

Matthew 13:23 Good Soil Produces Good Fruit

Alright this morning we're going to attempt to finish the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-23. The actual parable itself was given in verses 1 through 9 but we are picking up this morning at verse 18, which begins the explanation of the Parable of the Sower.

In verse 18 we have The Command. The Lord gives the command for the hearing ability of the disciples to be activated so that they can understand the explanation and meaning of the parable. So, He commands them, "**You yourselves hear.**" That activated their hearing ability.

In verses 19 through 23 we have The Explanation of the Parable itself. So far, we have studied five main points in verses 19 through 22. We are taking verse 23 for today, but in verses 19 to 23 we understand:

First of all, that Jesus presents that a man went out to sow, or spread, seed.

Secondly, and that the seed itself fell upon four kinds or conditions of soil, or ground.

Thirdly, we learned in verse 19 that the four kinds, or conditions, of ground represent different conditions of people's hearts.

And fourthly, also, that the seed represents the Word of the kingdom.

And then fifthly, we learned that all four conditions of all four people, they were continually hearing the Word. All four were continually hearing the Word. What that means to us is that the results of each situation was not because they were not hearing the Word; but the results of each situation are because of an outside interference of Satan through the world to counterattack the influence of the Word of God, which these people were hearing. So, it wasn't leaving off of the Word of God, but rather while hearing the Word Satan brings in worldly influences in order to choke out the influences of the hearing of the Word.

In verse 19, we saw The Consideration, or Explanation, of the First Soil. The first soil, or heart, condition was the seed of the word of God falling upon hard-packed ground alongside of the road. Because the seed of the Word of God does not penetrate hard ground or the hard heart. The evil one, represented by the birds in verse 4, the evil one comes and removes the seed and the soil does not bear fruit. It's hard-packed so the seed just sits on top and Satan comes and removes it, because of the hard heart.

In verses 20 through 21, The Consideration of the Second Soil. The second soil or heart condition was the seed of the Word of God falling upon rocky ground, which represents the soil that has a hardened stone foundation under a thin layer of dirt. This person's heart while hearing, they received the Word, the text tells us, the seed of the Word with joy, which means their focus is on external stimulating things. Because of the shallowness of the ground the seed of the Word of God has no room to develop a root system and the person is immediately offended when trials

and persecutions come on account of the Word. See, trials and tribulations and persecutions are to help cultivate around the planted Word. So, when people are in it for the emotion and the stimulating experience, when hardship comes and it's not so stimulating and not so emotionally joyful they get offended.

In fact, and I've mentioned is when we went through it a couple of weeks ago, I find that many people who profess to be Christians when you talk to them about suffering and trials and tribulations they have a tendency to get offended. It offends them to think that a God of love would allow hardship to come to their lives. And yet at the same time God works through the hardship to remove those things that are interfering with the influence of the Word of God. Remember we are talking here about Satan bringing outside influences to choke out the influence of the Word. So, the Lord has a way through trials and tribulations of getting rid of those struggles, those fleshly struggles that we have, and bring difficulties in those areas in order to eliminate the problem. But some people have a tough time responding to those hardships of life.

So, because of the shallowness of the ground, the seed of the Word of God has no room to develop and the person is immediately offended when trials and persecutions come. Trials and persecutions are for the development of the root system, to get the root system to dig deeper and hold stronger. Whereas the person who receives the word with joy or emotion, they are looking for what is above the ground, what is seen, what is experienced above the ground.

Verse 22, we saw The Consideration of the Third Soil. The third kind, or condition, of soil is full of thorns and weeds that choke out the influence of the Word of God. In the parable these weeds are represented by two activities that choke out the influence of the Word of God. The first activity describes the heart continually hearing the Word but at the same time of hearing the Word, a person's heart is focused on the care of this age. It is a heart that is occupied with the things and activities of the age in which we live, and it chokes out the influence of the Word. The second activity, we are told, it is a heart that is focused on the deceitfulness of riches or wealth. So, being occupied with either one or both of these two things causes the influence of the Word to be choked out and the salvation, transformation, and growth processes becomes unfruitful.

Today we are in verse 23, The Consideration of the Fourth Soil. This is the fourth and final condition, one that receives the seed and understands the seed of the Word and produces fruit. This is the only one out of the four that produces fruit. Verse 23 says, **But the seed which has been sown upon the good ground this is the one hearing the word, and understanding it; who indeed bears fruit, and produces some a hundred times, some sixty, and some thirty.** That is a hundred times, sixty times, and thirty times more than it's one seed. It produces that many more.

We want to study three things about this final soil condition.

The first is the description. Notice in verse 23, the description of this soil. It's called *good ground*. **The seed which has been sown upon the good ground.** This word *good*, *καλός*, has to do with a physical condition of good. So, it is talking about the condition of the soil, that it is a heart that is receptive to the Word. It takes the Word in. We are told in James 1:21 to receive the implanted Word of God. Listen to James 1:21, **Wherefore after having laid aside**

all filthiness and abundant wickedness, receive with meekness the engrafted (or implanted) word, being able to save your souls. The Word of God is meant to be implanted, like putting a seed into the ground. Don't receive it as just listening but receive it as the implanted Word which is able to save your souls. So, first of all the description. The description tells us it's the good ground. The condition of the soil is receptive.

Secondly, the function is given to us. **This is the one hearing the word and understanding it.** Both the words *hearing*, and *understanding* are called present participles, which shows continuous action, all the time. He is the one continually hearing the Word and continually understanding it. The difference between this type of soil and the other three, first of all the similarities, all four were hearing, present participle, continually hearing the Word, this is the only one that understood it. By *understanding* we mean not just psychologically from an intellectual standpoint but understands it from a personal standpoint, a personal application. It has to do with me. It has to do with God bringing understanding in my life how this Scripture, the Word of God, associates with me personally. So, this one is hearing the Word and this person is understanding it, continuously.

Thirdly, the production of the soil. We are told in verse 23, this person indeed bears fruit and produces some a hundred times more than himself, some sixty times more, and some thirty times more than the one seed. In this third point we want to give you four things about the production of this ground and of this soil.

(1) First of all, notice what it's called. The calling of the end result of this production is called *fruit*, not *works*. That's very important. Fruit and not works. The Greek word for *fruit* is the word **καρπός**, which literally means *fruit*, like you would find on a fruit tree. But it is also used metaphorically in the New Testament for that which is produced by the Holy Spirit in and through the life of the believer. The Holy Spirit produces fruit, not the kind on the fruit tree, but as an expression of His Spirit.

Now the function and production of the fruit tree is a perfect example of what fruit means spiritually in the New Testament. Physically the sap of a fruit tree is the inner life of the tree and it's the sap that produces the fruit, not the tree. The physical tree does not produce fruit. It's the life of the tree, the sap, coming up through the main branch and out through the supporting branches that produces the fruit.

So, just as this tree example, the believer, the inner dwelling of the Holy Spirit, produces fruit. Not the believer, the believer doesn't produce fruit. The Holy Spirit, the inner life of the tree, produces the fruit, which is why it's called *fruit* and it's not called *works*. Because works is from human effort. We are told that God produces fruit not works because it is produced by the Holy Spirit. So, the word *fruit* in the Scriptures represents spiritual expression. It is the expression of the inner life of the Spirit in the believer. I'm just human, but the inner life of the Spirit of God, whatever He produces is called *fruit*. If I produce it, it's called *works*. It's just human. It's not spiritual at all.

We are told in Galatians 5:22-23 about the work of the Spirit. Paul says, **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, usefulness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control: against such there is no law.** The fruit of the Spirit. These are not something that

human beings discipline themselves to do. These are things that are produced by the Holy Spirit within the inner life of the believer and it becomes part of the believer's character and person. But it is produced by God. It is spiritual.

(2) Secondly, notice what our text says, not only is it called *fruit* and not *works*, it says this person in verse 23, **Who indeed bears fruit.** The term *bears* means *to produce fruit*. It's a compound Greek word that means *to produce fruit*, but the important thing about it is its tense as a verb, again, it denotes continuous action. The person who has had the seed sown upon good ground is continuously producing fruit. We are told by Jesus in John 15:5-6 that if a person is in Christ Jesus he is continuously bearing fruit. Not periodically, not every once in a while, but is continuously bearing fruit. John 15:5-6, here is what Jesus said, **"I, Myself am the vine, and you are the branches."** He's talking to His disciples. Here you have this tree, this vine, this main part of the vine and He says to the disciples, **"And you are the branches; the one abiding in Me, and I in him, this one is producing much fruit."** Notice the verb tense. Not *should produce*, or *might produce*, but the verb tense denotes *is continuously producing fruit*. In other words, He is saying, "If you are in Me and I am in you, it is impossible for you not to bear fruit." **For without Me you are not able to do one thing. If a man should not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch, and it dries up, its withered; and men gather them together, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."**

Again, our example of the tree. I've come across a lot of trees in my gardening days where people wanted branches trimmed and pruned so that they would bear fruit, but they were dead. You cut them, it's just wood inside, there's no there's no life. That branch will never produce fruit even though it is physically part of the tree. So, Jesus said, "If you have if you are separate from Me you will not bear fruit and your branch will be cut off, thrown into a bundle, a pile, and set on fire."

So, here's the connection between these first two points. Remember the first point is that it is called *fruit* and not *works*. And secondly, the production is continuous. And the reason why this is important is because it is the life of the Holy Spirit in the believer that is always producing the spiritual fruit of God. If God's Spirit is there, whatever He's doing is fruit. For me not to ever produce fruit means God's Spirit isn't there. I hope you understand what I'm emphasizing this morning so that you see the separation between human works. Sometimes people associate human works with fruit and they think that humanly, religiously, they have to produce, and they call it fruit. That is not fruit. Fruit is that which is produced by the Holy Spirit and where the Holy Spirit dwells there is continuous fruit.

Paul also said in Colossians 1:5-6 when he was giving thanks to God for the Christians in the city of Colossae, he said in Colossians 1:5-6, he says, **I'm thanking God on account of the hope which is being laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel. Which is come unto you, as it has come in the whole world; and is bringing forth fruit** (this gospel that is going out) **as it also is in you, from the day in which you heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth.** It's this gospel that's going out in the world is bearing fruit, just like in you from the first day that you heard it, until now, it is continually bearing fruit.

The psalmist in Psalm 1 describes the person that is continually being nourished by the Spirit of the Word of God as a person who is flourishing and spiritually prospering or spiritually succeeding in all that he does. Psalm 1:1-3, **Blessed is the man...** and I will point out to you a technical point, that in Psalm 1 these are perfect tense verbs pointing that the blessedness comes because of what the person has not been doing. **Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor has stood in the way of sinners, nor has sat in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in His law he does meditate day and night. He shall be a tree being planted alongside the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in its season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper.**

tsalach is the Hebrew word for prosper, and it has to do with bringing something to its completion. Much like Peter in 1 Peter chapter 1 [actually it's Paul in Philippians 1:6 ☺] talked about God who has begun a good work in you will complete it to the end. A person who is next to the rivers of water and who is producing fruit and his leaves do not wither he shall prosper, spiritually prosper and spiritually succeed in all that he does.

(3) Thirdly, The Characteristic of the Production. People are known by their fruits not their religious confessions and activities. Religious confessions and activities are works. People are known by their fruit. Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:15-20 that a person will be known by the kind of fruit that he or she produces, not their religious works. In Matthew 7 beginning at verse 15 Jesus said, **Beware from false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.** (That is, they're coming to prey upon and to rip off the sheep.) **You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns? how about figs from weeds? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.** You cannot mimic and mock the Holy Spirit. A person can talk a good game and have outward religious appearance like a Christian, but a person cannot reproduce the Holy Spirit other than the Holy Spirit himself. **Every tree that brings not forth good fruit,** Jesus said, **is cut down, and is cast into the fire.** Then He says in Matthew 7:20, **Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.** Not their words. Not their appearance. Not their presentation. Not their religious activities. But by their fruits you shall know the them.

(4) And then fourthly, about this production, The Comparison of Fruit Produced. Notice what the text says, **Who indeed bears fruit and produces some hundred times more than himself, some sixty times more, and some thirty times.** We've entitled this The Comparison of the Production because some seed produces more than others. The point is there's only one seed and that one seed produces more than itself. It is speaking of the yield ration of grain and they're not the same, just like in believers' lives. The Holy Spirit is there in His fullness in every believer's life but the production of yield of grain is different. In the body of Christ, we are called the body of Christ, and Paul described in 1 Corinthians 12 that in the body of Christ there are different body parts, just like in our physical body. And every believer functions as a body part in the body of Christ. And each part has different spiritual functions. Not all body parts produce the same yield of grain. It will produce one, or it will produce 100 times more. But always producing fruit. The production of the seed of the Word of God flows from one life to another producing more fruit in the lives of others. It's the fruit that ministers.

So, in summary, the fourth condition of soil, or ground, is made up of good soil. And it is the only one of the four that has good soil. This good soil is a person who receives and understands the seed of the Word of God. It is personal. Not only does he hear it, but it's personal. He understands it is for him or her. And he understands the Spirit working through the Word, which he or she has heard. The process of growth brings the seed to bear fruit. Again, this fourth condition of soil is the only one that produced fruit.

So, it's important that we consistently hear the Word of God just like in all four cases and types of soil. But it is equally important that we also receive it and seek to understand its meaning for our lives. So that it bears fruit. It is important we receive it personally, under the inspiration of God's Spirit. That also is fruit. It is the production of the Spirit of God.

Let's close with prayer.