

Matthew 13:18-21 The Importance of Developing Spiritual Roots

We are in Matthew chapter 13 and our focus, starting last week verses 1 through 23. We will be in this [section] for two more weeks. Very, very important material to study. Matthew chapter 13 is the third message that Matthew is presenting in this section, Matthew chapters 5 through 25. Matthew chapter 13 is the third message, The Parables of the Kingdom. And we are studying chapter 13 itself on The Sermon of Parables, because there are many parables in chapter 13, but the main one is the Parable of the Sower, which we started last week.

We saw in verses 1 through 2, the circumstances surrounding the giving of the parables. Jesus comes out of the house where He was staying and where He was teaching at the end of chapter 12; and He goes out along the seashore. And He was sitting along the seashore, as large crowds began to gather, He entered into a ship, because there was no room on the land. He entered into a ship to sit down and all the crowd was standing upon the shore. So these are the circumstances surrounding the giving of the parables.

In verses 3 through 9, The Parable of the Sower. In verse 3 we have The Content of the Parable; **He spoke to them many things in parables.** The term *parable*, the Greek word **παραβάλλω** (*paraballō*) means *to place alongside of, to cast alongside of*. **παρά** (*para*) is *alongside of* and **βάλλω** (*ballō*) is *to place*. In the instance of Scripture, a parable is to place a spiritual truth alongside of a common activity that the people are familiar with. God bringing His truth alongside of an activity, a common activity, that all the people know about; and connecting the two and showing in that activity a Spiritual truth.

This one is The Parable of the Sower. This is not somebody who works on clothes or sews clothes. A *sower* is somebody *who scatters or spreads seed*. Again, as I mentioned you last week, on our website for the picture background for the Gospel of Matthew is a man with a bag over his left shoulder and he's taking his right hand and he's putting his hand in the bag and he is scattering seed. That is what this parable is representing. A sower went out to sow.

In verse 4, we have The Condition of the First Soil. There are four kinds of soil, four types of ground. The first seed *falls alongside of the road*. That is that hard pack alongside of the road, where the seed cannot penetrate. So the seed just sits there. And Jesus said, "The birds came and devoured them."

In verses 5 and 6, we have The Condition of the Second Soil. This seed falls upon rocky places. The word for *rocky places* means *a slab of rock underneath a thin layer of dirt*. It is not rocks mixed with dirt, but rather a foundation stone. **Some seed fell upon rocky places where it did not have much earth and immediately it sprang up because it did not have depth of ground.** Very important, as we emphasized to you last week. Quick growing grass, quick growing plants, from the inception of planting is a very dangerous thing. The most important thing about grass and plants is the establishment of the root system. The same thing with trees. If trees do not have a strong root system, when the storms come the tree will go over. Not because of how big or how heavy it is but because the roots are what hold the tree up in the midst of the storm. So this one was in rocky places, it had a thin layer of dirt on the top, immediately

sprang up because it did not have depth of ground; and when the sun rose up the sun scorched it. Because it did not have root it dried up. Interesting, everything was dependent upon the root system. Even with the hot sun coming and scorching the production of seed, it was all based on the root system. If there is no root system, the elements will destroy the plant and destroy the produce.

In verse 7, The Condition of the Third Soil. This seed fell upon thorns. I emphasize the literal translation, *upon thorns*. The thorns, or weeds, were already there. The seed fell upon them. And the thorns, or weeds, sprang up and choked out the seed.

Verse 8 says, The Condition of the Fourth Soil. This seed fell on **καλός** (kalos), on *good* ground and it produced fruit. It produced one hundred times. One seed produced one hundred times more seeds than itself. Other seeds produced sixty times more seeds than itself. And others produce thirty times more seed than itself. So notice, the production is the seed. And secondly notice, that everybody produces differently. You cannot compare yourself to other people.

Then, The Command in verse 9. The English text says **Who has ears to hear let him hear**. The term *let him hear* sounds like an invitation, but in the Greek text it is a command that literally reads **The one having ears to hear, hear**. That is the command. So there are two things here.

(1) There's a precondition, *the one having ears to hear*. The person already has to have a condition of hearing before Jesus gives the command.

(2) But it is at the command of Jesus is that people hear the truth of God's Word. He activates people. As we'll see in a moment, and we studied a little bit last week, but as we'll see in a moment, without the Lord and His Spirit revealing the truth of His Word to you, you cannot find out or figure it out. It takes a revelation from God Himself.

So then in verses 10 to 17 we have The Purpose for the Parables. And in verse 10, The Curiosity of the Disciples. **They came to Jesus and they asked Him, "Why You speak to them in parables?"** I mean it is just a story. There is a spiritual truth there, but the people cannot understand it unless you explain it, so why do You speak to them in parables?

Verses 11 to 15, The Concealing of the Mysteries. Jesus said, **"Because to you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to those it has not been given."** When the Lord first started His public ministry, He revealed Himself and His truth. As people reacted in resistance towards Him, He began to conceal the truth. One of the main ministries of Jesus is to conceal the truth if a person's heart does not want the truth. And they are called mysteries because they are hidden. They are secret. Not secret outside of the Bible but secret within the Bible.

As I told you the last couple of weeks, I have now been a ministry for over fifty years and I still see the same characteristics all the time amongst those in ministry. Many are very educated in the Bible; but many have not had the mysteries of what the Bible is saying and

teaching revealed to them. You cannot go to Bible school to get revelation. You go to Bible school to get education. It takes the Spirit of God to reveal the truth of what God's Word is saying. And as you can tell because of the diversity of churches and denominations, obviously we are not getting a whole lot of people understanding what the Scripture is saying. We pick religious systems, we get educated in those religious systems, and we minister in those religious systems. But that does not mean it is the truth. So Jesus said, "It is for you to know, you disciples, not for them to know."

Verse 13, "**On account of this I speak to them in parables, because while seeing they do not see; and while hearing they do not hear, neither do they understand.**" Jesus purposely ministering in a way so that people will not know the truth. This is a major part of the Lord's ministry that we overlook because we read through these texts and we highlight and focus on other texts that mean more to us. We do not realize that Jesus was not inclusive. He did not start a movement. He was exclusive. Through His miracles He attracted thousands of people; but once He began to teach and reveal the truth, they all left. They did not join. And secondly, Jesus did not start a Christian religious movement. Jesus called people to be a disciple of Jesus, not of the church, not of a religious system. Jesus called people to Himself. And He says you must deny yourself; you must take up your cross and follow Me; and the people did not want anything to do with it.

And as I have mentioned to you in the past and I mention again, it is easier to become a disciple of a church than it is to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. He makes you deny yourself. The church movements over the years, and it has blossomed now; it is more like come in, come in and be inclusive and share your expressions here with us. Where Jesus said, "No, you deny yourself. You do not express yourself. You deny yourself if you want to follow Me." Because it can only be Jesus Christ. It can only be His Spirit ministering. And the people did not want anything to do with it.

And Jesus said this what He was doing well and speaking in parables to conceal the mysteries was because of the fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9-10.

That takes us all the way up to verses 16 and 17, The Comprehension of the Ministries. A verse we are going to need for today is verse 16, **But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and blessed your ears, because they hear.** The word *blessed* or *bless-ed* is **μακάριος** (makarios) and it means *to experience the fullness of something*. That is its general meaning within the Greek language. In Scripture it has to do with *experiencing all the fullness of God's Spirit*. And so Jesus is saying, "Blessed are your eyes and your ears because they see and hear. You are going to get to experience all the fullness of God's Spirit." In verse 17 He tells them, "**Many prophets and righteous people desired to see what things you see, and to hear what things you hear, and they did not hear it and they did not see it.**" We are privileged people. If God's Spirit opens up God's Word to you and draws you to Christ and your relationship with Jesus Christ becomes enriched, you become more intimately involved with Him on a personal basis, you are a very privileged person. Not many today have that privilege and opportunity.

So in verses 18 to 23 we have, The Parable of the Sower Explained. And notice Jesus is explaining it to the disciples. I pointed this out last week, but I want to point it out again today.

When Jesus said it's revealed to His disciples, when He said, *the one having ears to hear, hear*; that caused the disciples to come out from the crowd to Jesus Christ and caused them to sit under His teaching to hear what He means by the parables. The general crowd did not come. They listened. They said, "Oh, that is a nice story. Yeah, it is familiar to us," and they left. But those who pursued the Lord to find out from Him more of the truth in which He is teaching, they are the ones who receive the ministry.

Verse 18 notice this, and I will read it to you in the literal translation. English says, "Hear therefore the parable of the sower;" but in the Greek text it is, "You yourselves therefore hear." In other words, *you yourself*. Only you. Specific group of people. Those called to be His disciples.

Notice the second thing, another command, even in the English, "Hear therefore." Again, Jesus is activating their hearing process. If the Lord does not reveal the truth it cannot be known by the common man, even a Christian.

So verse 18 is connected to chapter 13 verse 9 where Jesus said, "The one having ears to hear, hear." And then verse 16 of chapter 13, "Blessed are your eyes because you see and blessed are your ears because you hear." And now He's giving the command, "Hear." So the first command "Hear" drew them out. He gave an explanation. He pronounced them blessed because they have been chosen to hear, and to see. And here He gives the command, "Hear, therefore." Just you yourselves hear the parable of the sower. Again, emphasizing it took the Lord activating their hearing. It takes the revelation of God's Spirit to understand His truth.

We have seen so many times from I Corinthians 2:9-14, Paul says, **But just as it has been written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered upon the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."** Human ability. My ears are human, they are not spiritual. My heart is sinful. My ears do not have, and my eyes do not have the ability to understand and receive spiritual things.

But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit is searching all things, even the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of the man, except the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God no one knows, except the Spirit of God. Now we ourselves have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches; comparing or discerning spiritual things with Spiritual. It takes the Spirit of God to take Spiritual things and reveal them. Humans in our human ability we do not have the ability to delve into or understand spiritual things.

But the natural man, ψυχικὸς (psuchikos) in the Greek, the psychical man. It is a person that does not have the Holy Spirit. That person is just psychology. **But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him (μωρός, mōros); neither is he able to know, (that is a literal translation, *he doesn't have the capacity to know*) because they are Spiritually discerned. But the one who is Spiritual discerns all things, yet He Himself is discerned by no one.** If you have the Spirit of God it is the Spirit that discerns. It

is the Spirit that judges. You cannot judge the person who has a discerning spirit because it is the Spirit that discerns.

Man cannot understand in the natural. It takes the Lord to reveal His truth, which is a mystery. We have words written on a page. We have various teachings and opinions as to what it means. But it stays a spiritual mystery, because for many people it is concealed.

The psalmist said Psalm 145:3, **Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised and his greatness is unsearchable.** You cannot search it out.

Romans 11:33 Paul says, **O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!** You cannot understand them. You can search them out all you want to. But you cannot figure God out.

Ephesians 3:8 Paul says, **Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.** They are unsearchable. You cannot know them. They are past finding out. You cannot go down to the library and check out some books and say, "Well, I am going to figure God out." You cannot do that. He has already given His word, which people cannot figure out.

So in verse 18 is The Command. **You yourselves therefore hear the parable of the sower.**

In verse 19, The Clarification of the First Soil as He explains. **While anyone is hearing the Word of the kingdom, and not understanding.** Now there are some identifiers here. But I want to point out some characteristics first. In each one of these presentations of the type of soil and the seed that has fallen into it, we will see that the seed is the Word of God. That is given to us here in verse 19: *while anyone hearing the Word of the kingdom* is represented by the seed falling into the ground. But this hearing - here is the characteristic - for each one of these types of soil, every single one of them were *hearing the Word* continuously. It is a participle in the Greek text, which means *while they were hearing* here is what went on along with it. They did not leave off from hearing the Word of God. They did not refuse to hear the Word of God; it is while they were continuously hearing the Word of God these various conditions took place. So your first identifier is that the seed is the Word of the kingdom.

And everyone who is continuously hearing the Word of the kingdom (and notice) and not understanding. That is the general audience. They heard but they did not understand.

He says, **The evil one comes, and takes away that which has been sown in his heart.** Here is your next identifier: *the evil one comes and removes that which has been sown.* In verse 4, Jesus said in the parable, the birds came and took the seed. Now He says, "The evil one came and removed the seed." So the birds represent Satan and evil. So the birds.

The evil one comes and takes away that which has been sown in his heart. It did not say *ground*, He said *heart*. So the soil represents different conditions of people's hearts. Every one

of us, everybody in every church, and every Bible study group is one of these four people in the hearing of the Word of God.

This is the seed sown alongside of the road.

So this is your first soil, hard pack, hard hearted. The Word of God will not penetrate.

I want to give you another side characteristic as we go through this because some people think that you can quench the Word of God. You cannot. You can quench the influence of the Word of God. The Word of God is all-powerful, and it is the same in each one of these instances. But the Lord has made it - and we will see more next week. Next week is a very good study. I encourage you to come and [listen] as we study the growth process that has been given to us in Hebrews chapter 5. But as you hear there are other things that go on in our life that affects the influence of the Word that we heard. You can come to church every Sunday morning, but dependent upon what you do all week long, it can choke out the influence or any influence that you received based on how you respond to the Word. If your heart is hard hearted and you just refuse to respond to God's Word, it is going to sit there and Satan is going to come and he is going to remove the influence. That was the first soil.

Verses 20 and 21, The Clarification of the Second Soil. This is the seed which has been sown upon rocky places. And again, this is not rock mixed with dirt, this is a cement slab underneath a thin layer of dirt. So the thin layer of dirt does allow the seed to fall into it and even penetrate and even germinate. This is the one hearing the Word. And again, the word *hearing* is a participle, showing continuously. This is a person who continually hears the Word. Their problem is not that they do not hear the Word. They do. Some people have a problem because they do not hear the Word. But Jesus is saying, no, that is not in this instance. This is the one hearing the Word. And again, the seed represents the Word of God. **And immediately with joy receiving it.** So immediately and hearing the Word receives it with joy, excitement, stimulation. Everything is surface. Everything is either a human or outward experience, but not inward.

You say, "How do you know when something is of the Lord? [When] you have experienced something that is of the Lord or something that is just fleshly, emotional, and really not spiritual at all?" When the Lord moves in your life and works in your life, it is permanent. And it is eternal. Never changes. So the establishment of the root system is the number one priority for the believer. Not the various experiences. Verse 21 says, **But he does not have root in himself.** No root. Everything is external. Everything is on the emotional.

A couple weeks ago when we presented the parts of The Manifesto of the Two Gospels here, we emphasized the fact that we in our day today, more than any other time in history, we do not understand the difference between the power of the Holy Spirit and emotional stimulation. For some strange reason - just the way we are, our culture has trained us - is that we can walk into a room and when the music starts and all that energy starts flowing, we think it is the Spirit. And then forty-five minutes later when the music stops, the Spirit has stopped. And we leave. Leaving the moving of the Spirit back in the building. That is not the moving of the Spirit. We

do not know the difference between emotional stimulation and the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit is inward, it develops a root system to be able to weather the storms.

But he does not have root in himself, but he endures for a while... That is the Greek word for *temporary*. Everything that he experiences is temporary. That is why I say everything that Christ does is permanent. It is a change, a transformation. You become a new creation. We are attracted to stimulation these days.

...and when tribulation or persecution happens on account of the Word, immediately this person is offended. First, let me say to you that this is emphasizing the shallowness, the lack of foundation, the lack of a root system that we have already talked about many times. Whether it be grass - you have to wait thirty days after you plant grass seed because it has to take thirty days to establish its root system and come up and be a certain height and be a certain condition before you can start mowing it, even before you can walk on it. The same thing with trees and plants. A tree will go right over if the root system is bad or the root system is very shallow. It is the inner person Paul says - Ephesians chapter 3 - it is the inner person where Christ dwells is where we are to look. That is to be our focus. That is to be our priority. There is a reason for it. We will get to that in a moment.

This person who gets excited about everything they hear, they receive the Word with excitement; they do not concentrate on establishing the root system or the foundation. Back in Matthew 7:24-27 Jesus says, **Therefore everyone hearing these words of Mine, and doing them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock:** (definite article **πέτρα** (petra), that would be Christ) **and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it didn't fall: for it was founded or established upon the rock** (as a foundation). **And everyone hearing** (interesting here is your participle again even back in Matthew 7) **everybody who is continuously hearing these sayings of Mine, and does not do them** (you have no response) **shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.**

As I stated last week I cringe about our decision-making. The top priority of a believer's life should be the hearing and the response to the Word of God, confessing all the time to the Lord we need His Spirit to reveal the truth to us and change us and transform us according to His will. But I cringe because the decisions we are making now, the kind of foundation, the kind of root system that we are establishing now will determine how we respond to the storms when they come a year from now, five years from now, and ten years from now. The emotional people have a tendency to get wiped out. When you are concentrating on growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and growing that foundation and that root system, you do not see a whole lot going on outside. You kind of look at everybody else and you think, "What's wrong with me?" My sister used to ask me that all the time. "Why are other people experiencing miracles and I don't experience any?" And I said, "Yeah, but what are you doing?" You spend your time in God's Word developing a relationship with Christ so that when the storms calm you have a root system, a foundation upon which to stand.

But notice secondly in this verse 21, **But when tribulation and persecution comes** (tribulation is trials, testings, hardships) **and persecution comes on account of the Word immediately they are offended.** What a phrase to use. You do not know how many people over the years I have come across that get offended if you tell them that the Christian life is made up of trials and persecution. They refuse to accept it. "A God of love would never make us go through hardship and suffering." It comes along with the Word. That is what prepares the soil. Once the seed is planted the trials and tribulations come and remove the unwanted material and help establish the planted seed. It is going through the hardships of life that develop our relationship with Christ.

In James 1:1-3 listen to what James says. **James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered...** Literally, *who are of the Diaspora*. These are believing Jews who were scattered because of persecution. Scattered outside of Jerusalem, outside of Israel. He says, to you, ...**Greetings. My brothers, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.** That is kind of weird. **Count it all joy whenever you should fall into various trials knowing,** verse 3 of James 1. So we are to rejoice knowing something, not just rejoice for the sake of rejoicing.

Knowing this, that the testing of your faith is working out endurance. The word *testing* has to do with *going through the development process*. How do you like that one? Your faith is going through the development process and it is working endurance. The English text says *patience*. There are two different words. *Long-suffering* is **μακροθυμία** (makrothumia) that means *patience with people*. **ὑπομένω** (hupomenō), which is the word here, is *patience under circumstances*. **ὑπομένω** (hupomenō) means *to remain under*. So the Lord is teaching us through the trials, developing our faith and trust in Christ, our relationship with Christ, in order to remain under the difficult circumstances. Not escape, not get delivered out of it, but remain under. You see, that is weathering the storm. "Oh! the storm is coming, I got to get out here." No, the storm is going to find you. Everybody experiences the storms; but spiritually not everybody holds up under the storms. It is dependent upon your root system. Your foundation. So trials are necessary for growth. The ground needs to be prepared, constantly. Unwanted things need to be taken out - that is what trials do as we will see in the next two types of soil that will take next week.

Very, very important to understand this. Two things from today:

- (1) Our dependence upon God's Spirit to reveal to us His truth to us personally.
- (2) How important it is to concentrate on establishing a foundation, a root system; so that when the storms come our house will stand.

It breaks my heart to have to tell people when they give me a call, they say, "Pastor Bill my life is crumbling around me." And it breaks my heart to say, "Well, a couple years ago I told you, you really need to take the study of the Word of God and fellowship with other believers more serious, so you can establish a foundation, a root system there. I can't do anything for you now." But what you can do is you can start now. Get your life back together by getting back in the Word and responding to the Word. Do not just sit there and listen to it but rather hear it. And if

you do not understand it seek the Lord. Let Him reveal it to you or ask somebody who teaches the Word, like the disciples did with Jesus, in order to find out God's truth. It is not enough to be religious. This is about a personal relationship with Christ through the hearing of His Word.

Let's close with prayer.