

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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THE PARABLE OF THE SEEDS AND SOIL

Matthew 13:1-23

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The points of today's message are:

- The seed of the truth is not meant to be random.
- The rocky areas of the soil need to be dealt with.
- The thorny areas of the soil need to be dealt with.
- The condition of the soil determines whether the seed will take root or not.

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 13:1-9

*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. <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. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <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."*

**EXPLANATION:** Today's message is about increasing our faith. The Seed of the Word is planted in our spirits and is cultivated and watered and then grows into maturity and is harvested.

Jesus spoke in parables. They are full of rich meaning and truth for all of us. This parable is about a farmer. Jesus talks about the seed as being the seed of truth.

First, we have the seeds that were gobbled up by the birds. They fell along the path and didn't take root and the birds picked them up. Let's focus on areas of life that we all need to work on and some truths from the scripture. Jesus didn't always

explain his parables, but in this case he did.

## **THE SEED OF TRUTH IS NOT MEANT TO BE RANDOM**

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 13:18-19

*“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.”*

**EXPLANATION:** This scripture gives me an image of a pathway with random plants growing here and there...with no appearance of any effort of a gardener – just random.

The seed of truth, meaning the scripture, is not meant to be just a bunch of Chinese proverbs, or old sayings passed down through the ages. It is a narrative, a connection of truths upon truths that leads to the truth that Jesus came to save the sinner’s soul. The ultimate goal of the truth of scripture is leading a person to repentance of sin, faith in Jesus, and a life of discipleship. It is meant to have permanent and daily impact on a person’s life.

You know, most seeds have a shelf life. Seed companies discard old seed in favor of new seed. But the seed of the word of God is intended to be imperishable in your life.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 1:23-25

*For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. <sup>24</sup> For, “All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, <sup>25</sup>but the word of the Lord endures forever.”*

Also, the seed in us is intended to bear fruit:

**SCRIPTURE:** John 15:7-8

*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

**ILLUSTRATION:** How do seeds get planted? Farming equipment, individuals, natural elements such as wind, flowing water, erosion and other things. Seeds are even transported by animals in their fur or feathers.

God disperses his truth – the truths of scripture -- in a multitude of ways. Our own reading of scripture. God provides insight and conviction about the scripture. God may use others to plant the seed of truth in us. He may use life circumstances. I am sure I cannot think of all the ways he does plants the seed of truth in us.

Verse 19 in our text tells us that lack of understanding allows the evil one to snatch the truth from our hearts. What does this mean? To understand means more than just the memorizing of facts. It means an interweaving of truth in such a way that we live it out every day.

## **THE ROCKY AREAS OF THE SOIL NEED TO BE DEALT WITH**

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 13:20-21

*“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.”*

Jesus said understanding and applying this parable unlocks the truth to all truth. Jesus points out the problems of the rocks. The soil is not rich and isn't cultivated, and the plants don't grow.

It's like people who volunteer for everything, but don't follow through on anything. People have good intentions, but they haven't thought it through, that volunteerism comes with commitment.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Growing up, I went to two different high schools. I remember at the first one, the football field was very rocky. You know, a rocky playing field doesn't make for good football. One summer, the coaches and players got tired of it and they plowed up the entire field. For weeks, they used shovels and wheelbarrows and removed the rocks from the field. I saw the piles of rocks and couldn't believe how many there were. It was just incredible. After it was all done, it felt like the field was several inches lower. But wow, what a nice field. They got tired of the rocks and did something about it.

**APPLICATION:** You're going to deal with rocky soil in your life. What a shame it would be to spend your entire life dealing with rocky soil. Those rocks might be different shapes and sizes, but probably none of them are precious stones. You'll have to labor like those football players...digging up the rocks and disposing of them. But look what the benefit will be. Good soil, ready for the seed of truth to be planted. There is a whole lot for us to learn in this passage of scripture!

## **THE THORNY AREAS OF THE SOIL NEED TO BE DEALT WITH**

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 13:22

*“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.”*

**EXPLANATION:** The thorns in the soil are clear: worry and the deceitfulness of wealth. What in the world does this mean? Worry may be the greatest inhibitor of faith being lived out in your life. Worry, worry, worry – I am convinced it is a spiritual condition. It's a lack of faith in God. People worry about things that are outside of their control. How many of you worry about your children? Sure, you can be concerned about them, pray for them, but worry doesn't fix anything. How about other things that are beyond your control? These are thorns in the soil that need to be dealt with.

The other thorn in the soil is the deceitfulness of wealth. What is that all about? We tend to think if we have more money, we'll have everything we need. “If I just had more money, I would give to that cause.” “If I just had more money, I would be able to get all my needs out of the way and take care of others.” I have several friends who have plenty of money but guess what their number one worry is? Money. So wealth hasn't really helped them. The deceitfulness of wealth is the thorn that needs to be rooted out.

## **THE CONDITION OF THE SOIL DETERMINES WHETHER THE SEED OF TRUTH WILL TAKE ROOT**

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 13:23

*“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.”*

You see, if the truth does not take root, the problem is not the seed. It is the soil.

**ILLUSTRATION:** For several years, Susan worked at a florist in Mt Juliet. They also sold seed. One day, someone knocked over the seed bin and all kinds of seed spilled on the floor. Someone swept up the seed, probably twenty pounds of it and put it in bags. I took all that seed on a mission trip to the Bahamas. There was an agriculture teacher there trying to teach people to grow their own food. I took the seeds to her. The teacher painstakingly sorted all the seed. Can you imagine how tedious that was? Over time, she'd brought in volunteer workers to cultivate the soil, since much of it was sand. Topsoil was shipped in and they composted organic waste to enhance the soil.

The ag teacher and the students planted all those seeds, not knowing what most of them were. They couldn't identify them until sprouts sprang up. Eventually they had a harvest that was so profound, the Prime Minister of the Bahamas found out about it and came to see it.

**APPLICATION:** I want you to think about those random seeds in the bag. How many people would have just thrown them away? Thousands of seeds all mixed together. Most would just discard them as waste. Most would have thought the problem was the seed. The seed, however, was not old and so the problem was not the seed. The problem was our perception. What would we do with it? Where would we take it? Who had the patience to do something about it? While in another part of the world, an ag teacher with limited resources was preparing soil for seed she did not have. Had the soil not been prepared, the seeds would have stayed in the bag and eventually they would have been thrown away.

To someone who does not have the soil prepared to receive the truth, the scripture is nothing but a bunch of random words. The seeds in the bag would have never done any good if the soil had not been prepared. If our hearts and our minds are not prepared to receive the seed of truth, it won't grow.

If the soil of our lives is cultivated and made fertile, then the truths of the scriptures will sprout and we'll begin to understand what it is all about. Cultivating the soil of our minds requires us to allow God to plant truth in such a way that we are open to whatever sprouts. We need to be open to what God wants to reveal to us. We're going to accept it, nurture it, bring it to full harvest. We're going to bear fruit.

**CONCLUSION:** We must ask ourselves, what is the condition of the soil in our lives? The seed is not the problem. The problem is the condition of the soil.

This parable is about how we interact with God's truth. It's all about the condition of my life, of all our lives. Every believer has these mixtures of soil. We've got rocks, hard paths, thorns. In some areas we are wonderfully fruitful, but in other areas, there isn't much growing or the growth is stunted.

Jesus drops truth to us all the time from his word, and through others who are in his word. These hard places where seed will not take root need to be dealt with. These are familiar places in our lives, but they are unhealthy pathways. Let's be fresh, rich soil for the planting of the seed of truth in our lives.