

Hook

I decided to grow a plant. I got my green thumb ready to work. So, I put seed in some used motor oil from my truck. Guess what happened? Maybe it works better to grow a plant in dirt. This doesn't mean that it will grow into a beautiful, thriving plant. The soil matters. Our hearts are like soil in relation to the Word of God.

Book

What is a parable?

Literally means to 'come alongside'

A story that is used to come alongside a truth

In the context of scripture: An earthly story with a heavenly meaning

Purpose:

1. reveal the kingdom of God: the nature, coming, growth, and the consummation of it
2. To get a single point, or sometimes a number of points
 1. Not an allegory where everything has meaning
3. To get us to think, to contemplate the meaning
4. Reveal more to those who seek truth, hide the truth from those that don't want it
5. To draw attention to Jesus as Messiah and call us to a decision

Why did Jesus speak in parables?...the disciples asked this very question

(Matthew 13:10-17—expounds upon Mark 4:10-12)

Mark 4:25 clarifies

It became clear that many did not want to hear what Jesus taught

--for those that wanted to hear, they would begin to understand

--for those that would *continue in their unbelief* and not want to

hear, God was gracious enough to give them what they wanted

and would not reveal these truths to them, so their judgment

would be less

*Jesus willingly explained the parable to those that wanted to

know

Mark uses a kind of 'insider/outsider' language

Verse 11: insiders vs. outsiders

-insiders--those whom the fellowship and will of Jesus take

precedence over everything else

- hear, believe, and produce fruit
- outsiders--
 - gentiles were thought to be outsiders, pharisees and more were insiders
 - Jesus flips this upside down

Mark 4:1-20

What are the 'secrets'?

Knowledge of God that cannot be gained by natural means; that which is found in Jesus; through Jesus a productive harvest will be made throughout the world; the growth of God's Kingdom; The spirit of God regenerating the saved man; the growth of the church; how God works through the church

The writers of the OT wrote about them, but never understood them, nor experienced them.

-Hebrews 11:1-2 "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation."

The Parable is about hearing and this is connected to the soil of the heart. (V3, 9, 12, and 20)

An important question would then be: What does it mean to 'hear'?

- One can hear, but not let the things they heard have influence and impact upon them
- One can hear and let the things they hear have influence and impact upon them to the point they meditate upon those things and make them their way of life

Pieces of parable:

Sower—Jesus; we can translate that down to us because we now have the
Word

Seed—Word of God,

Soil—the heart

Look

Soil 1: hard heart (vs. 4; 14-15)

- Either fighting against God or just don't see a need for Him

- Don't see the impact of their sin; they are good enough
- an impenetrable heart; dismiss, even resists God's Word so it is easy for Satan to take it away
- the pharisees were in great danger of this. Their pride was so strong and had consumed them so much that they sought to even destroy Jesus.
- Hard hearts must be plowed up
 - For the sower-this takes time and prayer and wisdom
 - If this is you...I will pray for a softening of heart

Soil 2: Shallow heart: easily deterred heart (vs. 5-6; 16-17)

- emotional response, no head knowledge; gets caught up in the excitement, even looks like they mature, but hard times (the sun) turn them away
 - the Truth of God is very rational
 - We have evidences in our lives, in nature
 - This could be a person that comes to church because it makes them feel good, but what they experience is left in the church body
 - Their Sunday morning life looks different than Monday-Saturday
 - God's word never penetrated his will and intellect
 - Why discipleship and true fellowship is so important--being connect with others and God's Word
 - emotion in our faith does have its place, but it is never meant to lead our faith
 - the cost of following Jesus is not worth it; we will face persecution
 - doubts will come, what will you do with them
 - in times of hardship, this person abandons faith
- James 1:12 "Blessed is anyone who endures temptation"

Soil 3: The Distracted or divided heart (vs 7; 18-19)

- The good seed is mingled with the bad seed
- There is competition for the nutrients to make one stronger
- Intrigued and even love God's Word and the things of God, but never chase after them and make them your own. The things of this world (responsibilities, finances, and unhealthy desires) get room to

influence usf. Instead, it becomes more of a head knowledge with no response.

- repentance and removing weeds doesn't happen
- this is a partial commitment (i.e.—in friendship, running business together, marriage)
- We can't serve two masters, you will serve the one and not the other (Matt 6:24)
- “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34)
- The cost of following Jesus isn't worth losing what this world has to offer (fame and fortune)
 - It is better to be poor on earth and be rich in heaven; it is better to be alone on earth than alone in hell.
 - Fame and fortune aren't bad...how you got it, the priority it has in you matters
- It isn't a loss of salvation, it was a desire to gain something of value for themselves, to build them up; it inflated pride. The key--no fruit

Soil 4: The Good, receptive heart (vs 8; 20)

- Different than previous 3
 - hears, accepts, and bears fruit
 - hearing is active, not passive
 - they pursue God's Word
 - rejoice in the working of God's Word
 - begin to realize their resources are meant to be used for God's work
 - look for ways to
- result of a good heart--fruit
 - Galatians 5:22-23--fruit of the spirit
 - Ephesians 2:10--'good' works
 - 2 Timothy 2:21--"Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work."

-Matthew 5:14-16 "In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."

--30, 60, or 100x

-There is a promise, there is a result

-fruit comes

-For a crop to multiply 10x would be pretty good, but 30, 60, or 100x would be almost unfathomable.

-God's word over the ages has had tremendous impact; amazing results

-start with the disciples

-a small seed impacted a small area and moved it's way out to the entire world

-the enemy of God has been trying to destroy its growth since

-some will listen and respond, some will not--spread seed

-some will take more plowing

-some will be ready to harvest

-John 15:5 says, "The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit"

*We are called to spread seed, not save people

Rejection is a killer; seeds aren't ready for harvest overnight

Success for us isn't a saved life, but it is spreading the seed--leave that success up to God (1 Cor 3:5-9)

Took:

Each of the first 3 soils is influenced by a different enemy

-Soil 1: Satan himself snatches the seed

-Soil 2: the flesh counterfeits 'religious feelings'; emotional response

-Soil 3: the things of this world

How do we know if God is working in somebody?

-They listen and begin to engage in conversation, maybe they put themselves into a place to hear God's Word; that person comes to mind in regards to faith;

The concern needs to be our heart first and foremost.

How do we get a 'good' heart?

- starts with listening: an openness to God's Word
 - this makes fertile soil
- prayer
- humility towards what we hear
 - repentance and reflection
- seek to apply what you hear
- train yourself to be cognizant of God's presence with you
- put ourselves into a position of growth
 - personal prayer and devotion
 - give out of our resources
 - serve
 - rejoice
- invest your life with other believers

We have been given this parable to understand what it looks like to 'hear'.
It begins with a heart that will receive and then act upon
Which soil are you?