

The Parable of the Soils

Luke 8:1~15, part 2

Luke begins this section telling us, that Jesus began to go about from city to city, village to village, proclaiming the “*Kingdom of God*.” Speaking of the long awaited “*Kingdom*” prophesied of, by the prophets of old, that would be “*set up*” at the coming of Messiah. The only problem was, it would not be *the kind of kingdom* that Israel had in mind. It would not be an earthly, worldly kingdom, as Israel had imagined. Jesus had not come to take the throne of David, cast out Rome and restore Israel to its glory as they anticipated. But rather, the Kingdom Jesus came to establish was that of the “***Rule and reign of God in the hearts of men.***” Let me say that again, because that statement is vital in understanding this Parable.

The ***Kingdom of God*** is a reference to *the rule and reign of God in the hearts of men!*

The scene here is that of Jesus preaching the “*Kingdom of God*” to lost and dying sinners, with the hope they would receive it, by coming to Christ! The *sower* is *Christ*, the *seed* is the *word of God*, and the *soils* are the *hearts of men*. When understood, this parable explains how men/women become “*citizen’s of the kingdom.*” It explains what Jesus meant, when He told Nicodemous, “*Ye must be born again...except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (Something Nicodemous had trouble understanding.) “*Born again*” is better translated, “*Born from above.*” Nowhere is that better explained, than here in this analogy. This “*New life*” Jesus was referring to, would come as a result of embracing the message of Christ! By “*faith*” in the gospel of Christ (seed), this “*new life* (wheat)” is produced in the heart of the man.

Listen, it’s important that we don’t miss the point of the “*parable,*” as not to miss the truth Jesus is trying to teach. Which is the “*Sowing of the Seed,*” and the “*Harvest of the grain.*” Now don’t miss this, it is the “***Harvest, produced by the Seed***” that is in view here. Now don’t miss that, just as a seed is sown, to produce a harvest, the word of God is preached in hopes of a *harvest of the souls of men*. The preaching of the gospel is aimed at bringing rebellious men/women, into humble submission to Jesus Christ as Lord.

Here Jesus uses that analogy of a sower, sowing seeds in his field, to reveal a great mystery of the kingdom of God. Jesus declares that the kingdom will be offered to all men, but reveals, that for one reason or another, many will not receive it. In declaring this truth, he uses four different kinds of soil, to illustrate the different responses of the hearers, three of which rejected His offer of the kingdom.

Last week, we looked at the first two soils that He referred to as the “*wayside,*” and the “*stony ground.*” The first ground, the “*Wayside,*” refers to the trodden down path between the fields. This ground is hard, making it unsuitable for growing anything! Grass does not even grow here... Thus the seed that fell here, merely set on top of the ground, and in time, the birds swoop down and pick it up. The “*wayside hearers,*” represent those will hear the word of the kingdom, but due to the *hardness of their heart*, reject it. They make it clear; they want nothing to do with it. Luke tells us that the birds represent Satan, and that he comes and steals the word out of this man’s heart, just to ensure he doesn’t start “*thinking*” about it later, and be saved.

The next one, are those described as the “*stony ground.*” In His analogy, Jesus explained that the problem with this ground, was that there was a layer of bedrock just below the surface of the soil, that prevented the roots from going deep into the soil, getting the much needed water and nutrients to survive. As a result, the plant withers and falls away. Here Jesus uses the shallowness of the soil to represent “*superficial belief.*” It describes those who “*hear the word,*” and for a while “*appear to believe,*” but over time, when they begin to encounter the things that “*go along with following Christ,*” they leave. We need to be careful here as to not misunderstand what he’s saying here, for some have suggested this refers to

some who “*believed, and were saved,*” they just are backslidden. Not so, remember, the emphasis here in this parable, *is on the harvest produced by the seed*. Here, there was no “*wheat*” produced...it never came to maturity, due to the shallowness of the soil. The point of this soil was to explain that some will hear the word of the kingdom, and for a while, show signs of faith, but in time, when their faith is put to the test, it reveals it was nothing more than *superficial belief*.

This morning, I want to continue this parable, by looking at the next ground, the “*thorny ground.*”

(Vs 7) As he was sowing, ⁷ ... *some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.*

Here, Jesus uses another type of ground to describe how another group will respond to His message of the kingdom. He does so by describing how some of the seeds, that the sower had sown, fell among some thorns, a reference to the seeds of thorns that were in the soil as well.

Thorns was a big problem in Palestine... The ground conditions and the climate there were very conducive to thorns. Add to that, the fact there was *no pesticides*, and the fact that the seeds of thorns were spread by the wind, made it a very big problem, and very aggravating for the farmer. It was not uncommon for a farmer, after working tirelessly in his field, to later find that thorns had infested much of his crop, basically destroying it. As the wheat would begin to grow, so would the thorns, with the thorns quickly overtaking the wheat, and as Jesus says here, “*choking it.*”

Now this was something well known to those listening to him that day, for they had seen this time and time again. **But what did it mean, in terms of the kingdom of God?** Well, Jesus explains in verse 14...

(Vs 14) ¹⁴ *And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.*

Jesus reveals that the thorns are a reference to the “*cares and riches and pleasures*” of this life... Stating that it is “*these things*” that hinder and *destroy the hopes of a harvest*, in the hearts of these people. It is “*these things*” that will keep this group of hearers from the kingdom of God. The “*Cares of this world,*” the “*Riches of this world,*” and the “*Pleasures of this world*” will cause many to miss out on the kingdom of God! This one reminds me of a quote I once read, “*Heaven, don't miss it for the world.*” Beloved, tragically, many are doing just that. The sad, tragic truth is, that many, having heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, and after much consideration, have chosen the “*things of this life,*” over that of the “*life to come.*”

I want to look at this one closer, simply for the fact, that I think this one includes the greatest number of people. I am convinced that this one is the greatest reason people turn from following Christ. I say “*turn*” because given the analogy, this group, like that which fell upon stony ground, received it for a while. Jesus describes this group as those who receive the seed, but as it begins to grow, so does the thorns along with it, with the end result being, the thorns winning out! I'm convinced that therein we have a picture of the “*struggle*” taking place inside the human heart, for the heart. I see a picture of the word of God starting to take root, and beginning to grow in a man's heart. But as it does, the lust and desires for this world rise up, and wage battle with these new desires, eventually overtaking the new desires and choke them, destroying them!

This one tears my heart out...for I am convinced, that the individual Jesus is referring to here, *sincerely tried*, and I believe *they came really close*. But tragically, in the end, the world won out! Rather than turn from the world and yield his heart to Christ, this individual *holds on* to the world...

Now I need you to hear me, I've heard this interpreted, to refer to people who became believers, then slipped back into the world again, teaching it as backsliding. Teaching that in the end, they'll be ok. But beloved, that's not what's being taught here at all. The individual in view here, never became a believer. He came close, closer than the other two soils, but nonetheless, the end result was the same, *NOTHING*.

Notice, Jesus says... *“that the word was choked... with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.”*

That word “*perfection*” translates to “*maturity*”... *“The seed that fell on this ground grew, but did not mature and ripen, as a result of the thorns.”* Remember the “*Whole Point*” of the parable? The seed was sown in hopes of the harvest! The *emphasis* of the parable is on the “**Harvest, produced by the Seed**” Now don’t miss that, for it’s vital in correctly understanding what He’s teaching here. Just as a seed is sown, to produce a harvest, the *word of God is preached* in hopes of a *harvest of the souls of men*. This hearer, though closer than the others, *in the end was fruitless*. The word had not accomplished in this man’s heart what God had hoped it would. In the end, he still possessed a “*worldly heart*,” a heart yet centered on “*This world*,” and the “*Things of this world*”...and not on Christ!

Now don’t miss the point here...that being the “fruitlessness” of the first three soils. Though each one had a different reason as to why, the end result was the same, all three were “*fruitless*...” The point is, the two that initially received it, but later fell away...they are no better off than the one who initially rejected it, wanting absolutely nothing to do with it. For the end result of all three was the same, in that none of them truly submitted themselves to Jesus Christ as Lord of their life...

(Vs 8) These three “*fruitless soils*” are contrasted with the final soil, that brought forth fruit...

⁸*And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold.*

The good ground simply refers to the ground in which the SEED was able to grow and bear fruit. The seed accomplished what it set forth to do, in that it went into the ground, took root, and produced wheat!

Jesus points to this ground, as an example of the final group of hearers, those who receive His message of the kingdom, by yielding their hearts to the rule and reign of God. The “*Wheat*” symbolizes the “*eternal life*” **produced** in the man’s life, by the preaching of the word! Something that needs to be cleared up, this “*Life*” that the scripture speaks of, “*Eternal life*,” is not something that begins when you die. This “*Eternal life*” is a reference to the “*Life of God!*” “*Eternal Life*” is a reference to the “*Life of God produced in a man*” by the preaching of God’s word! Speaking of course, of the “*Life of Jesus Christ*,” manifested in *His being Lord of a man’s life!*

(Vs 15) ¹⁵*But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

Of all the grounds, this was the only one, which the seed accomplished what it was set out to do, and that is produce wheat. It simply refers to the one who hears the word of God, and receives it, resulting in the salvation of his soul. Using the analogy, you could say that the farmer, (Jesus) will return in the end, to gather His harvest, separating the wheat from the chaff, putting the wheat into the barn, & burn the chaff.

The question becomes...What made this “*Good Ground?*”

I’m convinced; that by referring to it as “*Good ground*,” I don’t think he was suggesting that it was of any “*better quality*” (example: *more rich in nutrients*) making it *better ground* than the others. Matter of fact, I want to suggest to you, that *the dirt* he’s referring to here, is absolutely “*no different*” than *the dirt* of the other three mentioned in this parable, I believe it’s all in the same field.

What sets this ground apart as “*good*,” **is not** what it “*contains*,” but rather what it “**does not contain.**” What makes this *good soil*, is not what it “*has in it*”...but what it “**does not have in it!**” It seems to be a contrast to the other soils. It is good ground considering the fact that it is not “*hard*,” that fact that it is not “*stony*,” the fact that it does not have “*thorns*” in it. It’s the “*lack of these things*” that make it “*good soil.*” I am convinced, that “*all of the ground*” would be suitable for growing wheat, if it were not for

“*hindrances, obstacles,*” such as the stones and the thorns. Even the wayside, the hard path between the fields, I would think, that if he had plowed that up, it too would have been suitable.

The emphasis here seems to be ***upon the condition of the soil***...not the soil itself.

I think its extremely important to understand what I’m saying, because given the fact that the ground represents the heart of man, there are none of us who are “*better*” than others. We may act a little more civilized...but we all possess the same, dark, dirty, depraved heart. Jesus is not saying that the “*dirt*” was better here. But rather, the difference with this soil was the “*condition*” of the dirt. The seed did not bear fruit in the first three soils, due to the condition of the ground and the things contained in the ground.

The “*Good ground*” is that which is simply...“*Broken and Empty*”

This “*Good ground*” simply describes that of a humble, repentant heart... Jesus is teaching here, that it is only *this kind of heart*, it is only *this kind of spirit* that is able to receive the kingdom of God.