those who are in lala land may miss the message and not respond. Friends, Jesus, like my math teacher, is calling people to come and find life and salvation in Himself. Pay attention and don't miss the call to receive the kingdom of God.

## **3. The Rocks**

This is the person who hears the good news that Jesus Christ can save and takes it with great joy. But then they have no root, foundation, to build upon, and when they face hardship or persecution for following Jesus, they walk away from the faith. The roots of a tree keep it steady and in place even during the fiercest storms, and without deep roots the tree will not be able to weather the winds. Jesus is referring to those who hear and, with emotion alone, proclaim that they are ready to follow Jesus without hesitation. The Apostle Peter experienced this when Jesus told him that he would betray Christ three times on the night of Jesus' arrest. Peter was always quick to declare that he was all in for Christ, but on the night Jesus was arrested, Peter fell hard and denied Jesus altogether. This is why Jesus reinstated Peter after the resurrection, because he had walked away. In the modern era, we have seen big-tent revivals in which a polished preacher pleads with people to repent and turn to Jesus. Faith healers proclaim that God will heal them and make them wealthy and happy if they turn to Christ. Yet, if those who rushed to the altars to receive the gift of salvation do not grow deep spiritual roots, they walk away from the faith when something tragic happens. We must pair the plea of the gospel with Jesus' careful words to count the cost before following. Coming into Jesus' kingdom means being all in, no matter what happens!

#### **4. The Thorns**

Jesus reveals that the word that falls on thorns is choked out by the love of the things of the world, including promises, wealth, and prosperity. Christianity could be described as the supreme exercise in delayed gratification. The goal of following Christ is the final inheritance of the kingdom, which one sees after their days on this side of heaven are lived. Joel Osteen penned a book with the title "Your Best Life Now." Osteen, alongside many others, believes that these days on earth are only supposed to be happy, healthy, and wealthy, and if that's not true, one's faith isn't strong enough. This grievous misunderstanding creates a religious system where the followers ignore daily suffering and sacrifice, knowing that Jesus will claim victory in the end. Believers are called by Jesus to crucify, kill, their fleshly desires and to live modestly, with generosity for those around them. The early Christians sold all their personal property and lived communally to ensure that no one around was in need. In today's world, the challenge is to see one's income with the heart of generosity. One example is modern billionaires. Some socialist ideals demand that the government take their fortune by force and redistribute their wealth by government mandate. That's generosity by the military, and it's wrong. However, it's not wrong to say these people with billions of dollars could, by their own merit, change the world by giving generously. However, the average American is also among the wealthiest people in the world. How can we live more humbly to care for others? The sum of this is that greed will overshadow the gospel, and some will hear Jesus but will rather swim in the desires of the world now and be lost to judgment later.

## **5. The Good Soil**

Finally, Jesus reveals the good soil. This is the believer who hears the invitation to follow Jesus and His teachings and is then empowered by the Holy Spirit to use their gifts to help not only themselves but also others find and hear the good news. Good soil is the environment that allows Christ followers to grow and share with others the invitation to the kingdom. Jesus is sharing and teaching the disciples, who will become the twelve Apostles. They will train up others, like Paul and Barnabas, and then those people will call and train up others. She believes the good soil isn't that a person hears and knows, but that they are called, convicted, trained, and empowered to spread the invitation to others. Healthy plants bloom, grow, and reproduce. How sad would it be to see only a single sunflower or rose? Then you ask why, and their answer is, "Well, this is only for me." Another American lie is that religion is a private matter and it's nobody's business what we believe. Polite society told us this; Jesus told us the exact opposite. The word of God in the heart of Christians grows and reproduces in others, just as healthy plants display their beauty and also spread their seeds to grow other beautiful plants. Jesus confirms that this won't be as numerous everywhere or with everyone, but that healthy seeds planted in good soil grow and reproduce. This is why Good Shepherd's mission is both Being and Making Committed Followers of Jesus Christ. We pray that God would find good soil in us, both to grow us personally and to help us reach others.

### **Application**

#### **1. What's Your Lawn Look Like?**

- Which of the traps tempts you? The path, the rocks, or the thorns? John Wesley said that accountability in the local church is "looking over one another in love." With your cornerman looking over one another and being honest about where you're tempted, and praying for one another.

#### **2. Pollinate**

- Good Soil and Good Seeds share the good news of Jesus. Who can you invite to seek the kingdom of God this week? Write that person down and pray for them every day this week, and try to talk with them about Jesus in some way!