

The Parable Of The Soils

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: 10 January 2016

Preacher: David Moser

[0 : 00] Good morning, I'm Dave Moser. I'm one of the pastors or elders here at Shoreline.! I'm really glad to be here with you today. I invite you to turn with me to Matthew chapter 13.

If you have a Bible, or you can Google it on your phone, or it will eventually be up here on the screen behind me. While you're turning there, we're about to listen to a story that was first told and then written down about 2,000 years ago.

Why would we do that? I'm sure many of us have heard over the holidays, you know, the story of Jesus' birth.

It was a humble birth. No room in the inn. A feeding trough for a crib. But it was also a noble birth. Angel choruses. A star in the sky.

He was born a king. But ages have passed since then. The age of Rome has come and gone. The age of late antiquity has passed. The medieval age.

[1 : 02] The age of the great European empires has come and gone. The age of the Enlightenment. The age of the Industrial Revolution. The space age. The information age. They've all come and gone. Why are we listening to a story that predates them all?

Well, for all those 2,000 years, this story has captured all of those ages. All of those generations. And here we are still reading his story. And he came telling stories. The parables. And that's what this new sermon series is all about.

These are the stories of the king. And so it's fitting that we begin with a story that the king told about his kingdom. So, Matthew chapter 13, starting in verse 1.

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.

[2 : 04] And as he sowed, some seed 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. Now, skipping to verse 18.

Hear then the parable of the sower. Jesus now explains. 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 little while.

[3 : 07] And when tribulation or persecution arises on a cord 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.

Indeed, he bears fruit and yields, in one case, a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty. So that's the story.

Let's pray, and then we'll first look at why he told this story. So let's pray. Father, in these quiet moments, may the words of my mouth, my meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight.

Oh Lord, our rock, and our redeemer. Amen. So why did Jesus tell this story? Did he just walk up to somebody and spout it out?

[4 : 11] Look at verse one. He says, That same day, Jesus went out of the house 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.

The first word's, that same day. The story doesn't just come out of the blue. It's connected to something else. To see that, we have to backtrack into chapter twelve.

Starting in verse forty-six, we'll see why. He was still speaking to the people. Behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?

And stretching out his hand towards his disciples, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother. So, the parable of the sower, is connected to that.

It's told in response to it. And this is going to be really important when we get to the end, when he talks about the good soil. So, don't forget this. Okay, so that's the setting and the introduction.

[5 : 15] Let's get to the story itself. He tells the story, we'll look first at the three unfruitful soils. Now, you might be saying, why should I care?

Why should I care? Like, about a story, it's not relevant to me. It's about farming. It's old. There are two reasons that you should care about this story.

First, this story is about you. Even before we hear Jesus explain the parable, you probably, yes, this is about four different kinds of people.

The soils represent different hearts. You are one of the four soils. There's no escaping it. And so, 2,000 years ago, Jesus told a story about you.

And secondly, the story doesn't stand alone. Just like looking before the passage is important, looking after the passage is also really important. There are more stories in Matthew chapter 13.

[6 : 16] The next one is another farming parable, starting in verse 24. He put another parable before them, saying, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away.

So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, Master, did you not sow good seed in your field?

How then does it have weeds? He said to them, an enemy has done this. So the servant said to him, then, do you want us to go and gather them? But he said, no, lest in gathering the weeds, you root up the wheat along with them.

Let both grow up together until the harvest. And at harvest time, I will tell the reapers, gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned. But gather the wheat into my barn.

I'm willing to bet you know what that means. If you need a clearer explanation, he gives it in verses 36 to 43. That taken together, it matters what kind of soil you are.

[7 : 28] In the parable of the sower and the seeds. One group of people is headed to death. Or they will be weeping and gnashing of teeth if you look at verses 36 to 43.

The other will be headed to God's household where he says that they will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father. So why should you care about this story?

Because it's about you. Because your part in the story is a matter of life and death. And we love you, so we're telling you this story. And Jesus loves you.

That's why he came and told us this story. So we might find life in him. So that we might shine like the sun in the kingdom of our father. So how do we get there?

Well, we're going to jump straight to Jesus' explanation, starting in verse 18. Now, verses 10 to 17 are important. In fact, they're their own sermon. And that's actually what we'll be looking at next week.

[8 : 29] So we're not just skipping that. It's still an important piece of the puzzle. But today we're going to focus in on the four soils. Verse 18. Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, the first thing we need to answer is, what is that?

The word of the kingdom. That's the seed that's being sown. What is it? In the book of Matthew, if you look back and read up to chapter 13, when Jesus speaks of the kingdom of heaven, he speaks almost always in a moral dimension.

Within the book of Matthew, he's already paired up the kingdom with our morals in a number of ways. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the

kingdom of heaven.

So, the kingdom of God is less about the kingdom and more of God, if you get my understanding there. Because it's about his righteousness, his justice, his love.

That's why, when Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer, the kingdom features like this. Your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[9 : 46] The kingdom of God is God's rule in human hearts to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God. So, the word of the kingdom is the announcement of that kingdom and the invitation to be a part of it.

The first words of Jesus' public ministry are, repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. So, in this parable, the seed represents that message.

Now, now that we know what the seed is, let's look at the reception of the different soils. Verse 19, 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. This is simply the heart that is hardened to the message of God. Now, it's as hard as the packed earth of a well-worn trail.

There's nowhere for a seed to grab a hold of. There's nowhere for it to put down its roots. And it doesn't penetrate. And that hardness can take a lot of forms.

[10 : 53] It can look like, you know, defiant opposition, but it can also look like complete apathy or indifference. If the message of the kingdom leaves you unaffected, you're this soil.

And I hope that God uses that as a warning to start breaking up the hard soil in your heart. Verse 20, as for what was sown on a rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.

Yet, he has no root in himself and endures for a little while. And when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. The second person is a bit different.

There's a positive response here. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. me. That's a good start, right?

But all is not well here. Are you familiar with bonsai trees? They're those really short trees, right? How do they get like that?

[12 : 06] How can you have like an elm tree that's 100 feet tall outside but sits on a shelf in your living room? Do you know how that happens? Part of it is that it's in an incredibly shallow potting or potter.

And so there's nowhere for the roots to go. And if it can't go deep, it can't go up either. And that's the picture here of the rocky ground. It doesn't even mention soil.

It's rocky ground. And there might be a little bit of soil on top, but there's nowhere for it to dig down deep. If there's any soil here, it's superficial. And that's what Jesus is warning against.

See, simply agreeing with Jesus, like saying, hey, yeah, I'll take that seed, it isn't really enough. He finishes the thought. Yet he has no root in himself, just like the bonsai, but endures for a while.

And when tribulation and persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. A shallow soil allows that seed to get a foothold. But underneath, the bedrock of your heart is something else.

[13 : 16] And it kills the seed. If something other than Jesus is your most important thing, the word of the kingdom will not take root in your heart.

Because you won't allow it to. And this was me for much of my life. I grew up in the church. I knew the gospel. I agreed with it.

I said, yeah, that's the truth. But I didn't want to have it in my life, if you'll get my meaning there. It reminds me of a story my mentor once told me.

He was giving premarital counseling to an engaged couple. and he was going to marry them in a few months. And he was laying out some ground rules. And one of them was no sex between now and the wedding.

Now immediately, the guy stood up and said, what the bleep? Like, that was the seed running right into the bedrock. He had something else that was more important to him than Christ and Christ's kingdom.

[14 : 24] And that was me in my life, too. I knew the truth. I said, yeah, that's great. But I'm not interested in it being my bedrock.

I had my own bedrock. And even though I knew it, I never allowed it to take root in my life. And I was numbered among the demons. In James chapter 2, James says this, you believe that God is one.

You do well. I had the truth. So do the demons. I didn't reject it. Thought out, like, hard soil.

But he continues, even the demons believe and shudder. So I had the truth. I had the facts. So do the demons. I believe them. So do the demons. The question is, how do you respond?

Do you embrace the truth? Or do you stand up and shout like that engaged guy and say, no. Or do you shudder like the demons?

[15:31] Or do you throw yourself on Christ? On the surface, I might have looked a bit like a Christian. I could say the right things. I can fool you if you weren't looking closely.

But under the surface, I was just as hard as the person whose heart is represented by the path. I called him Lord with my lips, but I still called something else Lord in reality.

I wasn't worshipping Christ. I was still separated from him. Now, the third soil is actually very similar to the rocky ground. Verse 22. 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.

See, instead of the obstacles being underneath the surface, they're now above the surface. There are other seeds in this world and they compete with the seed of the kingdom.

There's the word of the kingdom, but there's also the word of popularity and pleasure, toys, money. They compete with the gospel. But they produce thorns, not fruit.

[16:49] And if you let them, they will kill you. But interestingly, it's not riches, if you look closely, themselves that choke out the gospel. It's the deceitfulness of riches.

If you buy into their lie, money promises us a lot of things, like security, but that's a lie. Our money can be taken from us at any point.

We can squander it away. Somebody can sue us. The tax man can come. It is not secure, but it promises security. But it's false. It doesn't offer what it promises.

So if you're constantly pursuing the security that wealth brings, you will never truly have it. And if you think you have it, it can be taken from you at any moment.

Wealth also promises us pleasure, doesn't it? If you just buy this car, the advertisers tell you. Or live in this neighborhood, the realtor tells you. Or take this vacation, you'll be fulfilled.

[17:54] And everyone will love you if you buy this product. But with the tabloids and the advertisers don't tell you, the soap operas will, interestingly enough. And that's, you can be just as miserable, even more so, living in a mansion.

So, money doesn't offer the security it promises. It doesn't offer the pleasure it promises. And if that's the thing you pursue, if that's your God, you will be choked out and unfruitful.

And you will not shine like the sun in the house of the Father. And I'm afraid there are lots of people who sit in churches every Sunday all across America, all across the world, who, like me, when I was young, said, I believe the truth, but they're still rocky or weedy ground.

The hard heart, the shallow heart, the choked heart, none of them have life. What then must our hearts look like? Verse 23, 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. What sets the good soil apart? At first glance it looks like it's the fruit, but actually that's a result of something deeper.

[19:34] There's a foundation underneath that fruit. Did you catch the word in there? He hears the word and understands it. It's the only one of the soils that understands it.

The good soil is in contrast to the others. In verse 19, the man on the path doesn't understand it.

And the other two soils, the rocky soil and the weedy soil, doesn't even mention understanding.

Doesn't even come into the discussion. Only the good soil, not hardened, not shallow, not competing with other plants, only that person understands the word of the kingdom, says Jesus.

And that's what sets them apart. And that's what produces the fruitfulness. So what does he mean when he says understands? Is there like an exam or something? We're going to spend next week looking at verses 10 to 17.

We're going to look at it really quickly now to shed some light on what he means when he says understand. Verse 15. For this people's heart has grown dull with their ears they can barely hear

and their eyes they have closed lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their hearts and understand with their heart and turn and I would heal them.

[20 : 50] So we'll look at it more next week. But what we can say now is this. Hearing the message is not enough. You must also embrace it.

Understand it with your heart. Embrace the word of the kingdom. That's your kingdom come. Your will be done. That's what it means.

That's what sets the good soil apart. And what are the results? A yield of fruit. Which is really key here because if we remember back to the reason he told the story.

Why did he tell the story? He looked back in the chapter 12. Whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

And this is the only one of the soils that produces the fruit. That's the obedience. And here's where it gets cool. Jesus wasn't saying, I'll come hang out with you if you accomplish a lot of biblical tasks.

[21 : 57] quite the opposite. He's saying, if you understand the word of the kingdom, embrace it with your heart, you will bear much fruit. And you will be my brothers and sisters.

That will be the evidence. So hear me. If the gospel has taken root in your heart, Jesus calls you family.

family. Earlier we said there were four kinds of people to go to the four soils. The point Jesus wants to get across is this.

There are really only two. Those he calls family and those he doesn't. Now, certainly there are different ways of not being his family. Different kinds of unfruitful soil, hard, rocky, thorny, but whether you reject the word of the kingdom because of a hard heart or a distracted one isn't really the point.

Only if you embrace the king, submit yourself to his kingdom, will you produce the fruit of obedience that demonstrates you a part of his kingdom family. So if you've never embraced the word of the kingdom, where God's will is done, do it today.

[23 : 16] Jesus will call you family, and you will shine like the sun in the kingdom of your father. And for those of us who Jesus has already made a new creation, those he already calls family, I have a simple question.

Do you live like that, like your family? Are you in hot pursuit of his goals? Is your heart cry, your kingdom come, your wondrous will be done?

On earth that's in me, as it is in heaven? Are you growing from thirtyfold fruitfulness to sixty to hundredfold? Or have you started to let your first love wane?

Are you looking over at your neighbor saying, that's a fine-looking rock you've got there, or that's a handsome thorn bush? church? How do you recent?

That's the question, how? What can you do today because of this passage? Well, here's a thought. The passage is about spreading the seed, the word of the kingdom.

[24 : 24] In passages like Matthew 28, Jesus calls us to spread the word of the kingdom too. What if someone walked up to you today and said, what's Christianity all about?

If you're having tremors, like, how do I answer that? Figure it out. It's a wonderful spiritual exercise for you.

It's great because it makes you ready to answer the question, and it helps you know the difference between right and wrong, but it's also good for your soul, your soul.

it's awesome for your heart. It's the word of the kingdom, remember, that produces the fruit. So, meditating on the gospel, the word of the kingdom, it's huge for your own heart.

Now, if you're a little rusty on the gospel, let me bring it back to mind for you. If this is new to you, let me make it as clear as I can. This is the word of the kingdom, the gospel of Jesus Christ, in seven ideas.

[25 : 37] One, God, the maker of heaven and earth, is completely, utterly, perfectly good. He is the great treasure we must pursue, and he is the great king we all owe our allegiance to.

But, two, we have all gone our own way. God's sin. We have set ourselves up as gods.

When we decide what's right, what's valuable, what we'll pursue, this sin has separated us from God. So, three, because God is perfectly good, he punishes sin.

A God that doesn't care about justice is hardly good, hardly worth worshiping. That's what we see in the next parable about the good and the bad seed, weeping and gnashing of teeth. Hell is real, and we have all earned it.

But, four, because God is also perfectly loving, he doesn't want that to be the end of the story. He entered the world as a man, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of God, and he lived a life completely pleasing to God the Father.

[27 : 00] No sin, no rebellion, and not just avoiding sin, but actively, fruitfully living a holy life. In his life, he completely lived out the word of the kingdom.

Your kingdom come, your will be done. But, five, we hated him. We nailed him to a cross.

In Acts chapter three, Peter put it like this, you denied the holy and righteous one, and you killed the author of life. Let that sink in.

We killed the author of life. The only one who deserved no wrath faced it. The God of justice himself experienced the greatest injustice.

God the father raised him from the dead and seated him in heaven with a name that is above every name so that finally, seven, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved because by repenting and believing on Jesus, he delights to unite himself to you.

[28 : 29] He draws near to us and associates himself and his everlasting life with us so closely that we share life and lot with him. He says, my brother, my sister.

recently in Ephesians chapter 5, we saw that Christ's relationship to his people is like a marriage, just as a husband and wife are bound together, responsible for each other's debts, sharing in each other's successes.

Jesus has bound himself to his bride, the church. He has taken our sin and death on himself and nailed it to the cross where they died with him.

And we have his righteousness, his blessings, his inheritance and his everlasting life poured out on us. Our debts became his and he paid them and his glories became ours.

So he has given us status as children of the Father and he gave us his righteousness so that in Matthew chapter 13 verse 43, we could be called the righteous. He said, then the righteous, will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father.

[29 : 49] A parable of the sower and the seed and the soils is a story about Jesus, his kingdom and you. He who has ears, let him hear.

Let's pray. pray. Father, nothing in our hands we bring.

Only to your son we cling. Lord, I pray that your word would be powerful in the lives of your people. people. If anyone here has a hard heart, Lord, plow it into soft soil. If anyone here has a shallow, rocky heart, crush the bedrock beneath it.

If anyone has a heart full of weeds competing against you, Lord, I pray that you would tear out those lesser deceitful things. and for those of us in whom the gospel has already taken root, who have repented and believed, whom you call family, reinvigorate us with a passion for you, your kingdom, and sowing the seed along with you.

[31 : 13] Give us Jesus, Lord, only Jesus. Pray these things in his name. Amen. Two things before we sing.

If you need to hear that message of the gospel again, maybe you need to meditate on it more, because you need to have the fires of your heart stoked again.

Basically, what I wrote, what I just said, is written down nearly verbatim near the offering box in the back. Take it, meditate on it. If you need to hear that again because you've never received Christ, I want you to take the hand out too, but I also want you to talk to me.

I would love to pray with you. And secondly, if you came here today and you were pretty sure you were one of these soils, and what you've heard has disrupted that, and it's causing anguish in your soul, scripture tells us that we can be assured of our salvation.

And I want to talk to you too, so that you can know that you will shine like the sun in the house of your father too. Thank you.