

NOVEMBER 7, 2021

WORSHIP

No Other Name,
All Glorious, Way Maker

WELCOME

How is the condition of your heart towards God today? Is it hot, cold, or lukewarm? What tells you that it is what it is?

WORD

MATTHEW 13:1-9

That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. ² And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. ³ And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴ and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵ Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. ⁶ But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. ⁸ And others fell on the good soil and *yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."

We begin today a new series, "UNCOVER God's Kingdom through the Parables of Jesus".

Why is this topic important? The phrase "**Kingdom of God**" or "**Kingdom of Heaven**" is mentioned over 100 times in the NT. In **Mark 1:15**, the first recorded words of Jesus were "**The Kingdom of God is at hand. So repent...**" This is important because it impacts our lives now, our future, and our eternity. What is the kingdom of heaven? It is not limited by geography, space, and politics. Timeless and eternal, the Kingdom of God is the spiritual realm where God is King, and His subjects follow Him. Jesus in His parables tells us what the kingdom of heaven is like, how to get there, how to be sure you are part of the kingdom, what your attitude should be, and how you can prepare for it.

In **Matthew 13:10**, Jesus' disciples asked Him why He spoke to people in parables. Over 1/3 of Jesus' teachings were **parables** (Gk. para – side by side, **ballo** – throw or cast) – earthly stories with heavenly meaning. It's meant to catch attention and teach heavenly truths. It can also conceal and reveal – when a person is honest and sincere, he is able to understand the parable (in **v.12** Jesus affirms that to those who desire to know truth and embrace them, it will be granted). However, the same parable is a mystery for people who are proud, or as **William Barclay** said, "**it conceals truth from him who does not wish to see truth**". Parables don't just convey information – they challenge the hearers to take action. Jesus even quotes a prophecy from Isaiah in **vv. 14-15** showing that for those who do not like truth or to adhere to it, they will not get anything out of His teachings. To understand His parables, one has to have the right attitude. To hear clearly, the heart has to be right!

Matthew 13's first parable is the Parable of the Sower which shows us four kinds of soils which represent four kinds of hearts. Which heart is ready for God's Kingdom and truth?

1. HARD SOIL – HARD HEART (v.4)

Jesus interprets this in **Matthew 13:18-19** and **Luke 8:11-12**. The seed is God's Word, and when it lands on a hard heart, the evil one easily takes away the truth, preventing them to "believe and be saved" (**Luke 8:12**).

2 Corinthians 4:4 says that the gospel is veiled/covered to those whose eyes the devil has blinded. How is our heart hardened? By the **deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13)**! Pride, bitterness, unforgiveness, immorality and the like – these can harden our hearts, sear our conscience, and makes us calloused to the point of rejecting truth. An example of this would be **Herod (Mk. 6:17-20, Lk. 23:8-11)**. Though he enjoyed listening, his heart was hard and therefore it wasn't ready to receive the truth that Jesus brought. This same Herod beheaded John the Baptist (**Mk. 6:27**), and was even so interested to Jesus – yet because he was not after the truth, his heart was not right and therefore missed out on Jesus. Herod eventually lost his kingdom and died without the glory he held on for so long.

IS YOUR HEART RIGHT FOR GOD'S KINGDOM

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WORD

2. ROCKY SOIL – SHALLOW HEART

Jesus explains about the rocky soil in **Matthew 13:20-21**. Someone with a shallow heart may receive the Word with joy (an emotional experience). But without the depth needed for the roots to anchor on, the rocks of life – afflictions, trials, and persecutions causes him to give up.

Jesus does not want counterfeit Christians. He wants us to understand the gospel message. In **Luke 9:57-58**, Jesus discouraged a man who declared his intention to follow Him. The condition that Jesus set in **Luke 9:23-26** includes denying the self, taking up your cross daily (living a surrendered life to His will), and following God through and through.

Many Christians think that Jesus becomes their “servant”. This shows blindness and self-centeredness. The apostle Peter in **1 Peter 1:6** addressed the same concern – trials, disappointments, and problems are sure to come for many of us. These things “test” us, to allow the proof of our faith to show if our faith is true or not.

3. THORNY SOIL – DIVIDED HEART

Matthew 13:22 explains the thorny soil. Worry and deceitfulness have choked and competed for the nutrients of the soil. The problem is not the world, but the worries of the world. The problem is not wealth, but the deceitfulness of wealth. As **John Chrysostom said, “Therefore he said not ‘the world,’ but ‘the care of the world’; nor ‘riches,’ but ‘the deceitfulness of riches.’”**

No wonder, Jesus tells us clearly in **Matthew 6:24** that we can only have ONE MASTER. Everything else should be secondary. Judas (**Matthew 26:14-15**) planned to betray Jesus for a price, a possible reinforcement of his habit of pilfering money from the ministry funds (**John 12:6**) – and this, despite being part of Jesus’ ministry, and doing the same things that the other followers of Jesus has been doing. If the heart is not right, eventually, the life will follow. Another example is Demas (**2 Timothy 4:10**) – a faithful servant alongside Paul, but eventually loved “**the present world**” – and has developed a divided heart. Jesus tells us we cannot serve two masters! Don’t have a divided heart.

4. GOOD SOIL – DEVOTED HEART

Matthew 13:23 explains that this person hears the Word, understands it, and bears fruit abundantly. **Luke 8:15** describes this kind of heart as honest, sincere, clinging on and not giving up, and eventually bears fruit. People who have devoted hearts persevere and does their very best in order to live out God’s truth, share it with others, and impact many lives. (Ex. *Henrietta Mears, Dr. Bill Bright, etc.*). The seed planted in devoted hearts will impact countless people, and those of us who embrace God’s truth must keep on sowing.

May our hearts truly be like the good soil, ready and right for God’s Kingdom and the mission it entails!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Self-Check.
What kind of heart do you have?

2. Setting It Right.
What dangers do you need to avoid in order for your heart not to be hard, shallow, or divided?

3. Living It Out.
What must you do to have a good/devoted heart?
How do you plan to live this out and impact others?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for the hard, shallow, and divided hearts to become devoted to Christ. Like a good sower, show care, patience, and faithfulness towards people and the work God has given you. Sow the seed of the gospel in the heart of any person God allows you to meet.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving
Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World
Upright and moral governance of Public Servants
A God-centered Philippines
Repentance and Salvation

III. Church
That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities
Worship and Training Center
Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns
Deeper intimate relationship with God
Righteous living
Salvation of family and friends

MEMORY VERSE

Luke 9:23

And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”