

**Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23    God Made You Good Ground!    July 25-27, 2020**

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**Introduction**

In today’s gospel reading, Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23, Jesus takes to the farm and the fields as he teaches the Parable of the Sower and the Seed. A parable is a story with a godly spiritual point or message. Jesus used parables to illustrate truths for his followers and to veil truths from his enemies. The take-home for today is this: **JESUS MADE YOU GOOD GROUND ... Thank God for Doing This ... Let Your Ground Produce a Much Good.** Let’s think about this parable.

**EXAMPLE 1**                    **Matthew 13:1-4: That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. <sup>2</sup>Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. <sup>3</sup>Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.**

With parables there is always a main point of comparison and sometimes some sub-points. In verses 18-23 Jesus connects the dots for us.

**Matthew 13:18-23: “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: <sup>19</sup>When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path.**

In picturing the sower, don’t picture a mega-tractor with a 48-row planter. Picture this. The sower is God, and in a transferred sense, anyone who speaks God’s Word in behalf of God. The seed is God’s Word. The soil is the soul of humankind and the reception God’s Word receives as it is proclaimed to them.

Jesus lived, died, and rose again for all. God wants all people to be saved and to have saving faith in Jesus as their Savior. God wants the gospel to be proclaimed to all peoples – therefore the Great Commission. But when the word of God is proclaimed not all receive it the same way.

In Jesus’ first example the person hears or reads God’s Word and knows the facts about God and Jesus being the Savior. But he or she does not believe with saving faith in Jesus – the understanding of faith.

Why? Possible something happened that turned them off to the Bible or Christianity. God allowed something they think is unfair or not right. They got a serious illness. A kind, giving loved one died. They look at catastrophes and tragedies in the world and conclude, “If God is a loving God, how can he allow these things to happen. I want nothing to do with him.” Or, in self-righteousness they conclude, “I don’t need a savior.” Or, they just don’t believe there is a god. So they are unresponsive.

**EXAMPLE 2**                    Jesus goes on - **Matthew 13:5-6: “<sup>5</sup>Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.”**

Again, Jesus provides the meaning -Matthew 13:20-21: <sup>20</sup>**The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup>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.**

Sadly, I have seen this all too often in ministry. People hear the gospel of Jesus and find great comfort and joy in it. After the initial contact with God's Word, there is little or no on-going contact. So the Holy Spirit doesn't get the opportunity to grow and mature that person. It can be the person who goes through a Bible information class, comes to church for a while, and then becomes inactive. It can be the confirmand who is all excited about his or her faith, but then seldom reads the Bible, worships, or receives Communion. So the spiritual roots don't continue to develop, but actually shrink.

When sickness, loss of loved ones, family problems, financial issues or other arise, they wonder, "Why is God doing this to me?" Or, when they find themselves taking flack or even threatened for being a Christian, they can't handle it. They fall from faith. They were impulsive – no growth.

**EXAMPLE 3** Jesus gives a third example of people receive God's Word - **Matthew 13:7:**  
**"<sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants."** Jesus explains the meaning this way – **Matthew 13:22:** <sup>22</sup>**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.**

In this case, God's Word is heard. It is received. But the soul that receives it has tentacles of anxiety or worry, and/or greed. Maybe Covid-19 and the possibility of death has so overwhelmed them, they can't think of anything else including God's Word. Or they are so wrapped up in their finances because they have been deceived to think that money and possessions will solve their problems, make them better off and happier. They don't realize that if you're not happy without money, you won't be happy with it. Money will just enable them to suffer in style. So they don't receive God's word because they are pre-occupied.

**EXAMPLE 4** Jesus takes to the last example of receiving God's word – **Matthew 13:8-9:** <sup>8</sup>**Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. <sup>9</sup>Whoever has ears, let them hear."** Jesus explains things this way – **Matthew 13:23:** <sup>23</sup>**But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."**

Do you believe in the God who is One and yet Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son and Mary's Son who lived a perfect life, died on the cross to pay for your sins, and rose again so God could and did declare you forgiven and innocent in his sight? If so, this example is you. You are the good soil.

But you aren't the one who made you this. As you came into this world, your soul was that hard-packed soil of which Jesus spoke. You couldn't receive God's Word. As Paul wrote, you were **"...dead in your transgressions and sins ... an object of wrath (Eph. 2:1-3)."** This is the way we all come into this world.

It's the way we all are by nature. This is how we are in the eyes of God if we don't believe in the Triune God and in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

But just as a farmer breaks up the hard-packed soil of a hard-packed field with a huge tractor and a plow, so God the Holy Spirit, through the Law convicts of sin and convinces us of our need for the Savior. Then through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, The Holy Spirit softened your soul, making it fertile and receptive to God's love. The Holy Spirit enabled you to receive and believe in Jesus. The soil was worked, the seed was planted, and it germinated. You came to faith. Through that faith you received the forgiveness of sins, a place in God's family, and the righteousness of Christ. As a result you can and do good works to the glory of God to varying degrees.

### **JESUS' PURPOSE**

Why did Jesus teach us this? Not so that we could boast or glory in ourselves! Jesus taught this to impress on us the greatness of God's grace-his undeserved love – our lives. Every day when you get up, you get up fully loved by God, fully forgiven, fully a member of his family, and an heir of eternal life. Every night when you go to bed through faith in Jesus you are the same. For this, thank God in your prayers, your worship, and in your life.

God made you his not only that you be saved, but that you also produce “**a crop**” to his glory. The crop to which Jesus refers are good works that flow out of our faith in Jesus and are in keeping with God's Word. Remember that good works don't save us. Jesus did that. Good works are way of saying, “Thank you God for saving me. We don't do good works to get attention, but to direct attention to God.

Good works show love for others. In Matthew 25 Jesus pointed out that when we Christians do good works, often we don't think about it; we just do it. On the other hand the Lord gives us all kinds of commands and directions to love one another, encourage one another, help one another, forgiven one another, and bear each other's burdens.

### **CAUTION**

Realize that due to our sinful natures and the devil who is ever-present, we have to be careful that we don't slip into the patterns of the first three receptions of God's Word. There's always the temptation to tune out God's word either not listening or not using it. If we are not growing in faith the troubles and persecutions of life may overcome us and cause us to fall. If we let worry and the deceitfulness of wealth to overwhelm us so they choke off the word, we may be lost, and we won't produce a good crop.

### **USE GOD'S WORD**

Continue to hear, read, think about, and apply God's word in your lives. Make it a point to worship weekly. Intentionally prepare for worship. Get a good night's sleep. When we give you what's on deck for the coming weekend, check out the readings, sermon text, and service. Pray that God helps you to tune out the world and tune into His Word. Daily set aside some time to focus on God's word whether it's Meditations, Pastor Smith's devotion's, Grace Moments, WELS devotions, a section of the Bible, or other spiritually enhancing material. Come to Bible class whether in person or online. Let the Holy Spirit grow you, equip you, and empower you to bring forth a good crop.

Daily thank God and produce a good crop. God has enabled this as he has made you good ground.