

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-23

Halifax: 28 August 2005

Introduction

Last week, I began a new sermon series on the Parables of the Kingdom from Mat. 13.

- I showed you that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.
 - The word *parabolh* literally means “a throwing alongside of.”
 - In involves taking something familiar and “throwing it beside” something not so familiar that you wish to explain.
 - One man described a parable like this:
 - A parable is “a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.”
 - The story is meant to stay with you and make you think!
 - I think you would all have to agree that this is certainly the case with the parables of Jesus.
 - When you hear them, they stick in your mind and make you think...
 - How often do you see something happen and it makes you say, “Oh yes, that is like the parable of the sower...”
- I also showed you last week that the parables Jesus told in Matthew 13 convey information about God’s Kingdom that was virtually unknown in His day.
 - They present things that were almost universally mis-understood...
 - in particular,
 - The parable of the sower showed that the king or the Messiah would be rejected by many that heard His voice...
 - Jesus’ hearers expected nearly universal acceptance.
 - The parable of the wheat and the tares showed that He would even be rejected by some who claimed to follow Him, and that these false disciples would not be sorted out till the end.
 - The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven showed that His kingdom would start very small and grow very slowly...
 - Jesus’ hearers expected it to begin with very visible and widespread success.

- And the parables of the pearl of great price and the hidden treasure showed that those who entered it would be called to deny themselves and take up their cross.
 - Jesus' hearers expected that they would not have to sacrifice anything when Messiah came, but would have ease and material prosperity.
- As you can see, the kingdom was going to be strikingly different than what the covenant people were expecting!
 - Jesus further explained that many who heard these parables would not understand them because of their hardened hearts
 - And that the parables would only serve harden them even more because they don't want a kingdom like the one Jesus describes here.
 - They do not savour the things of God, but the things of fallen corrupted man...
 - They were looking for a Messiah that would save them from their political and social and economic problems...
 - not a Messiah that would save them from their sins.
 - In their minds, a rejected, crucified Messiah whose followers must each bear his own cross was not at all what they had in mind!
 - Jesus explained that the only ones who will understand are those to whom understanding is given.
 - Even the true disciples of Jesus did not understand these parables very well... even after Jesus had explained them to them!
 - But they were given the beginning seeds of true spiritual understanding by God's Spirit,
 - and Jesus promised that this understanding would grow into an abundance!
 - There parables stuck in their minds...
 - They remembered them when they saw Jesus rejected and crucified...
 - when they saw false disciples like Judas within their own ranks...
 - when they experienced suffering for Jesus' sake...
 - The longer they went on, the more meaningful the parables would become.
- You have a great advantage when it comes to understanding these parables because you are able to look back at the cross that is now fully revealed—
 - you understand that Christ was rejected in order that He might die for our sins...

- you understand that have been and are many false disciples in His church...
- and you have a whole history of the martyrs beginning with Stephen and continuing to our present day.

- Yet, at the same time, there is a sense in which your understanding of these parables is also growing and developing over time.
 - For example, when you first became a true disciple of Christ,
 - you may have been told that there would be professing Christians that would turn away from Christ—
 - but you did not understand it nearly so well as you did after you began to see that happen for yourself...
 - to see a dear respected brother (one you thought was a brother) turn away and reject our Lord...
 - As you go on, the parables make more and more sense to you.
 - You should count yourself very blessed if the Lord has given you understanding, because He has promised that He will make that understanding continue to grow.

This morning, I want to focus in on the first parable that Matthew presents to us in Matthew 13:

- The Parable of the Sower.
- Just as it was our Lord's desire to expand the understanding of His disciples by explaining this parable to them,
 - so I want to try to expand your understanding by explaining it to you this morning as it applies to you.
- Jesus explains that this parable speaks about the different ways that people respond when they hear the word of the kingdom.
 - The first three types of soil that Jesus describes are soils in which the seed is sown that never bring forth fruit...
 - The fourth type, the good soil, is the only one that is fruitful, and in this case there are various amounts of fruitfulness.
 - It is clear from what Jesus says here the sower's goal is fruitfulness!
 - I suppose that is a very obvious point,
 - but as we begin this morning to look at this parable, I want you to think about it with me...

I. Think about the fact that the sower's goal is fruitfulness.

A. When sower goes out with his bag of seed and begins to scatter it about his field,

- you know that his whole purpose for doing it is to get fruit.
1. He goes out to scatter corn seed in order that he might have corn, and wheat seed in order that he might have wheat.
 - It would be foolish to think he would go to all the trouble of ploughing his field and scattering the seed and watering it if it was not his purpose to have fruit.
 2. So it is with the Lord Jesus who sows the word of the kingdom in the hearts of men.
 - a. Surely you do not think He came to this world, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, for some purpose other than obtaining fruit?
 - How could you suppose that He went to the trouble to train up apostles to sow His word in His name if His goal was not to have fruit?
 - Or how could you suppose that He continues to send out ministers of the word to sow the gospel today if it is not for the purpose of bearing fruit.
 - b. Jesus makes it clear throughout His ministry that His purpose is to establish the kingdom of God, a kingdom in which fruit is brought forth for God!

B. But what kind of fruit is it that Jesus seeks?

1. We can best answer that by looking at what kind of seed He sows...
 - a. You can tell what kind of fruit a sower wants to have by looking at what kind of seed he is sowing...
 - If he is sowing wheat seed, you know that he hopes to have wheat—
 - if barley, you know that he is looking for a yield of barley...
 - b. So what is the seed that Jesus is sowing?
 - verse 19 describes it as “the word of the kingdom.”
 - The word of the kingdom is also called the word of truth, the word of Christ, the word of the gospel, the faithful word, and many other such things.
 - In Colossians 1:5-6, Paul speaks of this word as
 - “the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;”
 - Notice that the word is said to be bringing forth fruit all over the world.
2. What is the fruit that the seed of God’s word produces?

- There are many things I might say about this fruit...
- a. But I suppose if I had to try to explain what this fruit is by one idea, I might say that it is eternal life...
 - not merely life that lasts forever—though it certainly is that...
 - but what we might call “life with God.”
 - A fruitful life, from the Biblical perspective, is a life that pleases God...
 - It is a life that is full of what God delights in.
- b. And what is the life that God delights in a human being?
 - He delights in a life that reflects His glory!
 - A life that is connected to Him in such a way that that life is an expression of His love and truth and goodness and righteousness on a human level...
 - A fruitful person is a person that, as God’s image, reflects the truth about God—a person that gives a true picture of Him—
 - a true picture rather than the distorted, twisted picture, that fallen persons display before God changes them.
 - The fruitful person lives the way a human being ought to live.
- c. And this fruitfulness also includes a pleasing response to God—
 - The fruitful person is filled with thanksgiving, recognising all that God has done for him...
 - And he is filled with faith, recognising that he can do nothing without God...
 - And with reverential praise and worship, recognising the majesty and glory of God.
 - He responds to God as a human being ought to respond.
- d. To put in very simply, the fruitful person is the person who brings forth in his life what God wants him to bring forth!
 - It is interesting to consider that in one sense, we are all to bring forth the very same thing...
 - Every human being is to love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength...
 - And every human being is to love his neighbour as himself...
 - But in another sense,

- There is to be tremendous variety in what we bring forth to God...
- He has given us each a unique personality, a unique set of gifts and abilities, and a unique calling.
- As with any pleasing composition, there is beautiful unity in the context of variety.

C. Now you might well ask,

- “How does the word of God bring forth this fruit?”
- 1. And I would tell you first of all, by attaching you to the fruitful man—Jesus, the Son of God in human flesh.
 - a. The Bible teaches that we are fallen into sin and corruption.
 - Therefore, we cannot bring forth fruit that is pleasing to God.
 - We are dead, and all our fruit is spoiled because it is all tainted by our sin.
 - God cannot delight in what is corrupt and impure.
 - b. But the Word tells you to believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved...
 - He is the only man in this fallen world that pleases God...
 - But what is so wonderful about Him is that He was not only interested in pleasing God as an individual...
 - He was committed to doing all that was required to make all of God’s elect people—the whole church—pleasing to God!
 - And so, seeing that we, the church, were not pleasing to God because of our sin,
 - He took it upon Himself to atone for our sin by offering Himself as a sacrificial victim!
 - He took it upon Himself to pay for our sins so that they might all be pardoned...
 - It meant that He had to bare God’s wrath and curse for all His elect—the penalty that God’s law demanded in full...
 - He did this in love for us in order that we might please God and be accepted by Him!
 - And so He brings pardon to you as soon as you believe on Him, taking away all your sins...
 - And not only that, but He also gives you the Holy Spirit who produces the fruits of eternal life in you—life in God...

- Gal 5:22: The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
- And of course this fruit is no mere idle disposition toward these things—
 - it is love that is expressed in deeds and service to our neighbour...
 - And joy that is expressed in a life of thanksgiving rather than covetousness and grumbling about this or that...
 - In other words, it is very visible fruitfulness!

TRANS> The word of kingdom saves you by calling you to join yourself to Jesus through faith.

- The fruitfulness, a life that pleases God for all eternity—
 - comes about in the lives of all those who receive the Word of the kingdom that commands you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!
 - It is by Him that sins are pardoned and by Him that the Holy Spirit is given to us.
 - It is by Him that we are made fruitful.
2. And I might add that the Spirit produces this fruitfulness by enabling you to continue in the word of God...
- In other words, once you believe, you are not only joined to Christ and to the Spirit forever...
 - But you are also joined to the word of God forever so that you continue to follow God's word...
 - To put it another way, you continue to apply His word to all of life—
 - not only the command to believe on the Lord Jesus,
 - but all of God's commandments about how to live.
 - I do not mean that you obey everything perfectly,
 - but I mean that now your ears are opened to God's word and you are learning to obey it in all things.
 - You are like a garden that continues to bear more and more fruit as the years go by because God's word lives and abides in you...
 - It is at the core of your being and it brings forth fruit as it is more and more understood and more and more obeyed.
 - You learn to observe all things that Christ has commanded.

TRANS> Now to go back to our main point, this fruitfulness that I have described is the sower's goal when He sows the word of the kingdom.

- Jesus came in order that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly.
- The seed that He sows is good seed that brings forth fruit that pleases God in all who receive it.

D. But of course, the Parable of the Sower teaches you that not every one receives the seed in such a way that he produces fruit...

1. This is not because of any defect in the seed itself!
 - a. No, the seed of God's word is precious, incorruptible seed that is capable of bringing forth life when it is received and nurtured by good soil...
 - What precious seed it is that can give eternal life to sinners!
 - How you ought to give thanks for such seed!
 - How you ought to rejoice in it and seek it with all diligence!
 - How you ought to hold on to this seed that you might be fruitful!
 - b. It is not because of any defect in the seed, but because of defective soil that does not receive the seed as it should...
 - That is what keeps this seed from producing fruit in an individual's life!
2. And I would suggest to you that the problem with the receiving soil in every case is a lack of faith...
 - a. You see, there is a sense in which every person wants to be fruitful!
 - 1) What I mean is, every human soul wants to flourish... to be beautiful and full of fruitfulness...
 - 2) But don't get me wrong....
 - I don't mean to suggest that there are not many who have given up hope...
 - But what does that mean—what do we mean when we say a person has “given up hope”?
 - We mean that that person wanted something,
 - but that after a while it seemed so out of reach that he gave up.
 - He said,
 - “What's the use in even trying?”
 - and he became bitter and cold and indifferent and unmotivated—

- or perhaps he became superficial and silly...
 - But the point is that at his core, there is this desire for something better...
 - a desire for fruitfulness!
 - The very reason he is frustrated and bummed out is because what he wants seems out of reach.
- 3) So what is wrong with such a person?
- He lacks faith.
 - He does not believe that he can ever become fruitful, so he has given up on the idea.
- 4) In many ways, this characterises our society...
- A century ago, most people in the Western Hemisphere were a lot happier than they are today...
 - They were happier because they believed that they could be fruitful and flourishing!
 - They went to work to bring about world peace and to end poverty and to gain economic freedom and to become beautiful human beings!
 - But all they got was more and more war, the great depression, and more emptiness and ugliness...
 - The result is what we have today...
 - Many people who have lost hope—
 - they are disillusioned.
 - They turn to things like entertainment, addictions, and immorality because there is no use in trying.

TRANS> The problem is, they have no faith that they can ever be fruitful.

b. But of course this is not true of everyone!

- 1) There are still a lot of people in our society that believe they can be fruitful and who are fruitful as they would define it to a certain extent!
- They are working hard to have beautiful lives—to flourish in every way they possibly can!
 - And in many cases, they are able to achieve their goals to a certain extent and so are motivated to press on!

- 2) But I want to tell you that these persons also have a problem in the area of faith!
- Not in believing it is possible to become fruitful...
 - But in the way they believe they will become fruitful and in what they believe fruitfulness consists in!
 - If you believe you can make yourself fruitful, then you are going to be in for a very great disappointment...
 - All you can produce apart from Jesus Christ is death.
 - Even though you might be happier than the bummed out person I spoke about before,
 - you are in fact much farther from the truth.
- 3) If you think you can be fruitful apart from Christ, you in fact have two problems...
- a) First, that you think you can obtain fruitfulness in your own strength when you can't...
 - b) And secondly, that you do not understand what real fruitfulness is!
 - You have defined it on your own terms, but you have not listened to your Creator!
 - You have your own ideas about the fruitfulness you want in your life...
 - But if it is not the fruitfulness I spoke about before that God wants, it is not really fruitfulness!
 - You are like an ugly woman who gets all fixed up and who thinks she has made herself really beautiful when in fact she has made herself even uglier—
 - and then she goes out strutting about in pride while the world looks on her with either pity or disgust.
 - She makes a fool out of herself because what she thinks is beautiful is not really beautiful at all!
 - And don't give me that humanistic nonsense about beauty being in the eye of the beholder!
 - That is a lie unless you mean that the beholder is God!
 - Beauty is in the eye of the Beholder only if the Beholder is God!
 - He is the only capable and true judge!

- On the Day of Judgement, He is going to expose everything for what it really is...
 - All of our lies will melt away.
- He is going to show us what real beauty is and we are going to be terribly ashamed at the way we strutted about when we were so ugly!

TRANS> Only God can guide us into real fruitfulness!

- It is only when His word is sown in you and bears fruit that you have true fruitfulness...
- This is why the parable of the Sower is so important for us!
 - It teaches you about those things that keep you from receiving the Word of the kingdom that makes you truly fruitful.

II. The four soils in the Parable of Sower illustrate four different faith responses.

- **Let's take a look at each of them...**

A. The first response to the word of the kingdom is illustrated by the wayside.

1. In the days of Jesus, there were a network of walking paths that went across the fields.
 - a. Obviously, along these paths, the soil was packed down hard, being continually trampled by people, donkeys, and carts.
 - b. Because seed was scattered by hand, there was often some that landed on these paths.
 - But because there was no way for it to get into the soil, it was never able to bring forth fruit...
 - And even if a little blade did poke through here or there, it would be no time before it was crushed...
 - What's more, the birds were able to easily find this seed and would quickly devour it.
2. In verse 19, Jesus tells us that the wayside refers to the person who receives the word, but does not understand it.
 - Quickly, Satan comes along and snatches it from his heart...
 - though it enters into his mind, it is never really comprehended or accepted.
 - a. This person does not understand the word because he is stiff-necked...

- His heart is hardened by all the traffic that runs across his soul day after day after day.
 - If this is you, perhaps you are one of those ones I spoke about earlier who has given up hope.
 - You have been disappointed too many times and you are not going to let it happen again.
 - You are cynical and do not believe fruitfulness is possible.
 - I know people that are scared to even look at the gospel because they are afraid they will be disappointed again as they have been so many times before.
 - They have had too much traffic across their souls...
 - Relationships that have gone bad...
 - Dreams that have been frustrated...
 - The gospel sounds to you like a bunch of empty promises.
- b. For whatever reason, the wayside hearer does not think that what God offers in Jesus Christ is the way of hope...
- 1) And Satan has quickly come to take away the seed...
 - He says things like:
 - “You know that cannot be true—what about evolution? The Bible has been disproved. Only a fool could believe that.”
 - or He says:
 - “What about all the other religions? Surely you don’t believe that everybody else is wrong, do you?”
 - or He says:
 - “How could you follow a God that allows children to suffer? If He is a good God, why did He let sin in the world to start with?”
 - Don’t concern yourself with this religion...
 - 2) And so you see how very quickly the seed is devoured—
 - violently snatched away from your heart so that it cannot bear fruit...
 - When this happens repeatedly, the soil or your heart is packed down even more—even by the gospel itself!
 - Each time you hear it and harden your heart to it again, the earth is packed down a little bit more...
 - Yes, there are those who sit under the word and do not believe,

- and as a result their hearts become more and more resistant through practice until they are like stone.
3. Oh how I could wish that there were not so many such hearers in our society!
 - a. But it is no wonder!
 - We live in place where the word of God was once quite well known and we have hardened ourselves against it.
 - That is why there are so many that will not even listen to it...
 - and why even among those that do,
 - the seed does not really penetrate before it is taken away.
 - b. This person hears the blessing of Christ and he doesn't even want it.
 - It does not look to him like a blessing but a curse.
 - He can't imagine that happiness and holiness could ever co-exist.
 - Such is the response of the one who received the seed by the wayside.

TRANS> Now consider the second response:

- B. The second response to the word of the kingdom is illustrated by the stony ground.
 1. The stony ground does not refer to rocks that could be removed (and were removed) by the farmer,
 - It refers rather to the limestone that lay just below the surface of a thin layer of soil.
 - In the parable, Jesus says that this ground, unlike the wayside, received the seed so that it germinated...
 - the little plant began to grow...
 - In fact, the seed in this soil sprang up more quickly than it did in the rest of the field...
 - It sprang up because the shallow soil was more quickly heated,
 - But because the soil was shallow,
 - it also did not provide enough moisture...
 - the little plant quickly dried up under the hot Palestinian sun before it even had a chance to bear fruit.
 2. Jesus explains that the stony ground represents the heart of the hearer who immediately receives the word!
 - a. He is a rather superficial fellow—

- 1) As soon as he hears the gospel, he says,
 - “Yes, this is what I always wanted all my life long!”
 - “Jesus is the answer!”

- 2) He has all sorts of wonderful things to say about the church and the pastor and the other people who are there.
 - He truly does believe that Christ is the way to “bear fruit.”
 - that Christ is the way to become that blessed-happy man that he has always wanted to be!

- b. Many times, this one will give a great testimony to his new friends at the church and his old friends at the bar.
 - Everyone at church is thrilled to see his enthusiasm!
 - He unites with the church and comes to all the meetings...
 - He becomes active in service and is willing to do even the lowliest tasks to help out in the church.
 - He spends much time in prayer and in the study of God’s word!

3. But then there is a noticeable change in him...
 - a. The sun of tribulation and persecution arises!
 - 1) At first, he was expecting to convert his parents,
 - but instead they are starting to complain about his new life in Christ...
 - 2) He thought his friends would come to church with him,
 - but not they are starting to pull away from him and laugh at him...
 - Why can’t they see how great his new life in Christ is?
 - 3) He thought he would convert his boss,
 - but now he learns that he is about to lose his position in the company because he has become too honest with the customers.
 - b. He starts to feel like he has been deceived!
 - 1) He received the word and came to Christ because he thought this was the way of fruitfulness...
 - but now it seems to him more like the way of death and sorrow!
 - Instead of gaining everything, it seems to him more that he is losing everything.
 - 2) In verse 21, Jesus says that this one stumbles because of the tribulation and persecution...

- The word Jesus uses for stumbling or being offended is skandalizw from which we get our word “scandalise.”
 - This chap feels like has been wronged by the gospel.
 - It is not at all what he thought it would be.
- c. Now of course the problem is not with the gospel, but with his faith!
- 1) Unlike Abraham who hoped against hope,
 - and all those faithful martyrs who endured all sorts of affliction because they believed that God’s promise was good...
 - This man does not believe.
 - He does not grasp what it means to live by faith rather than by sight.
 - If he cannot have God’s promise now, he does not want it at all!
 - 2) He is like the 5000 who wanted to make Jesus king until Jesus told them that they must receive Him as One sacrificed to God for them...
 - They wanted to have Him as their errand boy—to do what they thought should be done...
 - not as a Saviour to die on the cross!
 - It was the same spirit that appeared in Peter when he forbade Christ to go to the cross—
 - a spirit that was quickly rebuked when Jesus responded to him with the words: “Get behind me Satan.”
 - 3) There are many who receive the seed of the gospel in this superficial way, hoping that Christ will take them to heaven...
 - But for them, heaven is not a place of holiness, but a place where they can finally have whatever they want.
 - David Brainard, the great missionary to the North American Indians, once said:
 - “My heaven is to please God, and to glorify Him, and give all to Him, and to be holy devoted to His glory: that is the heaven I long for, that is my religion and my happiness, and always was, I suppose, ever since I had any true religion; and all those that are of that religion shall meet me in heaven.”
 - If you look at heaven in that way, you will understand the cross and you will understand your suffering as something that is good for you.

- If you are a stony ground hearer, you do not understand heaven like that at all.
- For you, the great appeal is not the fruitfulness that God wants—
 - but whatever you think fruitfulness is.
 - For you, salvation is not about you being changed into what God wants so much as it is about you and your surroundings being changed into what you want.

TRANS> Now consider the third response:

C. The third response to the word of the kingdom is illustrated by the thorny ground.

1. This is the ground that receives the seed so that the seed grows and shows much promise...
 - But before it ever bears any fruit, it becomes so overgrown with weeds that it is choked out.
 - Apparently, there was a large thorn bush in the region where Jesus taught that could be seen growing here and there in the middle of a grain field.
2. Like the stony ground hearer, the thorny ground hearer also can be said to receive the word of the kingdom!
 - a. This is the person that hears the gospel and believes that this is truly the way of fruitfulness.
 - He says to himself,
 - “Jesus Christ is the way to become that blessed-happy man that I have always wanted to be!”
 - And perhaps we can suppose that this person even hangs on through the initial persecutions and troubles that arise...
 - The same sun the rose on the stony ground arises on him, but it causes him to grow (in a sense)...
 - Unlike the stony ground hearer,
 - The thorny ground hearer realises that something as important as the gospel is worth suffering for...
 - and that the blessing cannot be expected all at once.
 - b. But in this case, there is different defect of faith...
 - In his case, he truly believes that Christ is the way to fruitfulness,

- but he also believes that for that fruitfulness to be complete, certain other things are also necessary.
 - He wants to have both holiness and riches... like Job who was one of the richest men that ever lived...
 - Holiness and honour... like Abraham who was respected by the people around him...
 - Holiness and popularity... like David who was so loved by the people.
 - He can't imagine how God's blessing could be complete without these things...
- c. And I suppose there is a *sense* in which this person is right...
- God will give us all these things in His time,
 - His blessing is not really complete until He does.
 - But the problem is that God has not promised to give us these things now... in this present world
 - And this man sets his heart on having them now.
- 1) If you are like this, then it will be easy to find you worrying about these things...
 - If you don't have them or think you might lose them, you are all worried about it...
 - Of course, every believer can understand that because it is part of our situation at this time to not know what tomorrow may bring—
 - what may happen to our wealth or our job or our reputation.
 - This is the effect of the curse of God upon the world that we must bear until the resurrection day.
 - 2) And not only will it be easy to find you worrying about your riches and honours and pleasures,
 - it will also be easy to find you obtaining an ungodly sort of satisfaction from them...
 - We all know that happiness that material blessings and prosperity can give to us...
 - The Bible nowhere says that riches and honours themselves are bad...
 - 3) But the problem is when you feel that you must have these things to be complete...

- And when your worry and concern about these things begins to swallow up your devotion to Christ.
 - When you can't concentrate on God's word or pray because you are so consumed with thoughts about what you are about to purchase.
 - And when wealth and reputation become a way to be satisfied even when you are not walking with Christ...
- 4) When this happens, you are infested with weeds...
- You are trying to serve two masters!
 - And you know what Jesus said about that!
 - You can't do it because you will hate the one and cling to other!
 - The word of God will never bear fruit in you as long as you have two masters...
 - You have to come to the place where you realise that nothing else really matters but Christ.
 - Is it difficult to do this?
 - Yes it is,
 - Temptations bombard you in an effort to draw you away.
 - But if you have true saving faith, that faith will always get the victory and overcome.
 - You will wrestle, but you will always return to Christ before the weeds choke out the word and make you unfruitful.

TRANS> So you see now that there are three types of soil that in a sense receive the word, but that do not truly receive it for eternal life...

D. Happily there is a fourth soil that brings forth true fruit for God.

1. Jesus calls this soil simply "the good soil."
 - This soil does what soil is supposed to do when seed is sown in it.
 - It receives the seed and the seed brings forth the precious fruit.
2. Obviously, like the last two hearers that we looked at, this one also believes that Christ is the way to fruitfulness and so receives the seed.
 - a. Only this time, the hearer understands that the blessing is something that does not come at once...
 - If this is you, unlike the stony ground hearer...

- you are willing to wait and to hold on to God's promise even if that involves great suffering.
 - You hold on because you believe that God will make His promise good.
 - The same sun of tribulation and persecution will rise on you that rises on the stony ground...
 - but it will not dry you up in your devotion to God because your faith will sustain you.
- b. And, because you believe that the fruitfulness that God gives you now is the only fruitfulness that really matters...
- Riches and honours and all those things are nice,
 - but you are not going to worry about them or devote yourself to pursuing them in such a way that it might lead you away from God's will.
 - The same worries will bother you and the same temptations will entice you,
 - but you will not go after them because you believe that true fruitfulness is to be found in Christ...
 - You will look for your fruit from Him and not from these other things.

Conclusion

My friends, Jesus makes it clear in this parable that the only one who is saved is the one that brings forth fruit for God.

- The only way you can do that is by receiving the gospel with genuine faith.
- Not everyone will bring forth the same amount of fruit,
 - some will bring a hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty...
 - but Jesus calls this all good ground!

That is wonderful news for sinners!

- You who were dead and barren are now able to bring forth fruit that pleases God!
 - It is not you, but God's word working in you that brings forth the fruit!
 - Apart from faith in Jesus Christ who is promised to you in the word,
 - you could sooner get fruit from a stone than get fruit from you!

If you belong to Him, Jesus gives you this parable to help you...

- He gives it to you so that you will think about it as you go on in your walk with Him.
 - When you feel the pressure of persecution and are tempted to compromise a little,
 - you will remember the stony ground and you will say to yourself,
 - “I don’t want to be like the stony ground,”
 - and you will go to your Lord to help you to press on for Him...
 - And when you feel the pull of the world upon your heart and begin to feel that you must have this or must have that to be complete...
 - you will remember the thorny ground and you will say to yourself,
 - “I don’t want to be like the thorny ground in Jesus’ parable...”
 - and you will go down on your knees and you cry out to your Lord for grace to turn your heart back to Him.
- Your faith will keep bringing you back to Jesus, and one of the things He will use is this parable.
 - In this way, you will bring forth much fruit.
- By the grace of God, the word of God works effectively in you to bring forth much fruit.
 - Give thanks to the Lord for His abundant mercy who takes lifeless soil and sows into it the seed that brings forth eternal life!
 - May each of you cherish this seed throughout all the days of your life.