

## **Title: What Soil Are You – Part 2**

Text: Luke 8:4-15 (11-15)

Date: June 7, 2026

Proverbs 4:5 tells us to *“Get wisdom, to get insight by never forgetting or turning from the Word of God.”* And so, if you have your copy of God's Word with you this morning, and I hope you do, please turn to Luke 8. You can also turn there with our pew Bibles this morning. We're going to be looking at verses 11-15 of Luke 8, which finishes a passage of Scripture that resolves one of the most puzzling paradoxes of Jesus' ministry. Which is this; why do some people respond positively to the gospel of Jesus Christ and others do not? I mean the heart, what's at the heart of Jesus' message to this world is and should be the most appealing and encouraging message in all the world.

God the Son in human flesh crossed the infinite creator-creation divide to dwell among his fallen people and to die on their behalf in order to restore them back to God for their own personal joy and renewal and eternal satisfaction. I mean that is gloriously good news, and yet the amount of people who responded positively to that message or even under Christ's own preaching was, when you think about it, surprisingly low. Even though Christ likely preached to tens of thousands of individuals at a bare minimum during the three years of his public ministry, the final number of true disciples according to Acts 1:15 that gathered together after his resurrection was only around 120 people. So only around 3% likely of those who ever heard Jesus' direct preaching believed while he was preaching.

And when you look at the book of Acts, even during the times of greatest response to the gospel like in Acts 2 or 4 or 17 or 19, the percentages of those who actually responded in faith to the message of Jesus Christ was anywhere between 5 to 15% of what was likely the actual population in those cities at that time. Those numbers I think would track throughout most of church history in our own evangelistic efforts. So, the question is why? Why is this? Jesus' word demonstrated absolute power over demons, over sicknesses, as we've already seen in the gospel of Luke, over fish of the sea, and then when he speaks to humans, we see a difference. Why is that? Why are those who, as Jesus says in Matthew 7:14, who find the narrow way, why are they few? Why do some people respond positively to genuinely good news about Jesus Christ and others do not? Well, Jesus shows us why here in Luke 8:14-15 by giving us a simple parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

And we started looking at this famous parable last week in verses 4-8. If you remember of Luke 8, we saw the imparting of the parable, and it's a very simple story at first glance. A farmer goes out in the field, and he scatters some seeds, and those seeds fall on four different types of soil. Hard soil, where the seed is immediately eaten up by birds. Shallow soil, where the plant starts to grow and then quickly withers to death because it had no roots. Impure soil, where hidden roots of thorns grow up and eventually choke out the life of the plant that was growing. And then finally good soil, where the plant takes root in the soil

and then bears much fruit. The first three soils are unproductive in Jesus' story, and only the last soil, the good soil, produces an increase of a hundredfold.

Now that type of return is just impossibly large, as I mentioned last week. A typical harvest yield back then might have been around 7 to 10 times the amount, so a hundredfold yield is just extraordinarily miraculous. We know this is the case because the only other time that we see a hundredfold yield elsewhere in the pages of scripture is in Genesis 26:12, where the very son of promise, Isaac, the son of Abraham himself, reaps a hundredfold in the land of Philistia. And we're told there it's because the Lord miraculously blessed him in the midst of his hostility. And so, by Jesus mentioning that impossibly huge type of return of harvest, he's cluing us into the fact that something is going on in this story that's different. Something that at first does not meet the eye.

And that's why Jesus says there at the end of verse 8 repeatedly, *"he who has an ear, let him hear."* In other words, don't miss what I'm telling you, something odd is going on. Well, Jesus' disciples pick up on this irregularity. And so, in verse 9, they come up to Jesus and they ask him, what does this mean? *"What does this parable mean?"* And that's where Jesus gave us the intent of the parable in verses 9-10, which we concluded with last time. And the intent of the parable was, if you remember, to examine and to judge everybody's heart. Jesus explains in verse 10, by giving this parable, those who desired to know the truth would get exactly what they want because they would get an explanation. And those who didn't want to know the truth would get exactly what they wanted to because they wouldn't ask for an explanation. And so those who wanted to know the truth would get more of it. And those who didn't want the truth wouldn't get any.

And so, beginning at this moment, Jesus is beginning to judge the nation of Israel and his ministry by their own hearts through the giving of parables. And though doubtless there were many that walked away that day, there were also a few good hearts that were prepared. A few in whom the Spirit of God was working, a few who genuinely desired to know the truth, as there always is. And we see that with the disciples in verse 9, who go up to Jesus and they ask him what he means. And to them, Jesus gives the secrets of the kingdom. To them, in verses 11-15, which we'll look at this morning, Jesus gives the interpretation of the parable. In other words, he gives them an understanding of the spiritual truth that they will never forget. And neither will we, if we've come this morning with a good and willing heart that's willing to know what God's word has to say.

Today we're going to consider the interpretation of the parable in verses 11-15. And then we're going to consider how these spiritual truths should cause us to examine our own hearts and lives this morning, our own personal evangelism, and then our own approach to church-wide ministry here at Grace Chapel. And so that's what we've got ahead of us as we look at Jesus' interpretation of the parable.

So, with that in mind, if you're able, please stand with me out of attention and honor for the word of God to read our passage before us today from Luke 8, starting verse 4 into verse 15. Our author, the first century doctor, Luke, writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit these words for us today.

In Luke chapter 8:4, *“And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, ‘A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.’”* *“And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.”* Verse 7, *“And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it.”* Verse 8, *“But some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold. As he said these things, he called out, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’”*

Verse 9, *“And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear; but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast with an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.”*

This is the word of God who gives us more understanding than the aged when we keep his precepts.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you so much for your word this morning. We thank you that we do not have to figure out our way to you. That we're not a bunch of blind men trying to figure out who you are. But that you have spoken, and you have revealed yourself to us in your word, and in the person of your son, Jesus Christ. Father, we thank you that he who was in heaven came down so that we might understand these spiritual truths. And Father, I pray that by your spirit this morning you would work upon the hearts and minds of the people in this congregation just as you did all those years ago. That you would help us to discern our hearts. That you would convict those who were in the first three parables of sin, of righteousness, of judgment, and that you would encourage those in the fourth to continue to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Father, lead us on right paths for your name's sake this morning through your word, by your spirit.

And we ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

You may be seated.

So, after Luke communicates in this account the imparting and the intent of Jesus' parable of the soil, he then gives us here in verses 11-15, most importantly, the interpretation. Here he comes. He has told the story, he's told them what he intends, and now he gives them the truth. To those who cared about the truth, he gives them the meaning of the truth. And how did they demonstrate that they wanted to know the truth? They didn't just hear it, but if you remember as we mentioned last week, they came to Christ and they asked him questions. That is exactly how we demonstrate the state of our heart before God as

well. We don't just hear God's word, but when we hear it, we come to the Lord, and we ask him questions of it. Help me to understand this more. And so, I pray that that is your heart this morning as we look at the truth that Jesus has for us here in Luke 8:11-15.

And Jesus begins by saying in verse 11, *"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God."* Now you might not realize it, but if we went no further in our sermon this morning than this, that would be enough. There is so much that is expressed and implied in that one opening statement. But for the sake of keeping the main thing, the main thing this morning, I just want you to notice first that Jesus gives many explanations in these verses, but he gives no explanation or description of the sower here in these verses, does he? He gives no explanation at all. You want to know why? It's because it doesn't matter.

Now I'm not saying that the presence of a sower is irrelevant. No, a seed does not sow itself. Someone has to sow the seed. But what Jesus is saying here is that the sower in this story could be literally anyone. As long as what they are sowing, throwing out, is the word of God, it doesn't matter who throws it. Hallelujah. Listen to me, especially you who are members of Grace Chapel. You might be thinking this morning, well, I don't know enough to tell someone about Jesus. And I want to encourage you this morning, listen, if you know enough truth to be saved yourself, you know enough truth to share with someone else how to be saved. What did you come to realize at the very first when you trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior? You realized that God existed, didn't you? And that God is holy. That meaning He is without sin, He is good. And you realized in that moment that you were not. That there were many times in your life when you have not obeyed God or lived in a way that pleased Him. You realized you were a sinner and you realized that the consequence of that sin was death, eternal separation from God in a place called Hell. And what became clear to you in that moment? What became clear to you in that moment is that you had no hope of eternal life outside of the way of salvation that God had offered you in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

I still remember that moment when I was young, and my mother explained to me the basics of the gospel. I could not give you a full outline plan of the Romans Road or anything else like that. But let me tell you something that I realized in that moment, that I was a sinner. And that apart from what Jesus Christ had done for me, I could never be accepted by God. And in that moment, I realized Jesus was my only hope. And I confessed to the Lord in that moment that I was a sinner. And I cried out to God to save me based on what Jesus Christ had done. I was six years old.

This is not complicated, brothers and sisters. You can tell someone about Jesus. The qualifications of the sower does not matter. And yet so often we think it does, don't we? You know we want to make an impact for Christ. We want to tell our friends and neighbors about Jesus. And so, what do we do? Do we actually go out there and we talk to our friends and neighbors about Jesus? No, no. This is what we'll do. Better idea. Let's have a conference as a church, right? And let's invite Mr. So-and-so who has a doctorate from such-and-such and is an author of this and that. And let's invite our friends and neighbors to listen to him. And maybe, and we can hardly anticipate, what impact he might have in the lives of our friends and family members. Because after all, he is so immensely qualified.

Brothers and sisters, if he was the one immensely qualified to share the gospel with them, then why aren't they his friends and neighbors? God put you in their lives to tell them about Jesus. You're the sower. You're the sower in this parable. And listen, the seed is the word of God. The issue is the seed. It's not the sower. God used Balaam's donkey in Numbers 22:28-30 to make a difference in one of the most critical moments in Israel's history. The issue is the seed. It's not the sower.

And it's not, by the way, in how the sower sows either. Oh, he flicked his wrist differently that time. That must be why the seed is growing rather than when he flicked the seed this way. No, that's ridiculous. Spiritual fertility and fruitfulness does not lie in the gift of the evangelist. It lies in the nature of the seed being given. A simple farmer and shepherd like Amos, who just shares the Word of God plainly and simply for others, will do more for the kingdom of God and His glory than an educated and intellectual philosopher like Caiaphas ever will. The issue is not the sower or his method. The issue is the seed. It's the word of God.

How is the kingdom of God established? How does it come to be? How does it descend upon an individual in a church and a community? It is by the gospel. It is by the word of God. And that's why Jesus gave His life to sharing it, as we saw last time in verse 3. And why we see Him saying here, *"you who have ears to hear, let them hear.... The seed is the word of God."* You want to produce real lasting fruit for the kingdom of heaven, then give the word of God to people. Now, I know many of you might be sitting here this morning saying, I know this, Pastor. Well, yes, we might know it, and yet I think we don't. At least American Christianity doesn't. We think, well, if we're going to make a difference in this area for the kingdom of God, we need to toss out to our community new music or new methods or new ministries or new messaging. Let's focus on that. Let's spend our money there because that'll be the ticket.

Well, listen, all of those things might be fine and good and maybe needful at times. But if you want to make a real difference and produce real fruit that is lasting for the kingdom of God, then focus on sharing the word of God as broadly as possible, believer. Grace Chapel, as God gives us the opportunity to share and spread God's word, both individually or corporately, whether that be by the spoken word or the written word or over the airways, always take it. Beloved, share God's word with your family members and your community. Share God's word with your church. Beloved, share God's word with your children and your spouse because nothing else will make the impact in people's lives other than the word of God. Let the spreading of God's word always be the preeminent priority over every other consideration in life and ministry because *"the seed is the word of God."* That's a central issue and we must never forget it because when we forget it, we're going to make something else central to our life, to our church, to our community in trying to advance the kingdom of God.

We'll make political activism central or social engagement or marketing strategies, and we can't do that because none of those things ever saved anyone. The seed that makes the difference in a person's life is always the word of God. 1 Peter 1:23, *"for you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."* Romans 10:17, *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of,"* what, *"Christ."* James 1:18, *"Of his own will he brought us forth."* He caused us to be

born again, how? *"By the Word of truth."* So, if you want a life that brings forth much fruit for the glory of God, you've got to share God's word. It has to be central to your life.

You'll never understand any of the truths and you'll never experience the fruitfulness of this parable until you understand that the seed is the word of God. And so, after explaining the nature of the miraculous seed, Jesus now expands on this reality to explain the four soils that he's just introduced in his parable. And these soils, I want you to know, actually represent human hearts. We see that in verse 12, where Jesus says, *"The ones along the path are those who have heard; and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their,"* what, "hearts." And then in verse 15, *"the good soil are those who, when hearing the word of God, hold it fast in an honest and a good,"* what, "heart." And so, this parable of the soils is Jesus describing four different types of heart conditions.

And as such, Jesus supplies for us in this parable, I believe, really a sort of spiritual EKG to determine the status and the health of our own spiritual hearts before God. And Jesus begins by explaining the hard heart in verse 12. He says in verse 12, *"The ones along the path,"* remember that was the hard path. So those were the seeds that would just bounce off the ground. Jesus says they *"are those who have heard; and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved."* See, the seed of God's word doesn't even sit there for a moment in this situation because the heart is as hard as concrete. The Gospel has no effect on this heart whatsoever because the heart is as hard as a rock. And Satan, like a bird of prey, is circling, Jesus describes, ready to snatch away the saving truth as quickly as possible so that the soul of the individual *"may not believe and be saved."* I want you to mark that.

This soil and the next two soils, I believe, describe those who do not believe and are not saved. They are not describing believers, although there is a warning for us as believers in this. The hard heart, the shallow heart, the impure heart, are all describing the hearts of those who do not believe and are not saved. And the first unredeemed heart that Jesus describes here is the rock-hard heart, which, by the way, is the average human heart that is unplowed and unprepared for the Gospel. When they have a thought about eternity, those in this world, it just bounces off of them. When sin is brought up, it's just immediately dismissed. When truth is given, it just slides right off of them. As Ezekiel 36:26 describes, it's like a *"heart of stone."* There's no response to God or to his word. There's no care or concern.

These are the people who, when you share the word of God with them, it's like you're speaking to a brick wall. They have no interest at all whatsoever in Christ or in any good news from him because their heart is beaten down hard by sin and unbelief and self-righteousness. And whatever of the Gospel you might manage to get out there is immediately snatched away by the devil so that they may not believe and be saved. It's exactly what we saw this morning in our scripture reading from 2 Corinthians 4:4, where Paul says, *"In their case,"* not only are their hearts hardened, but *"the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel."* Beloved, beware the devil's work. He is always flying where the seed is being scattered. He is always laboring hardest, where the light is always shining brightest, in Gospel-preaching churches and in Christ-centered homes.

Beloved, I encourage you this morning, pray for your church. Pray for your children. Pray for your spouse. As you are, as I trust, scattering the good news of the Gospel all around you, I encourage you to pray for that seed as it's being scattered. Don't just share the Gospel. Pray over the Gospel, that it might find willing and receptive hearts, for we who labor, labor in vain unless the Lord does something. For as Hosea 10:12 reminds us, *"hard and fallow ground is only broken up when we take time to seek the Lord."* God is the only one that can change a person's heart. So, our evangelistic efforts always begin on our knees. God bless this effort as I tell them about Jesus. So, when it comes to hard and fallow hearts, beware the devil's work and therefore pray that God's Word would not be ripped away, but it would be planted deep. So, Jesus explains the hard soil is the hard heart, one that is unplowed and unprepared to receive the Gospel.

Jesus explains next the shallow heart. Verse 13 it says, *"And the ones on the rock,"* remember those that fell on that shallow soil, the stones that had no moisture in that bedrock that allowed no roots, Jesus says they *"are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a little while, and in time of testing fall away."* Now at first glance you would say that this is the complete opposite response of what we've just seen in the previous soil. The soil of the hard heart, rather than being hardened to the Gospel message, this heart, it says rejoices over it. So, they hear about Jesus, right? They hear about his hope of salvation, his forgiveness from sins, his offer of eternal life, and their hearts rejoice over it. They have an emotional response to it. There's tears of joy and excitement and energy.

I mean, everyone would be looking at this person and saying, that's the five-minute wonder, right? This is the person who after you give the Gospel they run for and they say, pastor, baptize me right now, right? This is the type of person that Jesus is describing. But what's the reality? Jesus says they have no root. It's just an outward show. You say, well, how do you know that these people have no real spiritual root, that they're not genuinely saved? He says because they believe only for what? What does this say? *"They believe only for a while, and then in time of testing, they fall away."* You can tell that they were never Christians because the moment their faith in Jesus is tested, they walk away from him. They consider Jesus not worth the cost.

As Jesus said in John 8:31, *"if you continue in my word, then you are truly my disciples."* Or as the author of Hebrews repeatedly tells us over and over again in chapters 10-12, true believers are those who endure in their faith in Jesus Christ. And then as Paul taught us back in Colossians 1:23, true believers *"continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel."* Contrast that with these individuals, those who believe only for a little time. But when times of testing, times of pressure, times of temptation come, they fall away, instant bloom, instant fade. They were shallow. They were never wrestling deep with the truths of Christ and his word, with the reality of the depths of their sin, or the purity of God's righteousness, or the surety of God's judgment. It was just stuff they heard from their pastor. It was not something that they believed in their heart. They never did it because they never wanted to. They never dug their roots deep because they were shallow. The only reason why they were interested in Christ was because they thought, if he'll give me health or wealth or prosperity, he'll fix my marriage or my finances or my life. They think that Jesus is going to fix all their problems and give them their best life now. And when Jesus doesn't do that, do what they think that he should in their life, they're out.

We've seen people like this, haven't we? Who went to church camp, who went to youth group, who have a wonderfully stirring profession of faith for a time. But then when trials and temptations come, when real life kicks in and they start suffering loss or challenges or heartaches, they walk away from the faith because they never had it to begin with. They had a shallow emotional reaction, but no enduring saving faith at all. What's the warning here for this soil? Beloved, beware shallow temporary impressions. Many of you may confess various times in your life when you experienced certain feelings or emotions about spiritual truths and the realities of God's word, to which I say, excellent, well done. But now, what are you doing about those truths? How are you living in light of them?

Are you right now digging your roots deep down into the truths of God's word? Or are you satisfied with a superficial Christianity? Can you give a reason for the hope that is in you? Biblical evidence for the truths that you confess. Are you rooted or are you simply parroting truth claims and doctrines you've heard all your life when you know no evidence? Could you survive a cult leader knocking at your door this afternoon and questioning the divinity of Jesus Christ and the triunity of the Godhead? Could you survive the death of one of your children this evening and the questioning of the goodness of God's person and his providence in your life? How many promises from God's word could you even give right now if you had to? Are you digging your roots deep down into the truths of God's word or are you satisfied with a secondhand religion? For listen, times of testing in life will surely come. And if you do not stand by faith, faith in Jesus Christ, you will not stand at all.

Beloved, I want to encourage you this morning to dig deep. Dig deep with your church. Dig deep with your children and your spouse so that having deep roots they might believe and in times of testing not fall away. If you're wanting resources on how to do that, please see me after this service or reach out to the church office this week and we'd love to point you to some good resources that can help you grow in your faith and get beyond the milk of the word and start eating the meat of it. So, when it comes to shallow hearts, beware shallow impressions or temporary expressions instead dig your roots down deep. That's the shallow heart.

Jesus describes the final bad soil in verse 14, the hard, the shallow and now the impure. The impure heart in verse 14 where it says, *"And as for what fell among thorns,"* remember that was the soil that looked really healthy on the outside, but deep down had strong roots of thorns lurking underneath. He says, *"they are those who hear, but as they go on their way,"* in other words, as they go down a path that at first appears to be faith, over time eventually, *"they are,"* what, *"choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and their fruit does not mature."* I want you to notice with this soil, though everything looks good on the surface for a while, suddenly and increasingly over time all of these impurities erupt from below the surface and slowly choke out over time any hope of eternal life.

You think, well, here's a person who's living for God and for his glory, and then suddenly he's consumed with the temporal, with the world, with as Jesus says the cares and the pleasures of life. These are those individuals who, though they seem to be following Jesus for a time, are suddenly pulled away by earthly concerns and by earthly riches and by earthly pleasures. And suddenly they are so preoccupied with the things of this world that they have no time to think about the world that is to come. They are overcome.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is a suburban heart, and it is a lost heart. That's what Jesus is saying. A heart that is pulled away from the word of God and the things of God by all the cares and riches and pleasures of life is an unredeemed heart. This should cause us to sit up and pay attention. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, *"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. But you cannot serve both God and money."* That's what's being described here. These people begin very well, but they become strangled by the cares and riches and pleasures of this world.

The things of this life, you could put this way, just crowd out all the things of eternity. They have a divided, impure, suburban heart. And this soil, I think, is the most frightening one of all as I read this parable. Because I know, by God's grace, I'm not the first soil. I'm pretty sure I'm not the second. But it's this third soil that constantly stirs up a godly fear and self-examination and a conviction in my heart that none of us should suppress. Because what do we have to say about all the people that we know who claim the name of Christ and yet, because of their vocation, or because of sports, or because of hobbies, or because of commitments, they have no time in their life for the things of God.

Well, we have to say what Jesus says, that *"they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, that their fruit is not mature,"* and if they do not repent and turn from that type of life, they're lost. As 1 John 2:15 says, *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* That's pretty clear, isn't it? If you love, desire, chase after, and yearn for the things of this world to the point where you don't have time to focus on eternal matters of the heart, the love of the Father is not in you. That's an impure heart. So, what's the warning with this soil? Beloved, beware selfish distractions. Beware selfish distractions.

Beware competing affections and obsessive concerns over the earthly affairs of this life and over pleasures. These pleasures are a continual danger that is preached against by Christ and the apostles throughout this gospel. The pleasures of comfort, of splendid clothing, of luxury, of kingly homes, of the pleasures of excessive savings for every contingency, the pleasures of sumptuous food and grand feasting. Beware these things that can slowly creep over the soul and crowd out your life's heart, focus, and desire for Jesus. Beware distractions, preoccupations, dominating obsessions, and excessive busyness that crowds out your time attention. For 2 Peter 2:19 says, *"whatever overcomes a person, to that they are enslaved."* And if Christ doesn't dominate you, something else is. Things that are innocent, when done in excess, can be eternally deadly. Beloved, beware the selfish distractions of impure hearts. Beware selfish distractions with your church. Beware selfish distractions with your children and with your spouse. Keep them focused on delighting in Christ above all else, so that by God's grace, neither the valley of despair nor vanity fair can choke out God's work in their life. That's the impure heart.

And finally, in contrast to all these three bad soils, Jesus describes in closing the good heart. And that's in verse 15. You realize now why I broke this up into two weeks. Verse 15, *"As for that in the good soil,"* remember, that which grew and yielded a hundredfold, *"they are those who, when hearing the word, hold it fast with an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience."* See, this is when the seed of God's word is sown, and it doesn't bounce off the surface, it doesn't spring up shallow, or in the heat of trials wither, it

doesn't get choked by selfish materialism and riches. It takes deep root. It is met by a willing and honest heart that approaches God and says, tell me more, tell me more, I want to know more. This is a good heart.

This is the heart that is saved, that yearns to know more about the glories of God in the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in the word. God's word is held by an honest and a sincere and a good heart, and therefore produces a fruit that is a hundredfold, because it is produced with patience, with endurance. It is not someone who is a flash in the pan. I trusted in Jesus. I experienced something at one time in my life, but now I'm going to live for myself. This is a description of someone who is given over continually to a steadfast love for Christ. Salvation here is not being indicated by a one-time prayer. It is indicated by a life that is continually bearing fruit with repentance, a life that keeps on repenting, a life that keeps on believing, a life that keeps on digging down deep. It keeps on bearing fruit with repentance.

You sit there and say, well, what fruit is that? What fruit is that? Well, let's start with the fruit of love. You know whether someone's saved by their enduring love for God, for Christ, and for others. You know whether someone's saved by their enduring joy and peace in the midst of trials. You know that someone is saved by their enduring patience, bearing up under difficult times. You know that someone is saved by their enduring goodness as the trials that they're sent through produces the fruit of righteousness in their life. You know that someone is saved by their enduring kindness in spite of the mistreatments and offenses that they're made to endure in this life. And you know that someone is saved by their enduring faithfulness to God and to his gospel, to their enduring gentleness in the face of hostility, and to their enduring self-control when circumstances spiral out of control.

These are the moments when those who are the good soil show the fruit that results from being born again. As Jesus said in Matthew 7, *"you will surely know them by their,"* what, *"fruits."* Over time, such fruit becomes clearly evident. You cannot mistake an increase of a hundredfold. And you cannot mistake the enduring fruit of the Spirit that's produced when the word of Christ is being received either. When the Spirit of God is producing fruit for God through the word of God, it is evident, and it endures. And so, Jesus sees that crowd, just as he sees this crowd that's here this morning. And the simple fact is, while there may be a body in the pew, that doesn't mean there is faith in the heart. And this parable is teaching us something very, very important. Not everyone who's talking about heaven is going there. And so, I want to leave you with two closing questions.

First, what soil are you? Are you the hard heart that maybe even up until this morning has simply refused to listen to the call to trust in Jesus? The one who in five minutes will not remember a single phrase of this sermon because you've already dismissed it, and Satan has already snatched it away. Are you the shallow heart who is only here this morning because of what you think Jesus will do for you and you have no desire to be free from your sin and to possess Christ's righteousness that you might be saved? No inner desire to dig deep into the truths of Christ? Are you the impure heart who deep down still loves your sin and yourself and the pleasures of this world and you're just trying to keep all of that below the surface and hoping those thorns don't spring up and be self-evident to all? Or are you the good heart whose heart has been plowed deeply in repentance and who desires this morning true faith and has a hunger for

God's righteousness and forgiveness and salvation itself? I want to encourage you, if that is you, the salvation that you desire is in Christ.

I call on you this morning to trust in Jesus. Trust in him. He lived the perfect life you could never live. He died the perfect death on the cross beneath God's wrath that you could never die. And he won the perfect victory on the third day. A victory that you could never win. And if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ this morning, you will be saved. You will be given a new heart. What soil are you? I would encourage you this morning, receive the word of the gospel.

The second question that I have for all of us this morning is this: How should this passage affect our personal evangelism and our corporate ministries here at Grace Chapel? And the answer is primarily, beyond everything that I've already said, we must be sowers of the word. The seed is the word of God. And I want you to know that therein is our hope because the solution is the word of God as well. Jesus doesn't give this parable so that after sowing we'd say, well, clearly that person is a hard heart. Clearly that person is bad soil, so see you later. He gives this parable so that after sowing we would say clearly that's a hard heart, so God help me swing with love that hammer that breaks the rocky hearts to pieces.

If there's one thing that this passage should remind us, it's that we are involved in spiritual warfare, ladies and gentlemen, for people's souls and eternal destinies. With the hard heart we contend against the devil because souls are being robbed of the truth. With the shallow heart we contend against the flesh because souls are fading away and falling away through temptation. And with the impure heart we contend against the world because souls are being consumed by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And in sowing the word of God, I want you to know that we're contending against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Therefore, the weapon of our warfare for people's souls is very simple, and it is not physical, it is spiritual. It is the word of God.

As John Newton wrote, my desire is to draw the sword of the Spirit, not against names, parties, and opinions, but against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The gates of hell cannot prevail against God's word. The flesh avails nothing against the words of Christ, and the world will be dissolved one day by the very word of his power. And so here we see in the example, and now in the teaching of Christ, that if we seek the advancement of God's kingdom in our marriages, in our families, in our church, and in our community, then we must be about one thing, the sharing of the word of God. Therefore, we must be knowing it and digging down deep into it. As the songwriter wrote, with this sword that makes the wounded whole, we must fight with faith and valor. What soil are you? I would encourage you from this parable, receive the word, and then sow it this week for the glory of God.

This is the word of God, which I consider it a great privilege to have been able to share with you today, in which I now commit to your further study and your faithful obedience until Jesus, who is the good news of our gospel, returns for his own.

And to that end, as the men come forward this morning for communion, let's pray.

Father, we thank you so much for this parable from Christ. Father, I thank you that your word is sharp like a double-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Father, I thank you that when you do this work, you do it for our good, for it is only when we know who we are that we can then appreciate who Jesus is. If we do not see ourselves as sinners, then who needs a Savior? But when we know that we are sinners, then we look to Christ, and we see a greater Savior.

Father, we thank you so much for the saving work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, which we get to celebrate in these next few moments. Father, we thank you for his body, which was broken for us, that when he died, he did not die for people who were righteous, but he died for people that he knew were unrighteous, that we might be saved. And I thank you, Father, that when he died, he shed his own blood on that cross so that we who receive him by faith might become inheritors of a new covenant, a new relationship with you, one in which we can enjoy total righteousness and total forgiveness through faith in Christ. Father, what good news.

And so, Father, as we look upon this world and we know that there are so many people who do not respond positively to it, may that not keep us back from sowing your word this week. For there are people who are lost and dying and going to hell this week. And we know that they will only come to faith in Jesus Christ by the word of Christ. So, help us this week to receive your word and help us to sow it so that you might produce in our day and in our community a harvest a hundredfold so that Jesus Christ would be praised.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

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