

Matthew 13:22a

Everything You Need to Know About the Christian Life

Again, we are in Matthew 13:1-23. Matthew chapter 13 is the third message of five messages in chapters 5 through 25. Chapter 13 is The Parables of the Kingdom. There are multiple parables in this chapter and verses 1 through 23 is the first one.

Remember that a parable, when applied to the Scriptures, is a spiritual truth that has been placed alongside of some common activity that was known to man. That is what parable means, to place alongside of. So, it is to place alongside a spiritual truth alongside of some activity, a common activity that is known to the people in order to bring the truth across. But it is interesting as is the Lord has showed us over the last couple of weeks that parables were given by Jesus in order to conceal the truth, not to reveal the truth.

In verses 1 through 23 is The Parable of the Sower. A sower is someone who scatters or spreads seed by hand. He reaches into his bag that's over his left shoulder and he scatters and spreads the seed as he walks along. So, Jesus has presented in the parable of the sower that the seed is being spread or scattered onto four kinds or conditions of soil, four kinds of ground. And last week we started in verses 18 through 23, The Explanation of the Four Kinds (or conditions) of Soil.

So, we took the parable and now beginning at verse 18, which is where we are picking up today, verse 18 we have The Explanation of the Parable itself. What spiritual truth is Jesus putting alongside of the common activity of scattering or spreading seed in His meaning?

In verse 13 is the command we saw last week: **You yourselves.** In the Greek text it emphasizes *just you disciples*, not you in general, but those of you disciples would have come to Jesus.

Therefore hear the parable of the sower. And the word *hear* in the text is a command, which is interesting. We've studied it probably a couple of times in the last three weeks, is that Jesus said, "The one who has an ear to hear let him hear." That's the English phrase but it is literally a command. It is not an invitation. "The one who has ears to hear, hear." He was actually activating the hearing ability of people to be able to receive what He had to say. And based on that the disciples came to Jesus and asked about the parable. So now Jesus is alone with the disciples and He says, "**Now you yourselves** (you disciples) **therefore hear** (He is giving the command) **hear the parable of the sower.**

And so, verse 19. We've studied The Clarification of the First Soil, the seed that fell along side of the road. We saw last week, we established two things from studying verse 19. I want to point them out to you this morning, two things.

Jesus said, "**While anyone hearing the Word of the kingdom.**" So, the first thing we did last week is point out to you we now have identifiers. What is the seed? The seed is the Word of the kingdom. The seed is the Word of God. **And not understanding, the evil one comes and takes away that which has been sown in his heart. This is the seed sown**

alongside of the road. We have three identifiers. The seed is the Word of the kingdom. Secondly, the evil one comes and removes the seed. We saw in the parable, in the first 9 verses, that the birds came and took the seed. So, the birds represent the evil one that have come and taken the seed because this seed fell along the hard-packed ground and there was no penetration, so therefore the birds came and removed it. The third identifier, he takes away that which has been sown in his heart. So, the soils represent four different kinds, or conditions, of people's hearts. We have our identification here.

Secondly, after establishing the identification I'll point out to you, and notice again at the beginning of the verse, **While anyone hearing the word.** You see the word *hearing?* That is a present participle in Greek that just basically means that this person is continuously hearing. They don't leave off from hearing, they are continuously hearing, and this same present participle is found in all four kinds of soil. Each one of these four kinds of people in their four ways of hearing and receiving the Word, they are continuously hearing, they don't leave off from hearing. It has tremendous implications for us, especially for today.

Verses 20 and 21, The Clarification of the Second Soil, that we saw last week. This is the seed that fell into rocky places. The word for *rocky* doesn't mean rock mixed with soil, it means that there is a slab underneath the thin layer of dirt; so that when the seed falls into the dirt, it immediately catches root, but it has nowhere to go because of the cement slab. So, first of all, we saw last week, again, this person is hearing continuously. Secondly, we saw that **immediately he receives the word with joy.** But verse 21 says, thirdly, **he has no root in himself. But everything that he or she is experiencing is temporary.** That's what the word [translated] *endureth for a while* means. It means it's temporary.

Now last week, we spent the entire time expounding on how important it is for a believer to establish the root system and not to be chasing emotional experiences - everything that is outward from oneself. They are temporary. Everything that God does, everything that is a work of God is permanent. It is not temporary. When God's Spirit makes changes in a person's life it is permanent. Period. And it endures throughout eternity. It is not just for Sunday morning from 11 to 12 and have a stimulating experience and then go home and it wears off. Temporary. So, this person gets excited about hearing the Word with joy but has no root.

For some reason in the normal we are always concerned about external. I remember my sister, before she passed away, would always tell me, "Oh, my friends and the people that I know, they always have these miracles going on in their life and they are having all these great experiences with the Lord." And she goes, "I don't have those." She says, "I sit listen to the Word and just commune with the Lord and..." I said, "Hey! You got it." If something happened, if the Lord does something external, "Great! Praise the Lord!" But what really counts is establishing that root system.

We saw from Matthew chapter 7 verses 24 to 27, where Jesus said, "If you base your foundation on His word, when the storms come your house will stand. But if you don't build your house on His word and you build it on the sand, when the storm comes it will fall." The foundation, the root system. Right now, I mean every Sunday when we meet, every week when we meet we are laying the foundation, we are establishing the root system. Why? Because the

storms are going to come. Our response to it will be based upon that which we have established over the last weeks and months and years. And last week I spoke to those of you that have young children. We are establishing the foundation of their lives, the root system of their lives, because when they reach the teenage years they're going to need that foundation.

So, he goes on to say in verse 21, **And when tribulation or persecution happens** (to this person) **on account of the word, immediately he is offended.** You don't know how many people over the years that I've met that get offended when you talk about how Christians must go through trials and tribulations in order to establish the Word of God in that root system, how offended they get. "Well, a God of love won't let me suffer hardships and difficulties. He always wants me to be happy." So, when normal trials and tribulations come, which goes along with the hearing of the Word in order to establish the Word in a person's life, this person that we are talking about here gets offended. "I didn't know that was in the contract!" And they leave, because the trials and tribulations are not all that stimulating and happy feeling, especially when we have to focus on laying that foundation.

For today, Matthew chapter 13 verse 22, The Clarification or explanation of the Third Soil where the seed fell in among the thorns or weeds.

Now I have a lot of information for you this morning. I'm warning you right off the bat because this is my main mantra right here. So, if I keep you until dinnertime you know the explanation.

The Clarification of the Third Soil, verse 22. **And the seed which has been sown into the thorns,** (Notice the literal translation, or weeds) **this is the one hearing the word,** (again, continually hearing) **and the care of this world** (literally *this age*) **and the deceitfulness of riches, chokes the word, and he becomes unfruitful.** Third kind of soil. The Word of God is falling in amongst two things that the weeds represent: (1) the care of this age, and (2) the deceitfulness of riches, or the deceitfulness of wealth. What do these two things do while he is continually hearing the Word? Chokes the influence of the Word of God. So, this is very, very important. Hearing the Word continuously while being involved in two other things, at the same time, simultaneous. Two things are happening the choke out the Word.

(1) The care of this age. The word for *care* in the Greek text is the word **μέριμνα** (merimna). And if you'll remember over the years we've spoken on this quite a bit - we have a seven-part series on **μέριμνα** (merimna) entitled Satan's Only Weapon Against a Believer in Christ. But that's the word here **μέριμνα** (merimna): the occupation of the attention of the mind. Not the occupation of the mind, but the occupation of the attention of the mind. Getting one's attention occupied.

This was introduced to us by Jesus in Matthew chapter 6 verses 24 and 25. Listen to this: **No man can serve two masters.** The word *can* is the word *capacity*. **No one has the capacity to serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot** (that is, you do not have the capacity) **to serve God and mammon.** The word *mammon* is the transliteration of the Aramaic word **מַמְמוֹן** (mammōna) - it has to do with the physical world, the material things of this physical world.

What Jesus is saying is, the human being has been created by God to only have the capacity to be occupied with one thing, that's it. Not two. So, He says goes on to say, in Matthew 6 verse 25, **Therefore** (based on this fact) **I say to you, Take no thought for your life.** The word *thought* is the word **μέριμνα** (merimna). It is also translated *worry*. It is also the word for *anxiety*. **Take no thought for your life,** (do not be occupied with your life) **what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; or yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?**

So, Jesus is saying you can be caught up and occupied, the attention of your mind occupied, with just the necessities of life; and if you're occupied and worried about that, that is what your life will be focused on. "Oh, but I believe in Jesus, but I'm occupied over here. I've got a lot of worry and a lot of anxiety over the issues of life." And Jesus says, "That can be a problem." Because man has been created with just one capacity, **μέριμνα** (merimna) become Satan's weapon.

In I Peter chapter 5 verses 6 to 8, Peter says, "**Humble yourselves therefore**, (and literally it's the passive voice, *be humbled*. He's not telling you to humble yourselves). **Be humbled under the mighty hand of God.** In other words, he is saying God's hand comes down upon you and brings the hardships of life and His heavy hand comes upon you so be humbled, submit to the humbling process. **In order that he may exalt you in due time: By casting all your care** (**μέριμνα**, merimna) **upon him; because he is concerned for you. Because your adversary the devil is walking around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**

We know from Job chapters 1 and 2 that Satan Scouts God's people. God asks Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job?" In the Hebrew that's a military term for scouting people. "Have you scouted Job?" What does Satan look for? What are the people and activities in life that are going to make the attention of your mind grab ahold of it and become anxious over it and worry about it and you can't let go. You say, "Well, I thought this was a spiritual battle with Satan."

Well it's important to understand this, as far as the Christian life is concerned and this is where I really want you to take notice that all of this has to do with the two phases of the Christian life. There's only two. From the Bible there are only two. You might be able to think of more but in the Bible there's only two. Salvation and transformation. Two. That's it.

Salvation is when you're born of the Spirit of God, when you receive Christ and His Spirit comes to indwell you. When His Spirit comes in and takes ownership and control of a person's life, that person is saved. It is not just belief alone. Somebody said to me this week, "Well I'm a believer."

"What does that mean?"

"I don't know."

"We know from James that even the devil believes. So, uh..."

You must be born again. You must receive Christ. And as I have said over the years, you've probably heard the word *accept*. "You have to *accept* the Lord." The Bible never says that. Receive Him. Acceptance is a mental agreement but when you receive Him, you are literally receiving His spirit into your life. When He comes in, He takes control of a person's soul.

Paul says in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 13 that **Once you have believed and have received you are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise.** My salvation is eternal. My salvation is based on the presence of the Spirit of Christ in me. Christ in me is the hope of glory.

But then there's a second phase of the Christian life, transformation. Here's the kicker. It's a transformation of the mind. We are given that in Romans chapter 12 verse 2, where Paul says, and I'll read it to you literally, Now **stop being continually conformed to this age but be continually being transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you might prove what is the good and acceptable and complete will of God.** So, stop being conformed. In the Greek text that's the word **σχῆμα** (schēma) where we get our word *schematic* from. Stop having the world dictate to you from the outside how you're going to dress, how you are going to talk, how you are going to act, where you're going to go, who your friends are going to be. Stop continually being conformed to this age that you live in. Stop being conformed from the external. But, in contrast, be continually being transformed. That is the word *metamorphosis*. Inwardly a change that takes place. Continually be being transformed by the renewing of your mind. He's not talking about psychology.

Now here's something that I've wanted you to understand over the years. After the Lord saves someone, that person still has the experiences and the imprint of the old life on the cortex of the brain. I'm saved. I've received Christ. He's with me. And it answers the question of why do so many Christians have so many personal problems? Why do so many churches have so many problems? It's because the church is not addressing the ministry of the Word of God for the renewing of the mind.

People who have experiences of abuse in their childhood, or during their lifetime, after receiving Christ and they are saved they struggle because those abuses and their knowledge and remembrance of them is still in the cortex of the brain. People still struggle with the old life because why? Because it's been implanted on the brain, the cortex of the brain. Do you understand how deep a relationship with Christ is? It is not about believing the right things and having your sins forgiven and going to heaven. I mean that's good enough as it is, but when Jesus comes in He comes in to save me. And then basically His approach to me, "Now I want to heal you. I want to change you. I want to transform you."

So, if my mind, you see where we are going with this - if, after I'm saved, with my mind I'm occupied with other things then I cannot be there to hear the Word to be changed and transformed and healed, because Satan has got me busy, occupied, with other things. That's why we have entitled that series I told you about, Satan's Only Weapon against a Believer in Christ. He can't take my soul. My soul belongs to Christ. So, the only weapon he has is to occupy the attention of my mind so that I can't be there for the healing that takes place over the years as I

continue to hear the Word and God's Spirit takes the Word and heals me from the past and He renews my mind.

So, this is the major problem in the church today and with individual believers. The focus is not on the renewing of the mind. We as the church - I'm speaking from a position of leadership over the years, have been more involved in building the organization and getting more people in rather than the ministry of God's Word in order to minister to the renewing of the mind of the people who are there. The people who are there are saved but they still have these experiences and imprints that are haunting them and that they struggle with and have been for years. We haven't addressed the issue. The church is supposed to function as a spiritual hospital to minister the Word of God for the healing and renewing of the mind. That's what it's for.

And I speak from experience because I stand before you guilty. The church is a spiritual hospital but most of the time either when I have gone to church or I have done church, it is like bringing the people into the waiting room at the doctor's office. And then they play music over the intercom and we all start singing to the music. "I know that one." And then the nurses come out and they have a quartet that they want to sing to all the patients who are waiting in the waiting room. And then it is closing time. And over the years my frustration has always been, "But I wanted to see the doctor!" It's nice that I get encouraged. It is nice that I have fellowship with the other believers when I come here, but I need to be changed. I need to draw closer to Christ. I need His spiritual healing for the renewing of my mind because I'm still affected by the sin of my old life. I'm forgiven for it, cleansed. But its effects are still in the mind. Believers are already saved. You don't have to keep going back to church to get saved again because the Spirit of God lives within. So, the biggest need for the believer is to have the mind renewed and healed. So, when a person is occupied with the cares of this life it distracts from and takes a person's mind away from the hearing of the Word of God, which is the most important phase after salvation.

Now what's interesting here is that when I'm taken away from the Word of God as a believer and the influence of God's Word is choked out in my life, even what I've heard before, is choked out of my life, we understand that there's a very special spiritual condition in the believer's life. Spiritual growth and change is likened to, or compared to, physical exercise. Did you know that? The Bible teaches that. It is not physical and spiritual, but the comparisons are there.

Listen to Hebrews chapter 5 verses 11 to 14. In this chapter, the writer Hebrews has been teaching about Melchizedek. He was a King and a Priest in the Old Testament. A very mysterious figure and the writer of Hebrews says that Christ's priesthood comes according to the order of Melchizedek, not the Aaronic priesthood of the law, but Christ's priesthood comes out of Melchizedek. So right away, just like the readers, your mind is probably going, "What? What does that mean?" So, in Hebrews 5:11 the writer goes on to say, **Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered or spoken.** It is hard really to explain about Melchizedek, **seeing that you are dull of hearing.** The word *are* is literally a perfect tense verb, *you have become dull of hearing.* Why is that important? It means at one point they were not dull of hearing. They weren't like babes, dull of hearing and the writer is trying to get them to

grow in order to handle solid food. He's saying, "You have become." You have lapsed back, and you have become dull of hearing.

For account of the time you are owing or indebted to be teachers. By now you should be teaching other people. **And yet you have need for someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God.** You've got to start over. You got into your exercise program and got in shape and you got all ready to go and then all of a sudden something came up in your life and you left off from your exercise program for a month. It is not recommended that you pick up where you left off. You start over. Build back up again. That is what the writer of Hebrews is saying. "You have become dull of hearing. I want to explain to you about Melchizedek and his priesthood, but you are dull of hearing and you won't get it. You won't understand. Before, a few years ago, you would've."

In fact, in **1 Corinthians** Hebrews chapter 5 Paul mentioned to the Christians in Corinth that at the beginning he fed them with milk and not solid food because they were babes. And he says, "Now, five years later, you still are drinking milk and not solid food," which in the Greek text shows an abnormality there. "You are abnormally a babe." Our kids are cute when they're two and three years old and running around and acting like kids. But if they became 20 and 30 and they acted the same way we'd have a problem. So, what he's saying is, "You have become dull of hearing."

You have someone to teach you again the beginning principles of the oracles of God and have become such as have need of milk, and not of strong solid food. Again, *having become need*. You used to eat solid food from God's Word, but you've left off from that and now you have to go back to being milk drinkers again because you can't handle the solid food. **For every one that uses milk is unskillful.** Literally *inexperienced*. See, we're talking about constantly be involved in the activity. **Inexperienced in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe** (an infant) **but solid food belongs to those who are mature, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised.** The word *exercise* is the word *γυμνάζω* (*gymnazō*) where we get our word *gymnasium* from. They've had their senses exercised. When you hear the word of God - not all Bible studies and not all sermons are the Word of God - but when God's Spirit takes His word and ministers to you, your senses are being exercised and you're being built up. The longer you hear and the more consistently you hear, the stronger you grow spiritually, the more you understand and the more you are able to handle solid food now. You build upon it. But if you leave off from hearing, or even while hearing you are taken away by the cares of this life, your spiritual growth and spiritual condition becomes like a babe. Becomes like a babe. **Those who are mature have had their senses exercised to discern both right and wrong.** What is of the Lord and what is not.

That's quite a text. Hebrews 5:11-14. I recommend it highly.

Spiritual growth is like physical exercise. We are being exercised by the Spirit of God through the hearing of His Word. We are being changed and transformed and healed by the renewing of our mind and we are building up our spiritual capacities to be able to understand and function in the spiritual things of Christ and be ready to handle more solid food as it comes

along. So that our life becomes more solid, spiritually. And our minds are renewed to the healing and change and transform of those bad experiences and sinful experiences of the past.

Do you see why Satan, it's his only weapon? If he can take the believer and take the believer's, the occupation of the attention of the mind, and get them away from the Word of God? People become spiritually out of condition. They don't sense spiritually like they used to. They become dull of hearing.

So, while hearing, the influence of the Word of God can be choked out by having the attention of the mind occupied with the care of this life. Satan uses this as the weapon to draw us away from the Lord, not just at church or Bible study, but all throughout the week. He studies us and he sees what person or what activities that he can bring into our lives to get us caught up into it, obsessed. Become anxious over it and worry. In our hearts we know we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But where is my mind? Where is my attention? Where is my focus? It is on these things that Satan brings in.

So, what does the Bible say to do about it? We saw that in I Peter chapter 5 verse 7 a few minutes ago. I Peter 5:7. **Cast all your cares upon Him.** The answer is that when Satan brings something into my life that causes me anxiety and fear and occupies the attention of my mind, is give it to Him, not just in principle but literally give it to Him and then I follow His lead. That relieves me. I can now go back to focus on the things of Christ. Oh, the issue is still there, but I've given it to the Lord for Him to work it out according to His will to work it out His way, rather than taking it on myself. Cast all your care upon Him. Literally give it to Him because it's the care of this world that chokes out the influence of God's Word even while you're continually hearing it. That's how important it is. That's how serious it is. That's why it's important for us not to play games, and not to play church, and not to play religion. But to realize that Jesus Christ has a personal intimate relationship with His people. And once we are saved, once we have received Christ then it is a healing process.

When I come to church, and even though I'm the guy that stands up front, when I come to church I come to my therapy. God's Spirit taking God's word, renewing my mind, week after week after week, building up spiritual capacity and spiritual strength to be able to walk with Him because He's a Spirit and one must be sensitive. I have to have my senses sharp to see and understand the spiritual things of Christ.

Well, this week we took one, The Care of this Age. Lord willing, next week we will finish out the second part of the third soil, in verse 22, and also take the fourth soil, verse 23, and next week also is communion. So, Lord willing, we will finish this out next week.

But hopefully, and like I say, I wanted to spend a lot of time on it and give you the detailed solid food information as to what the Christian life is all about: salvation and transformation. That's it. If you get to enjoy things, enjoy fellowship, enjoy activities, great. God bless you. But if you're not getting transformed then you're missing out. You are in the waiting room waiting to see the doctor, and never seeing Him.

Let's close with prayer.