
If You Have Ears, Hear! (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23)
7/30/2017 Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



So, after hearing the parable of the Sower and the Seed from Matthew 13, which soil are you? Are you producing 100, 60, or 30 times what was sown? If not, you might be in trouble! Actually, let's take another look at Jesus' words.

Today, as we take a closer look this parable and parables in general, Jesus shows us that this is exactly the wrong question to ask about this parable. God does not want us to hear this parable and walk away asking whether or not we are the good soil. God wants us to do what the disciples did: come back to Jesus so we can hear more from him. Today, God calls us. If You Have Ears, Hear!

In the next couple weeks, we are going to look at some of Jesus' parables. They are earthly stories with heavenly meanings. You'll notice that in our gospel reading, we skipped verses 10-17, but I'm going to spend some time on that section here because this is where Jesus actually explains to his disciples why he speaks in parables.

Many people say that Jesus used parables because he was a master teacher and learners respond really well to picture language. There may be some truth to that, but that is not the biblical reason Jesus used parables.

After Jesus finishes the parable of the Sower and the Seed, the disciples come to Jesus and ask him, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" Jesus answers them, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them." Jesus explains from Scripture that unbelievers are ever hearing but never understanding; ever seeing but never perceiving. Jesus explains that he used parables, not so that people would understand better, but so that they would be kept from understanding! Parables are a judgment on unbelievers!

Wow, Jesus, that's mean. No, that's just! Unbelievers refuse to listen to Christ. If Jesus taught clearly, they would have rejected him anyway, so Jesus speaks in parables to them. They hear his words and walk away thinking they have bettered themselves, but in reality they have only hardened themselves in their unbelief. The unbelieving world hears this parable of the Sower and the Seed and walks away asking, "Which soil am I?" They turn their eyes away from Christ and away from the

all-powerful seed, the Word of God! Instead, they turn their eyes inward at themselves, and they completely miss the point of the parable.

Jesus then turns to his disciples, who are looking not at themselves, but at Jesus. And Jesus says to them, "Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear." And that's what Jesus says to us today too. You and I have this incredible ability not only to hear the parable, but also to hear Jesus explain the parable, just as he explained it to his disciples. We get to see God's secrets revealed to us.

Jesus even says to the disciples in verse 17, "For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it." You and I, through the pages of Scripture, get to learn heavenly secrets that even the prophets of old never learned. And so, speaking to his people, who have ears that hear, Jesus explains the parable.

When anyone hears the message about the kingdom, when anyone hears the word about the reign of God, when anyone hears the message about the Son of God who came into the world to save the world, this is the gospel. When God's Word is spoken, Jesus speaks of four results.

The seed on the path are those who hear the gospel, and do not understand it. They don't get with it. It means nothing to them. They don't care. They don't want to hear anymore. You think Satan's gonna let the Word just sit by them in that case? No. Satan snatches away the message.

The seed on the rocky ground are those who hear and immediately believe! They receive the gospel with joy, but they have no root. Notice, a time comes when they face trouble or persecution *on account of the Word*. They come across something in God's Word that they just refuse to accept. Their cultural beliefs or the traditions they grew up with are more important to them than God's Word. They are scandalized by the Word. They stumble and fall away.

The seed among the thorns are those who hear, but they also want the good life. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of wealth, or you could say the deceitfulness of prosperity; these all get in the way. They want the Word, but they also want that stuff. They want the Word but they also want the good life, health,

wealth, and happiness, all that. Those desires choke the Word planted in them.

The seed on the good soil are those who hear and understand, who get with it, who believe it from the heart. They believe and produce a crop 100, 60, or 30 times what was sown. In farming, you have to do very well to even get 10 times what you sowed. But 30? 60? 100 times what was sown!? These are incredible amounts! But this is the power of God's Word for you and me with ears that hear.

Jesus warns us that there are many things pitted against our hearing God's Word; the hardness of our own hearts, our own sinful nature, the scandalizing nature of God's Word which is so contrary to what our culture would have us believe, the desire for more in this life. All these things are working against God's Word growing in our hearts.

Honestly, none of us are good soil. We all harden our hearts against what God says. We all struggle to accept what God's Word plainly says when it goes counter to our beliefs or cultural perspectives. We all choose the better life over God's Word again and again.

But blessed are your ears that hear, because in spite of the unbelief in your heart, God has sown his Word, the message of the gospel, in your heart. He has planted faith in you to believe in Jesus. Jesus is the true good soil. He is the seed that was planted in the earth when he died and was buried in the ground. He is the seed the sprung up bringing 100 times what was sown when he rose from the dead declaring all of your unbelief forgiven by God.

And now, with your ears that hear, God's Word, the message of the gospel will produce even in you and me 100 or 60 or 30 times what was sown. Not because we are good soil, but because God's Word, the seed, is that powerful!

For that reason, keep going to Christ for the secrets of the kingdom of God. Keep trusting in he who died and rose for you. And if you have ears, hear! Amen.

