

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 // Seeds & Soil

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Preacher: Earl Buchan

[0:00] But today, we're going to be reading from Matthew 13 verses 1 to 9 and then 18 to 23. I'm going to skip down a little bit. If you want to open your Bibles or tap and swipe your way there.

And I'm going to talk about the music stand just for a second because I actually, I owe you an apology and I want to explain why. I felt like I wanted to go back to my roots a bit.

And when I started preaching, I was using a music stand. And it's all we could afford. One music stand for worship. One music stand for teaching. And I, it just, it feels like home to me.

So I'm going back to this. And now I'm realizing it's really uncomfortable because if you put any weight from the, you know, arc of things I have up here, it tends to do this very quickly. So I'll work on that.

But the reason why I wanted to speak an apology is this. I, I have had, I call this a deep blessing. I've had the blessing of being able to go through the church's history.

[1:05] It's not something I think people do every day. I've had to do an abnormal amount of work for USCIS and with the 501c3, the IRS.

I've gotten to know the inner workings of governmental documentation way beyond I could ever have imagined or wished for. But one of the things that it asks is the church history.

I want to know about the church. Who this, who we are. What this place is. And, and the funny thing is, is that you, you go back and you start to just kind of, you start at the beginning. Which was roughly 1915.

If I am getting that correct. And you can go through the list of pastors that have been here. And you can go through the list of elders. There's, there's even, I, you know, one of my favorite board meeting notes is handwritten on what I think is a paper bag.

And it's just, I love it. I love it to bits. And as the years progress, things seem to get a little more organized. You know, things are typed out. And then there's a history of the church, which has been typed out.

[2:07] One of my pet projects, and I'm just going to share this right now. Is I'm actually going to assemble all of this into a book. And I want to, I want to gift it at Christmas. And Aaron and I are going to work on that together. Because I think it's just important for us to hold on to who we, who we have been.

And so my apology is this. I must have seemed like a barbarian at the gates coming in. Right?

Barbarian from the north, quite literally, coming in, sweeping in. And, and I understand better now, having read the history and the beautiful legacy that this church has had.

How weird that must have been. So, I'm sorry. I'm sorry for coming in like a barbarian. I want to take things a little more thoughtfully. And a little more purposefully moving forward.

Because I realize I'm a part of this legacy now. Not a part from it. So I want to work more closely.

Take a little bit slower steps. And make sure that we walk together through this.

Because this is a beautiful church. And whether you want it or not, I love you. Okay? Okay? I'm not going to hug you. But part of that's my own issues. Anyway.

[3:17] So, let's dive in here. Verses 1 to 9. That same day Jesus went out of the house. Sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him.

That he got into a boat. And sat in it. And while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables. Saying, A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed. Some fell along a path. And the birds came up and ate it. Some fell on rocky places. Where it did not have much soil. And it sprang up quickly. Because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up.

The plants were scorched. And they withered. Because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns. Which grew up and choked the plants. Still, other seed fell on good soil. Where it produced a crop.

A hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear. I feel strange communicating this.

[4:13] To a culture that understands farming and ranching. When I do not. I was not raised with it. So, what I will say is that back in the ancient times.

They would scatter seeds. And then till them up. And I understand now. That's not the way we do it today. We till things up. Plant seeds. Make sure that seeds are embedded in there.

Water them. Fertilize. Watch. And wait. Did I get that right? Is that sort of right? Okay. Good enough. One or two nods is fine. But like I said. It's hard speaking this to a culture.

That culture there. They knew about farming. They knew about it really, really well. And even if you were not a farmer. You'd know somebody who was a farmer. And understand. And Jesus was speaking to them directly. And a seed is an important visual for this.

Because it gives life. It's powerful. It's like the word of God. And that's where this is coming from. Our word as men and women can be challenged.

[5:14] It can fail. Because as Crawford pointed out. We're very imperfect people. And our words can sometimes fail us. But God's word does not fail. So it depends upon the soil with which that seed falls upon.

The truth of God has to take root in the heart. Be cultivated in order to bear fruit. I find it funny that if you actually look at this from another perspective.

Three quarters of the seed didn't take. A quarter of the seed took. And you know from a pure ratio point of view. That seems kind of bad. Right? We want to hear this story where the seed went out. And everything was great. And it was just you know blossoming. And everything was good. But that's not what this is about. It's about that the seed falls on different soil. So the seed falls in different lives.

And what that life is like. How open that heart is. How soft that soil is in our hearts. Will determine whether it takes root. And grows to something beautiful.

[6:17] Jesus wasn't describing an age of great harvest here. He was describing a time when the word of God would be challenged. I don't know about you today. But it kind of feels like that just never really stopped.

The word of God is challenged. Constantly. And he's talking about this. The son that he speaks of is not the son of God. It's the son beating down. It's persecution.

And when we're in persecution. When we're going through rough times. All we have sometimes. Is the word of God. To remind us. He will never leave us and forsake us. That is actually one of the first passages.

That rooted in my heart. As a teenager. When I came to Jesus. Because I was raised in loneliness. And one of the first promises. Was from. That I read from God.

I will never leave you. Or forsake you. And I've held on to that ever since. Because God's word is alive and well. And that took root. So there's different paths here.

[7:15] We got the wayside. It was hard packed ground. Sometimes it would be in between the different crops. It could also mean the wayside where many travelers walked in their path.

And the footfalls that would just completely press down the ground. It would become like concrete. The seeds are not going to find their way in there. It's hard packed ground. Very difficult.

Nothing could grow in that soil. And some of us. The hard packed mind. Is our soil. The hard packed heart. Hardened. Through hurt and pain and difficulty.

Sometimes pride. That hard packed ground. Can mean the soil. Will be thrown there. But it will bounce off. And maybe it's because we see things we just don't want to see.

Hear changes that we need to make. That we just don't want to do. The unteachable person is. It's not an easy barrier to break down. It's the Holy Spirit that does that work.

[8:14] And it may take time. And in the discipleship class earlier. I was talking about my brother. And if you've ever tried to witness to a family member. You know how hard it is sometimes.

It could just be really challenging. Right. I don't know if it's that you grow up with them. They just know who you are before and after. And in between. And the goon that you were and everything. My brother is kind of like that. He's my older brother.

And I do love him. I've tried to share the gospel. And it's like bullets bouncing off a Superman. Just I can't. Nothing. All the tools. Everything I've learned. I can't do it. So I thought okay Lord.

I have to surrender this to you. And I've been waiting for years. So he ended up moving to the eastern part of Canada. Where it's this small island. It's like an artist. It's like a culture of artists. And bakers. And makers. And candlestick makers. Whatever. You know. That kind of thing. Okay. And he moved out there. And he didn't know too many people. And all of a sudden some of his friend group.

[9:10] Over the years. Decide they're going to move out there too. And as far as I can tell. There's been three different groups of people. That have moved out there. Now what my brother Dan didn't know. Is they all got saved.

Okay. They all became Christians. And they moved out there. Now his whole friend group are Christians. So part of me is like. Yes. Like I couldn't do that if I tried. But look what the Lord has done. So I keep waiting for this moment.

Where he's going to message me. Saying yeah I get it. And now I'm thinking. Well I want to phone now. And just poke the bear a bit. And say. Ask him directly. So how are things with you and Jesus today Dan. You know. Because sometimes that harvest takes a long.

Long. Long time. And the atmosphere. And everything has to be built right. For Dan. I think it's narrowing down. I really do. And it won't be me.

But it'll probably be one of those other people. That show him Jesus in a very real way. Praise God. Pride could be involved. The person simply doesn't know.

[10:07] That they need to know something. In order to change. Now I'm good. You know. That touchy feely stuff. That's all for everything like that. You know. Well you know. The Bible doesn't elicit feelings in you.

You're reading it wrong. Okay. Theology is there. There's teaching there. There's truth there. But if it doesn't turn over the soil of your heart.

Read it again. And again. And again. Read it. Because there is real life to be found there. And it might just move us to emotion.

Of saying. Yes Lord. I'm sorry. Sometimes that can be a very difficult place to go. When it's. A seed is put on. Solid ground.

That's hard to get into. And then there's the stony places. This would be like a. A limestone. Like shelf. You may begin an inch or two of soil on top of that.

[11:02] Maybe a little bit more. So the seeds would take. And they would root a bit. But they wouldn't root fully. First wind that comes along. Any tree is just going to be. Blown away.

Because the root didn't take. Very much. And unfortunately. We can look around and say. Well. I don't really know what that means. Okay. But I've witnessed.

In years of being a pastor. People will come to church. And they will say. Well I'm not feeling it. And they leave. Because they want to go based on.

What they're feeling. The reality is. Is that there is a discipline. And a steadiness. That has to happen. To be built into our lives. There's decisions that need to be made. That we need to do.

In order to continue growing. And that's where we need each other. That's where we need discipleship. To be disciplined. And to disciple one another. So that those roots.

[11:57] Grow firm. Deep. And in the right soil. Because when it is shallow. You start to get. What's known as cultural Christianity. And you might have heard that before. We can come to church.

And it's a beautiful thing. We can eat the food. And we can sing the songs. But if it hasn't changed you. On the inside out. If you haven't been born again. Then it might just be up here. And it has to be here.

And when I say born again. I simply mean it like this. I remember when I used to go. And ask my mom for cookies. Right. I would never do it and say. I want a cookie. It would always be an open hand.

Okay. They would be like. Please. I want a cookie. When we approach God. And it's like this. I'm going to do it on my own time. But I'm going to go to church. And we're really going to enjoy it. I'll sing loud.

Right. But you can't have my life. That's not making a new life with him. When we're like this. And we say. Lord. I tried. I tried my all.

[12:55] And I got only so far. Because you are God. And I am not. In Revelation 1. It says that there's a throne in heaven. And it is occupied. I hope it doesn't burst into anybody's bubble today.

But it's not you that's sitting there. It's God. God. Okay. And when we recognize that. When we release ourselves towards that. That leads us to repentance. That's being born again.

Father. I am not the main character in my life. You are. And I want to find a new way of living. A new way to be human. And only you can show me this. And that is the heart of fertile ground.

Lord. Your way. Not my way. Some people get swept away with new teachings.

YouTube prophets are amazing. You know. If you watch YouTube too long. And I'm not faulting YouTube at all. I'm just saying. Like you know. If the algorithm feeds you certain channels. You can believe that trees are gods.

[13:54] And all kinds of stuff come out of there. And if your roots aren't growing deep. It might sway you one way or another. You know. We got to think. It's nothing new from the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were there.

And Satan didn't come along and bring this huge propaganda of a lie. He took the truth. And he moved it an inch. Okay. Did God really say don't eat from any of these trees?

That's not what God said. He just said don't eat from that tree. Did God really say not to eat from any of these trees? That seems cruel. Right? Well yeah.

That seems unfair. I should be able to eat wherever I want. And suddenly we fell. Okay. Because that pride sunk in. And the enemy only had to turn the dial one notch.

So we can get that now if we're not careful. But if you know the word of God. You're going to say that's not what God said. Not at all. Read it bro. Right? We have to know the word of God.

[14:57] Some people's lives are littered with things they've started. And they have not finished. I'm not going to look at anybody elbowing one another right now. Okay. I've got my fair share of unfinished projects. But sometimes we litter our faith is like that though.

It's like an unfinished project. And we just neglect and we leave. And it should be something we're working on all the time. Because a farmer can't skip a day of work just because they're not feeling it. You have to get up. Show up. And do the stuff. The other soil is among thorns. And this is deceptive ground. Because it can look clear enough. I was telling the story earlier that you know when I first started weeding.

Right? I thought oh I'll just pluck the stuff up. And oh it looks all flat and good. Right? Until you're reminded that no you've got to actually take the roots out. Otherwise you did absolutely nothing. It probably made it worse. Right?

You've got to take some time. Energy. Right? To get those roots out. And it's important. So it can be deceptive ground. Good seeds and weeds they grow up together.

[16:01] But the weeds can grow a lot more quickly. And automatically we might be thinking well that's sin. Right? The thorns that come into our lives they're like sin and things we do wrong. So we're just going to try and not do things wrong.

But really the thorny ground can be busyness. It could be really good things choking out even better things. And that's where we have to be careful.

Because we can get busy in our lives with good things. And not read the word of God. We can get busy in our lives helping people. Doing good things for other people. And not read the word of God. And you see the challenge there. It's like we're focusing on the good when there's actually a better and best. That we can walk into. Because what I've found is that my love tank goes only so far down the road.

Until it needs to be reminded where that love is coming from. And it's from the Lord. Not myself. We have to stay rooted in his word. And not let things choke his word out in our lives.

[17:02] Even if they are good things. One of the pieces of advice I usually give to people that are younger is just. I hope I'm not upsetting anybody here. But it's just simply this.

Give yourself permission to disappoint other people. Okay. This is about you. And this is about God. Your habits with him. If that disappoints someone. So be it.

Focus on the Lord first. Get your habits with him. Have a soft and fertile heart. So that when his word comes in there. It plants a deep root. Life moves quickly.

And if we're not careful. We can find ourselves too busy to pray. And we even forget about the word. You know. We were talking about board of directors. And elders and deacons. And things like that.

One of the other things that I can say. Is this. Before we make decisions. When it comes to church. Or people. Or other people's lives. We have to ask ourselves. Have we prayed about this?

[17:59] Is this just a knee-jerk reaction? Is this just gut instinct? Or are we praying about it? And if we don't have the answer. Pray a little longer. Wait for the Lord to reveal.

Right? It takes a while. Planting. When I first started. You know. Planting vegetables. My mom got me to do some stuff. And I remember. I went out and put cucumber seeds.

And I'm thinking. This would be great. I like cucumbers. I went out the next day. Nothing was there. But of course. I was a kid. I didn't know anything. I'm thinking. There should be cucumbers. All over the place. And of course. That's not how it happens.

We planted fruit trees. In the backyard. Of the parsonage. And somebody. I remember from here. They were like. Well. You know. When do you expect them to see fruit? Well. Someday. And in my mind. I'm thinking. You know.

Yeah. We're going to be here long enough. To see an apple off of that tree. Right? We didn't plant it. Thinking. Oh. This will be for the next guy. No. Planted it. Because I want to have an apple off my tree. Probably bad timing.

[18:54] Bring up the garden. And all that. But that's. You know. I'll. Leave that rabbit trail. The other ground here. And I'm going to close soon. Is good ground. Good ground.

Fertile. Weed free. A good. Productive crop. Grows from good ground. The seed can find nourishment. It could grow without having to compete against the weeds and evil things that would choke it out.

And would bring a good harvest. This person. With good ground in their life. I think looks like this. Okay. This isn't a template. But sometimes it's important to look at checklists in our lives and say. And look in the mirror. Am I that person? Their mind is open. They're willing to learn. They're prepared to hear. And they're never too proud or busy to listen.

If we read the word of God. Are we too busy to let it soak in? Does our pride get in the way? Okay. It does with me. So if you're like me.

[19:57] It does. Oh I've read this story a thousand times. You've probably heard the parable of the sower a million times by now. Maybe this is your first time. In which case hallelujah. Right. But maybe you've heard it a hundred times.

And you're thinking. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Skip to that other part. Right. Pride can get in the way of it. Let the word speak to you as though it's brand new. Approach it like you've never read it before. And say. Lord. What do you want to say here today? Is there something I need to confess? Is there thanks that need to be given? And then present your requests to the Lord. And adore him through it.

Okay. A lot of us would have avoided much heartbreak in our lives. If we simply stopped a moment. And listened to the advice of a friend. Or even better.

Read the word of God. And said. Lord. How does this apply to this situation? We struggle sometimes with the will of God. In making decisions in our life. Maybe a lot.

[20:52] And some of the questions we can ask ourselves. Is just. Will this lead me closer to Jesus? This decision. Will this help me lead other people closer to Jesus? Because the opposite is.

Will this take me away from him? Or will this. Cause me to bring other people away from him? These are decisions. These are questions we can ask ourselves. A person with good soil chooses to hear the Lord.

And that hearing translates into action. We be doers of the word. Not simply hearers of it. Right? So we become people that we read this. About being.

Loving. Joyful. Patient. Kind. Peaceful. Faithful. Self-controlled. Right? We read about these things. The fruit of the spirit. And we go and do those things.

So no longer are we embittered. And hateful. And spiteful people. We now become patient. And kind. And loving. And gentle. And self-controlled people.

[21:51] We become doers of the word that we read. Or hear. This is a person who listens. Understands. And obeys. Because the fruit in a person's life.

Life is evidence of a life lived for Jesus. It really is. Matthew chapter 7 verse 16. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes? Or figs from thistles?

So if a plant is to bear fruit. It has to be rooted in soil. And sometimes exposed to the sunshine. And what I mean by that is persecution. When the heat goes up.

Right? When the heat goes up. Does it strengthen your resolve in God? Does it bring you closer to him? Does it make you rely on him more? Or do you start thinking this is too much? I can't do this. I don't want to tell anybody about this. I'm in pain. But I don't want to get prayer for it. I'm going through troubles in my head. I feel a little foggy. But I don't want to get prayer for it. I hate to break it to you folks.

[22:50] But that's pride. And we got to let it go. We have to be in this boat together. Allow the Lord to lead us through his word. Teach us one another.

You know the word disciple. I mean if you really boil it down. It just means somebody that is learning and teaching at the same time. So I'm learning. You're learning.

And we should be also helping others learn too. And if there's a prayer request. If someone's in pain. Someone's in pain whether it's head or heart. Grab someone and say hey can you pray for me?

Because I just feel stuck. That is a heart that wants to till the ground. So that the seeds of the word can go deeper. Verse 9.

Whoever has ears let them hear. Because Jesus is saying something really important here. He's using a parable to outline his point. And it isn't about agricultural technique.

[23:50] I hope we know that by now. Jesus isn't calling everyone to listen. He's calling those who choose to hear. Those with an ear.

Those who choose to hear. Hear this now. Read in verses 18 to 23. And I'll close after this. Listen then to what the parable of the sower means.

When anyone hears the message about the kingdom. And does not understand it. The evil one comes and snatches away. What has been sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground.

Refers to someone who hears the word. And at once receives it with joy. 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.

The seed falling among the thorns. Refers to someone who hears the word. But the worries of this life. And the deceitfulness of wealth. Choke the word. Making it unfruitful. But the seed falling on good soil.

[24:46] Refers to someone who hears the word. And understands it. This is the one who produces a crop. Yielding 160 or 30 times. What was sown. You know I'm willing to bet.

At this stage of things. The disciples might feel some discouragement. And I know that may sound weird. But just consider this for a moment. Jesus was everything to them.

The most amazing person they had ever met. The Messiah. God made flesh. While he was walking with them. It must have felt like heaven on earth.

It doesn't get any better than this. We're following our master. Our captain. Our king. And he calls us friends. How is that? The beauty of that.

Oh man. I long for heaven for that. And they had it. And yet they still would have had some discouragement. At least in the eyes of the world. Consider this. The synagogues were closing their doors to Jesus.

[25:46] The leaders of religion. Were his biggest critics. And they were out to destroy him. Crowds came to hear him. But there were so few. That were really changed.

After hearing the message. Many came to be healed. And after they would heal. They would go away and forget. It would be dropped so quickly. It must have been discouraging at times.

For the disciples. So what does this say to those of us in ministry? The harvest is sure. You know. Like I said before. Three quarters of the seed.

The seed didn't take. Okay. But the seed that did. That did. Sorry. The seed that did take. The seed that took. That went into the ground. Produced a rich harvest.

Okay. And it can feel discouraging at times. When you're doing ministry. And it just doesn't seem to work. Or maybe it just feels like it's bouncing off the ceiling. For those of us like myself.

[26:44] I like to pray about 10 years down the line. It's why. Well. One of my reasons for planting a fruit tree in the backyard. Three of them actually. Okay. Because I'm looking down in the future.

Not for today. I'm looking for when that bears fruit. I'm praying for this church. As we bear fruit now. That we continue 10 years down the line. Right. I want to be there for that fruit.

So. This is the discouraging part. Is that in between. The time when the fruit appears. It can feel like an uphill battle. Keep going.

Keep doing the harvest. I know. I've used CIY as an example here. This year. Working with Monday and Wednesday summits.

I've been a short order cook. I even joked at one point. I said. You know. My job description should have had short order cook on it. Because I got making spaghetti. And all kinds of stuff for these kids. Feeding like. You know. 40 kids one day.

[27:41] 40 kids another. And I mean. It's all beautiful and amazing. And I go home exhausted from it. Right. But then I see something like CIY. And I'm sitting back here. Last week.

And I'm just like. I feel this wave of gratitude. Look what you're doing. Lord Jesus. Look what you're doing. In every little meatball. In every little slice of bread.

All of a sudden. It's planting a seed. For harvest. For something that just brings beautiful fruit. And I thank God for the leadership that we have over that. I thank God for the leadership we have in this church.

You're truly excellent men. I've never served with better. I mean that. So. No farmer ever expects 100% yield.

That would be a fool's errand. But you don't stop sowing. You don't stop praying. And you don't stop showing up. You keep on going. When we teach the word.

[28:37] We don't always know the effect it's having. We don't. When we teach the word. We share the gospel. We share our lives with other people. We don't necessarily see the effect of it right away.

And we may not. This side of heaven. But. We keep doing it anyways. Because it can take a long time. For the seed of God. Or the seed of the word of God. To really make its way into a person's heart.

So just before I break for prayer now. Where's your heart at? What's the condition of the soil in your heart now? Let's ask ourselves that question as we go into this prayer.

Because it's okay to admit that. Lord. My soil of my heart's been a little tough lately. You know. The difficulties of life have made me just kind of armor up a bit.

And I need you Lord to help me break that down. Maybe the soil of your heart is fertile. And you're like Lord. I want more of you. Then ask. Ask for it.

[29:39] Father. Give me a time of refreshing with your Holy Spirit. Fill me up that I might be able to fill others up. Maybe our lives are so busy. That we feel we're too busy to pray. Or too busy to study his word.

Or to read it. But. Start being willing to disappoint people. For the sake of your relationship with God. Because you're going to have a friendship with him. He calls us friends. Treat that friendship with love.

And duty. And honor and loyalty. He's there for us. So wherever our heart is this morning. Lift that up to God as we pray. And if you just.

Wonder. About the miracles that will happen in our lives. As a result. Let's pray.