

ChristReformationChurch

Tillamook, Oregon

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com

www.lightfordarktimes.com

The Gospel According to Matthew

Soils, Seed, and the Kingdom

February 3, 2019

Sermon Text: Matthew 13:1-23

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor 3

This morning we come to this 13th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew which contains one of the most important and famous parables of Jesus. The parable of the soils, or The Sower. Crucial truths are here that every Christian must know, though it seems that in our day many if not most are quite ignorant of these fundamentals.

Listen as we read and hear the words of the Lord:

Mat 13:1-23 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.

(2) And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. (3) And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. (4) And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. (5) 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, (6) but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. (7) Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. (8) Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (9) He who has ears, let him hear."

(10) Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" (11) And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. (12) For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have

an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

(13) This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. (14) Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ""You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." (15) For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'

(16) But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. (17) For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

(18) "Hear then the parable of the sower: (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. (20) As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) yet he has no root in

himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. (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. (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."

We have in this passage three major sections:

1. The parable itself
2. Jesus' Teaching on the Purpose of Parables in his teaching
3. The plain explanation of the parable

The Parable

This chapter is a concentration of Jesus' parables.

- The Weeds
- The Mustard Seed and the Leaven
- The Hidden Treasure
- The Pearl of Great Value
- The Fishing Net

The word, literally taken, means something like "to throw alongside."

Instead of plain-speaking in terms of the actual people and things and places, a parable “parallels” the reality in terms of a kind of picture which must be interpreted to be understood. In the picture, things and people represent some actual thing or person or truth, and thus a parable requires interpretation.

In this case we have:

- A Sower sowing
- Seed
- 4 Different Soils
- 4 Different germinations

This is what Jesus told the crowds. No explanation of the images. No interpretation given to them.

The Disciples’ Question

Listen again then to this very logical question the disciples asked Jesus out of the hearing of the crowds:

(10) Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" (11) And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. (12) For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (13) This is why I speak to them

in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

(14) Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ""You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." (15) For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'

Here is the passage that Jesus is referring to when He quotes Isaiah-

Isa 6:8-13 And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." (9) And he said, "Go, and say to this people: ""Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'" (10) Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." (11) Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, (12) and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst

of the land. (13) And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.

Do you see this? Do you understand that there are people, many people, who Christ does not want to hear the gospel? Who are they? Drunkards, homosexuals, swindlers, murderers? In some cases, but not for these reasons. Rather, they are people *who do not want to know Him*. Remember what we saw recently in Hebrews:

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

But how did Jesus describe most people? The ones in the crowd to whom He only spoke in parables? Well, in the same terms He had used in Isaiah's day:

- Dull hearts
- Deaf ears
- Blind eyes

What kind of people does God withhold the gospel? From people who have received His truth but who do not want it. From people who have tasted of His goodness, yet spewed Him out of their mouths. From people who

have heard of the cross and blood of Christ, but who trample it underfoot with derision. That describes the Jews of Isaiah's day, of Jesus' day, and the majority of people in our day. Including many who claim to be Christians but who in fact are fake sheep.

The Lord actively withholds and hides the gospel from people who do not want Him. He prevents them from understanding His truth. He gives them over to believe the lie they prefer.

You see, any person who refuses Christ, who wants Him to just leave them alone, who does not want to know Him, must understand that He is not going to just leave them as they are. No. He brings judgment on them and their condition grows worse:

"Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

The willful sinner does not just cruise along on an even plain, remaining in his present condition. Oh no. He descends deeper and deeper and deeper into evil and enslavement to Satan. If anyone here this morning is just toying with "church," if you are just playing a game and what you really want is the

world and for the Lord to leave you alone, *then be assured that when He leaves you, your last condition will be worse.*

Rom 1:28-32 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. (29) They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, (30) slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, (31) foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (32) Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

No one stays the same. Either we know Christ and we grow in His truth and Light, or we reject Him and descend into all manner of wickedness and darkness.

Let me emphasize this to children and young people. Your parents cannot desire Christ *for you*. They certainly desire that you come to know Him and be saved, but that is only going to happen if YOU seek Him, if YOU want to know Him and be saved. It comes down to YOU.

Joh 3:18-19 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (19) And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

See it? If you love the darkness, if you love your present condition as a slave to sin, as a lover of this present world, if you do not want Him, then He will not explain His parables to you.

But he won't just leave you in your present condition. Oh no. As He departs from such a person, He removes all of his restraining influence and they are given over increasingly to their sin until eventually they cross that boundary from which there is no return.

The Bible as Parable

You have probably heard people say, "no one really can understand the Bible. Everyone just interprets it as they want to." In one way, that is true. Those who do not want to know the Lord, who do not want to hear His truth, will not be able to understand His Word. It is one long dark parable to them, closed to their eyes and mind. The Lord is not going to give light and

His Spirit to those who do not want Him.

1Co 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

If you are bored every Sunday in this church, if you find the Bible soooo boring and dull, then let me warn you – *you should be very, very fearful*. Do you see it? If as Paul says the word of the cross is folly to you – that means that *you are perishing*. You are living in death and you are headed for hell.

Eyes that are Blessed

Listen then once more. Here is the good news for everyone who seeks Him and knows Him:

(16) But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. (17) For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

(18) "Hear then the parable of the sower: (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. (20) As for what was sown on

rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. (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. (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."

We in the church age are not only blessed to know Christ, but we are doubly blessed to know much more of His truth than “many prophets and righteous” people in the centuries before Christ came.

Specifically, what Christ has shown us is that *the kingdom of God is not of this creation. It is of His Spirit. It is not an earthly nation of people who are physically born into that kingdom to obey a legal covenant carved in stone*. No, this kingdom, the true kingdom of God, is only entered by those who have been born again. Who have heard “the word of the kingdom” and in whom it has taken root, germinated, grown, and borne fruit.

What do we see in this parable? We see that most people do not receive Christ's Word. They do not receive Christ, and this for a number of reasons:

1. The devil blinds their minds so that they cannot and do not receive the good news,
2. Many seem to get off to an exciting and good start, but as soon as the world begins to persecute them because of Christ, as soon as following Christ begins to cost them something, they jump ship and go right back to the world,
3. Others want money. They are all caught up in the world and all of its business and eventually they simply fade out and soon forget all about Christ.

There is then at least $\frac{3}{4}$'s of humanity. The seed only truly takes root and germinates and bears fruit in $\frac{1}{4}$ of those who hear and of course we are right to conclude that even $\frac{1}{4}$ is an overstated number. Listen to it again:

(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.

Next time we are going to look further into this particular verse. Where did the good soil come from? Are some people more "good" than others and that is the explanation? What does it mean to "understand" the Word? And just what is this Word specifically (the word of the kingdom)? Does every real Christian "bear fruit" and why did Jesus say that this fruit-bearing would differ in amounts from person to person?

For now we conclude with these thoughts on "the seed" –

A seed is a remarkable thing. Hard. Apparently dead. And yet when placed in the proper soil, provided with water and light, the dead comes to life. Every seed that germinates is a kind of "resurrection." Where does this life come from? And once the seed germinates, how is it that it "knows" what it is, so that a bean seed grows into a bean plant, a human seed grows into a human being, and so on. No one ever planted a Douglas Fir seed and watched it grow into an apple tree.

Little wonder that Jesus chose seed as the image for the Word of the kingdom. It is the seed that is sown by God to raise up a harvest of a new humanity, a kingdom ruled by King Jesus.