

# Two Seeds

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 30 July 2023

Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] Well good afternoon brothers and sisters and friends, it's a joy to be with you once more and a special welcome you're visiting with us today. We ask that you would know and we pray that you would know the Lord's blessing in your time with us.

We're here to worship God so we can sing to his praise, first of all from the Scottish Psalter and Psalm 103. The Scottish Psalter Psalm 103, that's on page 369 of the Church Psalm Books.

Psalm 103 on page 369. We can sing verses 1 down to verse 5 of the psalm. Psalm 103 verses 1 down to verse 5.

O thou my soul, bless God the Lord and all that in me is. Be stirred up his holy name to magnify and bless. Bless O my soul, the Lord thy God and not forgetful be of all his gracious benefits.

he have bestowed on thee. Psalm 103 verse 1 to 5. Stand and just sing if you're able. To learn. To learn my soul, bless God the Lord and all that through me is.

[ 1 : 24 ] Hill ■. Jerusalem ■■■iver. I won't stop going.

American praise. O my soul, the Lord my hope, and not forgetfully, O Father's gracious, O Father's grace, O Father's grace, O Father's grace, O Father's grace, O Father's grace, O Father's grace, O Father's grace, O Father's grace,

The fear around me relieved. Who doth redeem thy life of love?

To heaven they stop for doubt. To heaven they stop for doubt.

To heaven they stop for doubt. To heaven they stop for doubt.

[ 3 : 44 ] To heaven they stop for doubt. So that in us, The eagles' age renews thy youth.

Amen. Let's join together in prayer. Let's pray.

Lord our God, we come again before you this day and we bow ourselves down before you. You the God that is holy, holy, holy.

That is none other like you. You alone are the true and living God. We live in a world where we find so many so-called gods.

So many idols. So many other religions and faiths who all worship their own gods. As we compare each of these idols and each of these gods to you, we find that you alone are living and you alone are true.

[ 5 : 04 ] You alone are sovereign over all your creation. You alone have shown that. But also we come today giving you praise that you alone, you alone the one through living God.

And the only God to have sent of yourself your son. To have sent your son into this world. To make reconciliation a reality for his precious people.

And we stand before you in worship today because of the finished work of Jesus. Because of the finished work of our Saviour. Help us not to come to this place this moment.

Help us not to be here today in worship just to tick off a box for our week. Help us to come here understanding we come and we worship you this moment.

And as we do so, we are in your presence. We worship you here with your presence all around us. Not because of a building. Not because of any holiness to be found within ourselves.

[ 6 : 07 ] But we know from your word that you are with us. Because you have told us clearly that where your people are, there you have made your home in us and with us.

You have chosen to dwell, to tabernacle in your people. And because we gather here as a family gathering of your people today, we have the full hope and the full knowledge that you are here with us.

Help us this short time we ask to worship you with all the distractions of this world far away from us. We confess that we come to this place today. That we come to this time of worship.

And we bring the stresses, the anxieties, the worries, perhaps even the pain, both physical or mental, of this past week. We bring all these burdens today to this place.

We also bring to this place the plans, the responsibilities, the worries of this new week. We bring both the past and the present and our future worries and anxieties.

[ 7 : 13 ] And we take them to the throne of your perfect grace. That place where you tell us to come and to find our help in time of need.

And we confess we often find ourselves in times of need. We pray just now for those here today who are suffering. Suffering physically and mentally.

And perhaps some here who are suffering spiritually. Those here who are mourning. Those here mourning recent loss. And those here mourning a loss of many years ago.

Lord, we know that our words fall so flat. Our attempts to comfort often feel so useless. And we give you praise that where we fall short.

Of a Holy Spirit that he does not. That he is the ultimate comforter. And as he comforts his people, Lord, we ask you would give that same comfort to those who as of yet are not yours.

[ 8 : 13 ] We thank you for them today. Those here who we love and who we care for. And those who we are so overjoyed to see coming to this place week after week. But who as of yet have no saving knowledge of your son.

Who as of yet cannot call Jesus their Lord or their Saviour. We ask that even this day as we once again turn to your word. That you would open their eyes.

You would change their hearts of stone to hearts of flesh. They would come to know you. And come to love you. And come to serve you. We pray for ourselves as a church family here.

We thank you for the unity you have afforded us. We thank you for the fellowship you have given us. That we can call one another brother and sister and know that we mean it eternally.

As we pray for our own church family. As always we pray for our brothers and sisters next door. We remember them once more in their time of vacancy. Lord we ask that if it's your will you would give them in your time one who would lead them and guide them.

[ 9 : 18 ] One who would shepherd them. And that churches together Lord we would see the need of this place. We do pray just now for North Tolstair.

For this district as a whole. We pray Lord for the many homes. The many dark homes in this place who have no gospel knowledge. No gospel interest. Our neighbours.

Our friends. Our family members. Those we love and care for. But who as of yet have no care for you. Lord we ask you would bring them to a saving knowledge of yourself.

And in doing so. We ask you would use us as salt and light in this place. Help us to be fearless. And faithful. And gentle witnesses. As we go out with a glorious life giving gospel.

A gospel of peace. A gospel of truth. As we pray for our own village. We also pray for our island as a whole.

[ 10 : 17 ] I pray Lord just now for every gathering that is worshipping your name. Across the denominations. Across the cultural differences. We give you praise that you have your people across this island.

Across our nation. Across the wider UK. Across the world. Lord that your gospel will never be stopped. But it spreads and grows.

Across our world. Even this very moment. We do pray just now as always. For our dear brothers and sisters. Who love you as we do. But who must serve you in such difficult circumstances.

Our persecuted brothers and sisters. Who at this moment. Some we know are in prison. Some we know by name. Who are finding themselves having their sentences increased.

Year by year. We pray Lord for those who are in prison just now. Lord you know the circumstances. We pray for our brothers in India just now. Who are in prison. Simply for daring to be honest and open about who Jesus is.

[ 11 : 20 ] That there is no way of salvation apart from through him. Lord we ask you to bless them. We pray for their families also. Those who are waiting to hear news of their loved ones.

Those who are now. Lord very often Lord. Women and children. Who are now left without a husband and father. Who are socially outcast because of their love for you.

Lord we ask you to throw alongside them. Give us wisdom we ask in these days. Give us wisdom to make the most of the freedom we have. Whilst we still have it. Help us to be faithful witnesses of the gospel.

Forgive us for the times where we are shy away from gospel opportunities. Forgive us for the times we are not as bold. As we should be.

As we share the life giving news of our Savior. Forgive us also the times we have said things. And done things. And thought things which are detrimental to our gospel witness.

[ 12 : 19 ] We confess Lord. Week by week. That we find ourselves living lives. That are not measuring up to what we wish they were. Far less to what we know that they should be. Help us this day to find our hope.

And our rest in Jesus. Not in man made rules. Not in the pharisaical constructions. That some find themselves bound up to. We find our freedom.

And our rest in our living Savior. In who he is. In what he has done. And what he continues to be and do for us. As we think of him just now. Making constant intercession for us.

Constantly bringing as it were our names before you. Constantly remembering his beloved people. Lord we ask that you give us confidence this week. Confidence to serve you well.

And to be a faithful witness to you. Lord we thank you once more for the gathering here. We pray once more Lord for your people here today. For any here who know you and who love you.

[ 13 : 21 ] But who perhaps feel far away from you Lord. We ask you bring them back to yourself. For any here who know you and who love you. But who are struggling whatever situations. Who are struggling with a dark provenance.

Who are struggling with depression. Who are struggling with physical ailments. Who are struggling Lord with situations that only you and they may know about.

We ask you draw alongside them just now. Lord we praise you for the gift that is a gospel family. Together we find ourselves brothers and sisters.

Lord we find ourselves with no hierarchy here. We are together united equal before our glorious risen Savior. In that spirit Lord we ask you to help us to spend time in your word today.

Spend time singing you as we should from your own words. Singing your praises to you. Knowing Lord as we do so. That you hear the praise of your people.

[ 14 : 21 ] But more than that your word tells us that you delight in the praise of your people. Lord help us this day to come before you understanding that all that we have.

All the good things that we know and experience. And that we have our gift from you. We come today confessing that we find no goodness in ourselves this past week. This past day.

This past hour. We can confess. At times confess with full knowledge. At times with no knowledge. That we have sinned against you. In our thoughts. In our words.

In our actions. We have fallen so far short of the holiness. That you call us to exist. And we give you praise as we find ourselves falling short.

And at times falling away almost. We give you praise as we cling on to Jesus. That he holds on eternally to us if we are his people today.

[ 15 : 19 ] Ask all these things in and through. And for his precious name's sake. Amen. Let's turn to read in God's word.

Coming on our series looking in the gospel of Mark. And we can turn to read in Mark chapter 4. Mark chapter 4. We'll spend a few more weeks in Mark. And then take a short break.

Mark chapter 4. That's on page 787 of the church Bibles. Mark chapter 4. Mark chapter 4. Mark chapter 4.

Let's hear the word of God. This is Jesus. Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him.

So that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. And he was teaching them many things in parables. And in his teaching he said to them.

[ 16 : 21 ] Listen. Behold a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed some seed fell along the path. And the birds came and devoured it.

Other seed fell on rocky ground. But it did not have much soil. And immediately it sprang up. Since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose it was scorched.

And since it had no root it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns. And the thorns grew up and choked it. And it yielded no grain.

And other seeds fell into good soil. And produced grain. Growing up and increasing and yielding. Thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

And he said. He who has ears to hear. Let him hear. And when he was alone. Those around him with the twelve. Asked him about the parables. And he said to them.

[ 17 : 21 ] To you has been given the secret. Of the kingdom of God. But for those outside. Everything is in parables. So that.

They may indeed see. But not perceive. And may indeed hear. But not understand. Lest they should turn and be forgiven.

And he said to them. Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path.

Where the word is sown. When they hear. Satan immediately comes. And takes away the word. That is sown in them. And these are the ones sown. On rocky ground.

The ones who. When they hear the word. Immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves. But endure for a while.

[ 18 : 19 ] Then when tribulation. Or persecution arises. On account of the word. Immediately. They fall away. And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word.

But the cares of the world. And the deceitfulness of riches. And the desires for other things. Enter in. And choke the word. And it proves unfruitful.

But those that were sown in the good soil. Are the ones who hear the word. And accept it. And bear fruit. Thirty fold. And sixty fold. And a hundred fold.

And he said to them. And he said to them.

Pay attention to what you hear. With the measure you use. It will be measured to you. And still more will be added to you. For to the one who has.

[ 19 : 28 ] More will be given. And to the one who has not. Even what he has. Will be taken away. And he said. The kingdom of God. Is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground.

He sleeps and rises. Night and day. And the seed sprouts and grows. He knows not how. The earth produces by itself. First the blade.

Then the ear. Then the full grain. In the ear. But when the grain is ripe. At once. He puts in the sickle. Because the harvest has come. Amen.

And so on. Give thanks to God. For his holy. And his perfect. Word. Let's sing again. To God's praise. This time from sing psalms.

Sing psalms. And psalm 92. 92a. Sing psalms. Psalm 92a. That's on page 122. Of the psalm books. 92a. On page 122.

[ 20 : 26 ] We can sing verses 1. Down. To verse 7. How good it is. To praise the Lord. To sing a joyful song. And to your name. To your name. To your name. To your name.

To your name. To your name. To your name. To your name. To your name. To your name. To your name. To your name. To your name. A joyful song. And to your name.

O God most high. Make music. All day long. To show your love. When morning comes. Your faithfulness. At night. With music. Off stringed instruments. Your praises.

To recite. Psalm 92a. 1 to 7. To God's praise. How good it is. To praise the Lord.

It is the Lord to sing a joyful song.

[ 21 : 23 ] And to your name, O God, will stand. And to your name, O God, will stand.

With music on, dear Lord. To show your love when morning comes.

Should we go there at some night? With music of string dance the rest.

With music of string dance the rest. Your patience will be signed.

For by your body is, O Lord. Give me my strength, I lift up.

[ 22 : 52 ] I sing for joy when I serve Him. I sing for joy when I serve Him.

With music of string dance the rest. And to your name, O God, will be my hand.

I sing for joy when I serve Him.

The storm does not perceive, the senseless storm does not perceive, for to the brandless sound. Although the wicked slings are ground, the foolish should not see, that God who's blood is endless, the God who's blood is endless, will die eternally.

Let's, for a short time, turn back to the chapter we had, Mark, chapter 4. Mark, chapter 4. We're, of course, taking the account we have, the parable we have from verse 1 down to verse 20.

[ 25 : 18 ] This well-known so-called parable of the sower, but really, and of course a reminder for us here, that our chapters and our verse numbers and our wee headings in our Bibles, they're handy, but we're certainly not inspired. They're added on later on.

And the parable of the sower is really the parable of the seeds. And that's our focus for our short time today, as we look to what these seeds look like, and what took place with these seeds.

As we're going through our study in Mark, we finally see this is the first time we see Jesus speaking in parables.

We'll see it quite often now going forward. Sometimes a few parables together, as we have in chapter 4. Other times, there's a parable every so often throughout the chapter.

But here's the first time we have encountered parables in the Gospel of Mark. Before I was here officially, when we were here doing some supply work, we looked together at some of the parables of Jesus.

[ 26 : 31 ] We looked at some of the sayings of Jesus, some of the I Am statements. But it's a refresher for us, a reminder for us. When Jesus speaks in a parable, there's often lots of details in the parable.

But the parables often have some central main teachings that he is teaching. Either one or a few. And so often, and we ourselves, I'm sure, have been guilty of it.

Over the years, you'll see and you'll hear in discussion and in your own reading, we get caught up in the small details of the parables. The wee additional details Jesus adds on to bring the story to life for his listeners.

And we actually miss out on what Jesus is actually saying. The main purpose of the parable. So as we hear and as we think about parables, we're always asking the question, what is the main teaching here?

Or what are the several teachings that Jesus is conveying in this story? And there were stories. Parables were account stories Jesus gave that were so special and so specialised to the people he was talking to.

[ 27 : 55 ] There's been plenty of books written about how to best communicate the gospel. How do we best share the gospel? Well, Jesus is the ultimate communicator of his own gospel.

And when Jesus shares gospel truths to his people, he does so often quite simply. Using illustrations, using images he understands, and they would understand, I should say.

He's speaking to fishermen and crafters, fishermen and farmers, and he uses the illustrations that they would understand straight away. And before we begin, just the reminder for us, we often overcomplicate, and to our shame, and at times in sin, we overcomplicate the gospel.

Jesus never once overcomplicates the gospel. It is simple. It is clear. He shares the gospel in a way people will understand.

If we, and we very much myself included, are not doing that, we are falling far short of what we're called to be doing. We come again to a parable, and parables had two main purposes.

[ 29 : 13 ] Again, the first ones, as we said, it's pretty obvious. Parables were there to use imagery, and to use objects to describe, and to teach about what Jesus was teaching about.

But also, interestingly, parables had a second purpose. There was a hidden truth in parables that Jesus used. We see that in verse 10 down to verse 12.

The disciples asked him what the purpose, really, of the parables are, and Jesus lets them know. He said to them, verse 11, To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything is in parables.

In other words, parables are used to teach, but also parables are used by Jesus to obscure. Why? Why does Jesus want to obscure certain truths?

Because at this point, he is teaching his disciples. And some of the truths he is teaching, it is only for them to understand at that point.

[ 30 : 20 ] It's only for them to see at that point. And we have the amazing privilege that even the disciples didn't have. We can see both the parable, but also we can see Christ's explanation of the parable following straight afterwards.

The disciples had to ask and wait and work it out for themselves for a while. We can see the parable and the explanation. And that leaves us without an excuse today.

Both brothers and sisters and those here who as of yet you can't say that you know and you love Jesus, neither of us, neither group have an excuse.

The parables which speak to Christians, we have the explanation given to us. We can fully understand them, or at least begin to fully understand them. The parables which speak about becoming Christians or having the gospel shared to you, you have no excuse.

God's word makes the parables clear to us. In our parable today, in this parable of the sower, the parable of the seed, we see there is truly no escape for any of us here today.

[ 31 : 44 ] This is a parable which speaks to those here who have no genuine interest in ever becoming Christians. You're here, and we praise the Lord you are here.

And we love you, and we love the fact that you are here week by week. We really do, and we hope you know that. But if you're here today, and you in your heart think, I'll come to church, because I know I should come to church.

I come to church to keep my history. I come to church to honour my parents and my long-since-gone-grandparents. I come to church to keep a spouse, a loved one happy.

But in your heart, you're thinking, I've got no interest in ever becoming a Christian. Then this parable is for you. This parable is for you. If you're here today, and sadly, perhaps, if you think you are a Christian, but truly, perhaps, you're not, this is a parable for you.

We'll see that more later on. This is a parable for you. For those who think you're one thing, but the reality is, you're quite something different. Also, this is a parable which speaks to those of us who know and who love Jesus, and who find all our hope and all our peace and all our joy in him.

[ 33 : 10 ] In other words, in our time today, we find no escape for any of us. There's not one person here today or listening online who does not fall under the categories of this parable.

So the sower, of course, the sower is Jesus. Verse 3, listen, Behold, a sower went out to sow the sower's Jesus, and he is sowing the word, and Jesus himself teaches them that.

As the sower begins to sow the word, as the sower sows his seeds, we see, of course, the four different areas where the seeds fall.

The first place we see in verse 4, and as the sower, as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path. And the birds came and devoured it.

Some seeds fell along the path. The path here, if you imagine how they did their fields, we're so used to having plenty of greenery, plenty of fertile land to use, but think of yourself in this time.

[ 34 : 28 ] When they had fertile land to use, often it was small patches they had use of. And in between the patches, they would make a path.

Or if any land became less than fertile, the land wasn't producing, they would turn that land into a path, just trying to make the most of the space they had.

So imagine fertile bits of land, fertile soil, and in between that, there's paths. These are paths you would use to go from town to town, village to village.

These are paths you walked along whilst you sowed your seed on the fertile ground. That's the image that Jesus is giving them. These are well-trodden paths, well-compacted, down paths, been walked on by many people for many years.

some seed fell along the path. The path is hard ground.

[ 35 : 33 ] As you sit and as you hear the gospel go out, it's the simple gospel of salvation and Jesus alone. The simple gospel of come to Jesus, whoever you are, whatever your story is, whatever your history is, whatever you are just now in your heart, in your mind, in your body, whatever situation, physically, or mentally, or spiritually, financially, you find yourself in, the gospel says, come to Jesus.

Cry out to him for salvation and he hears you. If that simple gospel message that we hear, that we proclaim week by week, as that goes out, is it falling on your heart as if it's falling on the path?

The path is hard ground. Again, this is a path between the fields, the path to villages, it's well trodden. Emma and I have started taking quite often the walk to the bridge to nowhere, the walk past the bridge to nowhere, past the second bridge, and it's a well trodden path, but of course we all know, I'm sure most have done that walk, once you hit that second bridge, there's still a path perhaps, but it turns to mud, it turns to peat, it's not well trodden, whereas the other path is so well trodden, it's compacted, it's a very easy walk.

Is your heart something like that path? You've sat under the gospel year after year.

You've had ministers come and ministers go. You've had ministers tell you again and again from every part of scripture we can dig into and we've given you the same gospel message, different styles, different ways, different emphases, yes, but we have the same message.

[ 37 : 37 ] Your previous minister and the one before him, myself, whoever may come after me, we all have the same message to give you. Different styles, different tones, different ways, it's the same gospel message.

And the seed of the gospel lands on the hard path of your heart, that path that's been so well trodden over the years, it's just nothing can permeate it.

You've grown so hard to the gospel that I could shout and rant and rave for hours and it makes no difference. There's no place for the seed to take root in your heart.

You've become so calloused, so hardened to the simple beauty of the gospel. When you hear a minister preaching, you hear nothing but the minutes tick away until you get home again.

Now friends, we've all been there, many of us have been there, we've all been there trying to count how many lines, how many segments in the pew in front of you. We've all been there trying to count how many panes in the window thinking please, please almost be done.

[ 38 : 45 ] We've all been there. But how long have you been there? As you hear pleading after pleading, sermon after sermon, and the seed is sown and scattered and scattered, it just lands on the path untouched.

you've become over the years horrifyingly, you've become hard-hearted to the gospel.



The gospel of peace, the gospel of love, the gospel of reconciliation, the gospel of grace, the gospel that tells us that Jesus has come to save sinners, that Jesus has come to save all who will come to him, all who will turn to him, and you hear that glorious gospel when it promises you eternal life, and you go, I don't care.

I could not care less. The path is hard ground. The path is also exposed ground. Quite often they would pry at least and erect some form of shade over the fertile soil, as I guess we do still too.

Some kind of netting, but they use shade. Our problem isn't the sun usually, but for them the sun was a problem. They would erect a shade of sorts over the fertile soil, keep it moist or as moist as they could.

[ 40 : 08 ] Of course, there's no shade over the paths. It's just dust and rocks. It's useless ground. There's no shade over the path. It's exposed to the beating ray of every sin and every diversion of this world.

also it's exposed as it were to the glaring sunshine, the glaring brightness of a holy God.

I've asked this before and you can only actually answer in your heart. As you come to church week after week, as you sit here and as you hear the gospel week after week, as you go home and think of these things, how do you view God?

Or the other way around, how do you feel as if God is viewing you? Dear friends, the Christians here assure you that we know what it feels like before we were saved.

It feels, doesn't it, as if God is that glaring sunshine beating down on you, that holiness, that perfection and you find no shade from Him. Perhaps for a while you do, but like the path there is no shade over you and His holiness, His perfection, His justice and His wrath is there on top of you and you can feel it burning down onto you all the time and you think, what do I do?

[ 41 : 40 ] Just to give you the other side, for the Christians here today, if you're to ask a Christian how does it feel to know that God is looking down on you and His holiness and His perfection and His justice.

It's not a terrifying thing for us as Christians to know that because we know God looks on us in love. Dear friends, that could be your story too.

That could be your situation too. It's a hard ground, it's exposed ground, it's also of course a dry ground. The path doesn't receive any watering, the path isn't cared for, the path isn't given soil or manure or any kind of composting treatment, the path is left as it is, it's just rocks and dust.

There's no source of nutrients for the gospel seed to take root in. How long have you sat under the gospel? How long have you sat in these exact same pews and you've heard sermons which should fill your heart with gospel-based nutrients, enough to have a seed to take root and yet you find your heart as dry as anything?

I said it before and I'll say it again. We could close the doors and lock the doors and I could read through and preach for every sermon I can think of.

[ 43 : 07 ] We could go next door and listen to all of their sermons. We could get Roddy John back and give him his pulpit again and he can preach through all his sermons over his many years here. A hundred sermons, a thousand sermons, a thousand hours in this place will not save you unless you come to Jesus yourself.

I cannot preach you into the kingdom. I cannot drag you into the kingdom. I cannot convert you into the kingdom. Trust me as ministers, if we could, we certainly would.

But Donald MacLeod from Graver cannot save you. You must come to Jesus yourself through your hard-hearted, hard ground of a heart to have a gospel seed sown into it truly.

And because the gospel seed lands on hard ground, it faces opposition the birds are there. Again, back to verse 4, the birds came and they devoured the seed.

We see, explained to us in verse 15, of course, the birds is an image of Satan. Verse 15, these are ones along the path where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.

[ 44 : 20 ] Dear friends, Satan is ready and is willing and is eager to steal any chance of gospel growth. We discussed next door, we discussed here, we treat Satan at times as if he is nothing, as if he does not exist.

He is real. His powers are real. His people in terms of his legions of angels and servants are real. and he is ready to steal gospel growth.

He comes in with opposition and doubts to steal away gospel growth. He comes in with distractions and higher priorities to steal away gospel growth.

You can't be a Christian yet. What would they say? What would my wife say, my husband say? What would my kids think? What would my parents think perhaps?

What would my colleagues think? I might be a Christian one day but not just now. No, no, no. Not just now. And the seed is gone.

[ 45 : 27 ] And Satan has won the day yet again. Look at the wording in verse 4. The birds came and devoured it.

It's instantaneous. Verse 15 gives us that. It's immediately, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word at this very moment.

This is not just for dramatics. This is not just to sound good. At this moment, God's word makes clear to us as the word goes out that Satan is active right this second.

As the word goes out and lands on the hard hearts of some here, Satan is there actively opposing it, seeking to devour it. That is this constant reality we're working with at this moment.

That is real. That is the situation we have in this building. As the seed lands on the hard path of your heart, Satan is ready and willing and eager to devour it.

[ 46 : 36 ] And note the ferocity of the attack. It's devoured. Friends, make no mistake, Satan will go to great lengths to devour the seed, to devour any gospel interest that you might have.

As long as your heart remains an untouched, dry path, as long as you take no real gospel interest and have no real gospel care, the gospel seeds will leave God's word and land on your path of your heart and be devoured week after week after week.

And it's no waste of my time. It's no waste of the preacher's time. We will do it until the Lord calls us home. But you are sitting in a building week after week here to hear God's word.

And if you are here with a heart that is not ready to actually listen to it, that heart is cold and dry and dusty and the seed hits it and the birds come and it's gone.

That is happening this very second, this very hour. That's the solemn truth that we are dealing with just now. Same time is going.

[ 47 : 52 ] We'll deal with just today rather in rush things, we'll deal with one more of the images Jesus uses. The next image we have here in verse five.

Other seed fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil and immediately it sprang up since it had no depth of soil and when the sun rose it was scorched and since it had no root it withered away.

As explained to us in verses 16 to verse 17 these are the ones sown on rocky ground the ones who when they hear the word immediately receive it with joy and they have no root in themselves but endure for a while then when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word immediately they fall away.

So the path is no longer now it's a rocky ground but there's some kind of top soil on top a thin smattering of top soil and as the seed lands on this soil there is good initial growth.

The seed is sown the seed lands there's some soil so the seed springs up almost too fast springs up straight away and it looks good it looks perhaps even healthy immediately it sprang up.

[ 49 : 19 ] There seems for this seed to be some real gospel interest in the heart of those who hear it. This is those who have immediate interest and perhaps immediate growth and what looks like flourishing but there's danger ahead a thin layer of soil does not do the job when the conditions change.

The seed has no root the seed has no support there is no place for a root the seed is exposed to the elements is this describing your heart today perhaps.

you have a gospel interest you have a real gospel interest and it feels as if you are listening and you know you're listening and perhaps you look the part and dress the part and speak the part and even at times think the right way but your gospel interest is only really surface deep.

it has no root. That thin soil of your heritage you are at least in your mind you think you could well be a Christian because of your godly grandparents your godly parents your godly church heritage you think you could well be a Christian because of your bible knowledge your catechism knowledge your church history knowledge and so on that thin soil that makes you think well maybe maybe I could be a Christian because I really want to be and I know my stuff and I've been to church since I was young and so on and so on but what happens yes for some growth yes it'll lose good for a while but what's your position what's your position and when the sun rose verse 6 it was scorched the small seed was scorched the growth was scorched since it had no root it withered away and that's explained to us again by Jesus verse 16 verse 17 we had no root in ourselves but endure for a while then when tribulation or persecution arise on account of a word immediately they fall away dear friends if you have some gospel interest you will be surprised if not astounded at the level of opposition you will face if you are starting to think that you want to know more about who

Jesus is or truly understand for yourself who Jesus is you will be shocked at just how vehement how violent how vicious the opposition at times will be from yourself from family members from friends those often meaning well who are worried of you internally you have doubts of your own worthiness I can't be a Christian tribulation arises I can't be a Christian externally your family are thinking as we said you're again a bit too keen on all this church stuff all this God stuff thankfully I think the joke has passed hasn't it the joke we had for years about catching the curum but the joke might have passed but the thinking is still there you might well face persecution and derision for even pondering believing Jesus truly you might enjoy reading scripture you might enjoy attending church but as the comments and opposition grows you lose hope you lose desire and you give it all up as Jesus says when the sun of persecution and the sun of tribulation beats down on you immediately they fall away why it lacks root the sea grows up but the seed it lacks root there's a lack of true theology there are many people in this village and some here and you know your stuff you know your theology you can recite to me confession chapter and verse catechism question and answer in English and in

[ 54 : 25 ] Gaelic quite easily you know your stuff you can quote to me sermons you heard years ago you know your theology but you do not know it you have your theology to hand but you don't actually have it you lack true theology and how do you know that to be true because theology it says before theology always leads to doxology the study of who God is theology catechism confession our own reading our own study of scripture the study of God theology always should lead to doxology the praising of God and if our study of God doesn't lead then to a transformed life that then praises God more that's not through theology we're doing it to grow in our knowledge but not grow in our heart and God is not honoured by that in any way whatsoever there's no root you know your stuff but there's no root also at times perhaps we lack discipleship that's a challenge to the Christians here if we see someone in our congregation who's beginning to show gospel interest are we willing individually to come alongside them and to encourage them in that faith not wait for the ministry of the elders of course that challenges to us too very much so but to yourselves to us all as a congregation ministers elders and us all as brothers and sisters we are a church that will be known for discipleship for encouraging encouraging the growth of our root a church that lacks discipleship is a church of failed converts of those who will fall away again and again and again and also the seed lacks root perhaps because there's a lack of true deep faith the faith of this seed seems to be situationally dependent when things are going well they're happy to believe the second there's persecution or trouble the second there is something which is uncomfortable for them they wither away why because the root isn't real the root is not deep it's just surface level if your faith is situationally dependent then you will lose your faith pretty quickly we see that quite often when our young people go away to mainland they grow up in a church culture but they have no deep root and we can say that

I think my own experience my own close friendship group about three quarters if not half of them across denominations fell away pretty quickly it's not because it's the mainland it's because they grew up in a culture where they had no real root and they go away and because they're not home anymore because there's no pressure anymore their faith was situational for them it was locationally dependent and they go away they just go away perhaps your faith is dependent on your own life circumstances life is easy just now family life is okay your personal life is okay your health is okay so you can be a faithful Christian or you can call yourself a Christian but the second life becomes hard the second health fails your family situation becomes complicated or something else happens you find yourself drifting away in your faith your faith is connected to relationships but not real through faith if we're to grow and truly grow at the end of this like this seed here our root must not be surface deep our root must be found in

Jesus and in him alone our lives will change our circumstances will change perhaps our locations will change but if we are founded and rooted in Jesus who does not change then yes at times our faith will be weak and the Christians here know that confess that at times we are so unbelievably weak and we feel like we're just clinging on and no more but as we said in our prayer again the Christians here know when it feels as if we're just clinging on we know that he holds on to us because our root is in him and he will not let any of his people go he will not leave us nor forsake us that is the hope of a Christian if you're here today and if you find yourself perhaps agreeing and finding yourself like this seed you have interest you think you might know Jesus the question is where is that faith rooted is it in the church your family your circumstances or is it rooted in Jesus and in him alone and the glorious and beautiful gospel reality is if you're the first seed if you find yourself to be hard hearted and a dry path or if you find yourself to have some top soil but no real root the glorious thing is that's the same answer I have for you to solve both these problems let's come to Jesus let's come to Jesus the one who promises to be a source of ever living never ending water living water to those who come to him he will change your dry heart into an overflowing pasture of the greenest grass for his glory and for his sake he will take that topsoil level faith you might have and he will extend that down to the depths of the earth itself into himself he will bring you he will keep you are you willing to be humble enough to let go of your own self righteousness enough to be honest with yourself to be honest with a

God who made you and who knows you and to ask and to look in your own heart today not to leave this place and go home and just tick box never Sunday's been and gone we got dressed we came out we heard a ministry we came home and had lunch what's the point what's the actual point if you go home and don't consider these words for yourself go home and consider these words and think to yourself where is my root based is my heart dry and dusty is it a surface level faith or is my heart rooted and found in Jesus and him alone we'll have to cover the second two seats next Sunday but for now we can end by praying to our glorious Lord Lord God we thank you Lord for this chance we have come to have around your word and this chance we have had to hear your word and to read your word together Lord we ask that you would forgive anything that was said not in accordance to your word we give you praise that the power is not in the jars of clay you stand here but the power is in you as you work through your living word

Lord we ask that even this day you would bring some here who are perhaps hard-hearted to the gospel Lord water that path sow that seed and they'd come to know and love Jesus for themselves we pray also for any here today who feel as if they may know you but aren't sure but who feel as if their faith is based in something that's not you we ask you'd bring them back to yourself perhaps bring them to you for the first time they would have no longer a top level faith but would have a faith that has roots reaches right down to the depths of your love and your care and your keeping for them Lord bless again your word as we sing it we thank you once more Lord for the ones week by week who lead this song praise we thank you for them for their willingness and their diligence Lord and their service to you we ask they be blessed as they serve you week by week

[ 63 : 28 ] Lord take us home in safety if you will Lord we ask you gather us together again this evening ask all these things in and through and for Jesus in his name say Amen that's a singing conclusion from the Scottish Psalter Scottish Psalter Psalm 51 Scottish Psalter Psalm 51 that's on page 280 of the psalm of course this is a psalm of God's love and God's salvation to all that come to him Psalm 51 we can sing verses 1 down to verse 7 after thy loving kindness Lord have mercy upon me for thy compassion's great blot out all mine iniquity me cleanse from sin and freely wash from mine iniquity from my transgressions I confess my sin I ever see Psalm 51 verses 1 to 7 to God's praise■ got o'er resources we receive sm seventh me

The end of sin, I'm truly born, strong and iniquity.

For my castations, I confess my sin, I ever see.

If they only have my sin, then thy sight of this hell.

Thy heaven must be, the mercy just not the end of sin.

[ 66 : 23 ] Before I end the iniquity, watch for me, when my mother also here comes to me.

When will he let us stand? Before the end the inward parts, wait till I tell you.

My best God shall make me, O, when in the heavenly heart.

The end of sin, I shall be blessed.

The end of sin, I shall be brighter than the snow.

[ 68 : 20 ] In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and forevermore. Amen.