

Rooted - Week 13

“Rooted Deep, Living Strong - Part 2”

Matthew 13:1-9 NIV84

We're finishing the book of Colossians by going to the book of Matthew, to something that Jesus did through his parables. He puts a bow on it that fits perfectly with the book of Colossians. We're landing the plane on “Rooted” and the book of Colossians, which is the mini-book and the highlight reel of Romans, Paul's most deep and extensive theological work. If we read just through the book of Romans, we'll be swimming in a lot of deep water. It's brilliant, and it really shows his thinking and his mindset. But, in the book of Colossians, we find the same principles, only distilled down into very practical things. So, Colossians is the “practical handbook” of Romans.

As Jesus went along, he would speak in parables. Parables are stories with a point. They are stories that teach us something, and are usually multi-layered, so when we read a parable, there may be a lot of different things we can learn. There were things for the people right then and in their context, as when Jesus said, “*Look at the birds of the air,*” or “*there was a city set on a hill.*” He was always using things around him to tell stories and to point out spiritual truths.

It's no different in this one from Matthew where he's talking about the four soils, which are actually a metaphor for four different kinds of people and the receptivity, or *non*-receptivity, of their hearts. We talked about the first two last week and we're finishing now with the remaining two. The question we have to ask ourselves is, “*What kind of soil am I?*” Whenever people speak things to us, if we've ever had somebody say something disparaging to us or something dark or mean-spirited, we have an option. We can either receive the seed of that negative word into the soil of our heart, or we can literally turn our hand over, drop it to the ground, and keep on going.

If we take the seed in our hand that was just given to us and place it into the soil of our heart, it will grow and bear fruit. It will bring forth a harvest - not a *good* harvest or *good* fruit - or we can take that seed and turn our hand over and just walk away from the conversation. We don't *have* to take that seed into our heart. Jesus is talking about four kinds of hearts, four kinds of soils, and four kinds of people in this parable.

Matthew 13:1-4 NIV84 - The Parable of the Sower

“That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: ‘A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.’”

The disciples are going, *“Hmm, I'm not sure that I got that. Jesus, could You clarify what You mean by that?”* In verse 19, Jesus picks it back up saying, *“When anyone hears the message about the kingdom [the gospel or the Word of God] and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.”* So the seed fell on a long hard path and then it was snatched up. It was taken away so it could never take root. That's an impermeable heart, and we call that the *hardened heart*. The second kind of heart is the *shallow heart*, which means these people are quick to respond, but they're also quick to *retreat*.

Matthew 13:5 NIV84

“Some fell on rocky places where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and they withered because they had no root.”

Jesus defines that in Matthew 13:20: *“The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.”* Jesus says, *“Look, this one got it. They got excited. They were lit up over it. They were on fire.”* People like this start off higher than a kite. They're on the mountain top. They're living the dream. Everything's great - and then, three weeks later, you can't *find* them. They're gone. They got excited, but then life happened. Persecution happened.

When we get excited about Jesus, we need to understand not everybody outside these walls is going to share our excitement about him. We have this idea that if *we're* happy, everybody around us is going to *celebrate* it. But that's not the case. We got saved - we gave our heart to Christ and felt like a new person - we felt lighter and excited, but people around us said, *“Well, just don't get too fanatical.”* What they all need to see in us is consistency. That's going to be our ministry to those around us. As the years go by, none of us has done it perfectly - only one did that on the planet - his name's Jesus. But we move forward even when we fall. In his book Failing Forward, John Maxwell said, *“If you're going to fall, gain some yardage out of it.”*

Now, the third one's called "the crowded heart." It's choked by competing voices. In Matthew 13:7, Jesus continues the story and says, "*Other seed fell among thorns. It fell among thorns which grew up and the thorns choked the plants.*" He explains it in verse 22: "*The one who received the seed that fell among thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.*" Notice two things - the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it and make it unfruitful. That's seed that has fallen among thorns.

Jesus made no bones about this. He said, "*If you desire to live godly in Christ Jesus, you will be persecuted. Trouble will come but you'll have the ability to navigate it and to rise above it. You'll have the ability to walk over it, but it's still going to happen.*" Jesus told another parable about a house that was built on sandy soil, not on a solid foundation, and he said, "*when the storm came, when the wind blew...*" not *if* the storm comes, but *when*. It's not about *if*, it's *when*. And the beauty is, if our roots are down in good soil - not in shallow soil, not sown among thorns, not just fallen on a hard rocky or hard path - when the soil is good, the plant will be good, too.

That's not the case here. It was the worries of this life that choked out the Word. People fall away because of difficulty, because of persecutions, because of trouble. The worries of this life crowd them out. That's being "sown among thorns." It's not always the *bad* things that get us tripped up. It's too *many* things. It's *busy* things, *lots* of things. "Thorns" are things like worries, wealth, and desires. That's a call for pruning. Nobody enjoys pruning themselves, but when *God* prunes us, it actually produces good growth.

It's not a *rejection* of the Word. These people weren't saying, "*I don't want the Word.*" They *received* it, but now there's a complete *distraction* from it. Remember a few weeks ago, in the book of Colossians, one of the points was to "kill it." We've got to *kill* the things that are killing *us*. There's some things we need to kill in our lives that are distracting us and taking us out of the game. Here's a key idea. What we allow to grow alongside the Word will determine what survives.

Because if we let things of this world - these worries, these things that *crowd* out, these things that *push* out the good things of God, they'll eventually - like thorns, or like a thicket growing around a fence post - they'll *choke* it out. Here's the key question for this one: "*What's crowding out God in my life right now?*" What is it going to take for us as the Church in America to wake up? For one thing, it's going to be us being the right kind of soil so that when the Word comes - when the message comes - it lands in the right place and it's actually sown into the good soil of our lives.

Here's the last soil, and it's "the receptive heart." The receptive heart is cultivated for multiplication. In Matthew 13:8, Jesus says this, *"Still other seed fell on good soil..."* We should all want to be good soil. Then, we need to discern bad seed and drop it to the ground and take the good seed of God's Word - his message and the kingdom - and plant it in our heart so it can produce a crop that's thirty or sixty times what was sown. In Matthew 13:23, Jesus defines what this parable says, *"But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it, he produces a crop yielding 100, 60, or 30 times what was sown."*

He hears the message and understands it - he *comprehends* it. We can't comprehend something we're unwilling to receive, so when the Word comes our way, we have to say, *"I'll take that. Amen. Oh, that's a good word. That's good preaching right there. I'll take that."* What is that? That's trying to be good soil. That's taking the truth that's coming our way and saying, *"I'll take that. I'll receive that."* The Bible talks about the power of agreement when two on earth agree as touching anything. Jesus says, *"I will literally be there in their midst."*

When we're in agreement, God shows up. That's the power of agreement - the power of *alignment*. So, we align ourselves with the good message that's coming, and then say, *"I'll take that. Yeah! Amen!"* Good soil produces a lot of good *fruit*. That's not just hearing, but it's understanding and obeying. To be willing is good, but if we're willing *and obedient*, we'll *"eat the good of the land."* Isaiah tells us the goal is not just information, but *transformation* and *multiplication*. It's about us actually being willing to say, *"I'll take that and I want it to change me from the inside out. I receive it. I receive that Word by faith."*

What we should be doing right now, hearing this scripture, is saying, *"Amen. Amen. Yeah, I'll take that. Oh, that's a good word. I receive that. I'm in agreement with that."* Let's not be ashamed to agree with our *voice*. It might sound silly, but what we're doing, is entering into alignment and agreement. We're being good soil. We're just simply taking it in. That's another way to take it in - to be in agreement - to be good soil. We're receiving something into our heart.

Healthy soil doesn't just *receive* - it *reproduces*. It keeps going. That seed gets in and then it starts to multiply 30, 60, 100-fold inside of our spirit. And then we're leaking it *out* everywhere we go because we get bigger on the *inside* than we are on the *outside*. This life "happens" when we're good soil. When we're good soil, we can receive the good Word and it literally begins to multiply our impact wherever we go. It multiplies our *witness*. It multiplies our *effectiveness* for the kingdom. It might also multiply the *resistance* because, when we're walking with God, we are moving and we're creating resistance. And so the bigger we get on the inside, the more resistance we'll catch. That means we're probably over the target. And if we're not just *over* the target, we might just *be* the target.

Here's the key question, *"Is my life producing fruit that impacts others?"* There's a gospel seed - a good news seed inside of us, and we can receive that into our heart right now, and say, *"I take that. I'm taking that for myself. I'm receiving that because, by faith, I make a declaration today: I am good soil, and I will receive the good Word and it will bring forth a harvest. It will multiply in me. I don't know how that's going to work itself out, but I trust God. What's it going to look like? I have no idea. But I trust him because he already knows what it's going to look like. So, by faith I'm going to receive that good Word and I'm going to walk it out in the name of Jesus."*

That's the idea. Sometimes we have to say things by faith before we see them happen. That's called walking by faith and not by sight. And that means if that's something we desire, we want to be more effective, we want to grow in our faith, but may not even know where to start. Start with a word of faith. Start by saying, *"In the name of Jesus, I am good soil. And because I'm good soil, God's Word, Jesus himself said that when I receive the Word of God, it's going to multiply in me 30, 60, 100-fold. By faith, I know, I trust, and I believe it's already working. It's already happening. It's already multiplying in me."*

That's stating and declaring by faith that the good Word is going to produce a good *harvest*. It's not complicated. We don't even have to be brilliant to do this. Just be in faith and declare the goodness of God over our life even in the middle of our worst circumstances. In fact, that's where we need to do it the most - because, there are people here today in a rough spot right now thinking, *"Man, I wish I had that kind of faith. I wish I could remember what he just said. I don't have that language and that vocabulary."* That happens by practicing. Practice does *not* make perfect. That's a lie. Practice makes permanent. As we say these things and declare them over our life, they become rutted into our gray matter like a record. Then, we can call them up when we *need* to.

When we're the ones trying to declare the Word - to declare the gospel - that makes us a target. So, here's the deal, we need to be good soil so that the good seed of God's Word can get in us and produce what it produces. The seed produces. It just does what a seed does. And, like-*seed* bears like-*fruit*. So whatever seed we receive, that's the kind of plant we're going to get. That's the kind of tree that's going to grow. And we're receiving the good Word of God. We are whatever that Word is, whatever that topic is - whatever it is, it's going to produce that *in* our life and *out* of our life.

What kind of soil are we? If we identify with any of the three other than the *good* soil, all we need to do is repent. It's not complicated. It's simply turning and going the other way. It's saying, *"Lord, I'm turning my face toward You. I'm turning my back on that, but I'm looking toward You. By faith I'm going to be good soil. In fact, I declare, Lord Jesus, by faith, I am good soil. So, I'm going to trust You to develop that in me."* We do it by faith as we turn *towards* him.

That's repentance - turning *towards Jesus*. We think repentance is turning away. It's actually turning toward. It's facing *him* saying, "*I'm coming for you, Lord, and I thank You that You're making me good soil. You're making a good heart.*" So, what kind of soil are we? Soil can change. That's what we need to know. We do not have to stay where we are. We don't have to stay "thorny." We don't have to stay "rocky." We don't have to be a hard path where nothing grows. We can be good soil by turning towards Jesus. *Be encouraged*. God is always sowing seed our way - always. He's just looking for the hearts and the soil that are ready to grow. ... Are we ready to grow?

Prayer

Father, in Jesus' name, Lord, we don't want to be those who just hear the word. Lord, we want to be those who hear it, who understand it, who comprehend it, who agree with You, and who step into alignment with You by faith. And, we choose to do that right now in our hearts, in the soil of our hearts, whatever that condition might be. Lord, we turn to You right now in agreement. We speak out with our mouths what You have already spoken to us. Lord, we agree with You that we are called, we are chosen, we are holy in Jesus Christ - that we are blameless, we are forgiven, we are without reproach - that we are healed in Jesus' name. Lord, that we are not those who are under the dominion of sin any longer, but that we are free in Christ Jesus. We agree with You, not with our own minds, not with this world, not with others. Lord, we agree with You and You alone. And we say, have Your way in our hearts, God. We pray right now that you would change the soil types of our hearts - that You would make us good soil as we shift in alignment and we move towards You in faith. God, we ask You to do in our hearts what only You can do. And we trust You to do that good work. Lord, we pray that in Jesus' holy name. Amen.