

FOUR KINDS OF PEOPLE
Message 2

INTRO: Well, we are still in our intermission on the minor prophets. We are right in the middle as we have finished 6 books and have 6 to go. Last message I spoke to you about 2 of the four soils in Matthew 13. I did not take time to introduce the passage and I want to do that this morning. I know a good number of Bible teachers would differ with me, but I believe Matthew 13 is a critical turning point in the life of Christ. And I believe that what is in view in these parables is that new entity which has never been mentioned in the Bible to this point, and is not mentioned until Matthew 16, which is just three chapters later than our present chapter. That new entity is the Church. I find a picture in prophetic form, of the next 2,000 years in the parables of Matthew 13. I did a number of messages on this some years ago and am sorry they are not available on CD.

So go with me to Matthew 13 (read 13:1). "On the same day..." Which day? Well, the same day Jesus had healed a man in their synagogue on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees took counsel to kill Him. It was on the same day they accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the devil. It was on the same day his mother and brothers came searching for Him.

So it says, "On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea." I see a sad and faraway look in His eyes. The writing is on the wall. It has become obvious to Him that He will be killed, killed by His own nation. His own have rejected Him. And then, as He sits there, the people gather around Him. And He turns from the inevitable, and turns His attention to what will come. And then, in a form of speech the unbelievers cannot understand, that is context-less parable, He opens to those whose spiritual eyes have been opened what the next 2000 years will be like. Those 2,000 years are the Church age. At this point it has become obvious that He will be rejected by His own and a new age will begin. Here, in this chapter I find a picture so accurate of the Church age that I stand amazed at it.

And in the very first parable He likens people or their hearts to four kinds of soil, into which seed falls. And what that seed will produce is entirely dependent on the type of soil it has fallen into. And this morning, from

this message and the last message, you will find yourself like one of these soils. It will picture you very accurately. And I trust, if you will listen to the voice of God, you will hear Him speak to you. And so, before we begin, just say this: "Lord, I am listening. Speak to me."

So let us begin by getting the content of this parable (read 13:1-9). That is all very simple. A sower went and sowed seed. As he sowed along the edge of the field close to the pathway, some seed accidentally fell on the pathway. Well, just like the birds follow the tractor when the farmers work their fields here, the sat ready for seed to fall on the hard soil. They are there for an easy meal. So this seed that fell on the pathway was quickly eaten. There were also some rocks in this field, that is not hard to understand if you have seen Israel. One day as we traveled our guide said, "Today, I show you more rocks." Well, that rock had warmed up and kept the seed warm day and night and in no time it was up. But, in no time the moisture was gone because the roots couldn't go past the rock, and this seed too, was rendered useless.

Then, as nature has it, that naughty thorn bush that was thoroughly rooted and just grazed by the plow lies hidden just underneath the surface. Being rooted already, it is up in no time, and alas, some seed fell close to this water stealing thief, and it choked them. But some seed, praise the Lord, fell on good ground and it produced. Well, they didn't all produce the same amount, but they all produced. And there, I believe we have a prophetic picture of four kinds of people in the age in which we live.

And now that we have seen the content of this parable, we want to consider its concern. We have looked at the second and third soils in the last message and now we want to consider the first and fourth soils. And as we do that, let me remind us that in these parables, Jesus revealed the 'mysteries of the kingdom of heaven'. I do not have time to explain this term mystery, or kingdom of heaven, only to say that a mystery speaks of things revealed to only a certain group of people but which are kept hidden from others. The Church was a mystery according to the Apostle Paul, and the revelations of these parables were a mystery until after Christ ascended to heaven. Maybe some day we will get to this mystery which is clarified in Ephesians 3.

Well, when the disciples came to Jesus privately (vs. 9), He explained to them the parable of the sower. And we want to give our attention to the first and fourth soils which speak of four kinds of hearts. And so, he who has an ear to hear, let him hear!

I. THE PATHWAY SOIL

The first kind of soil is given by Jesus in Matthew 13:4 like this: "Behold a sower went forth to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside." The meaning of this soil is given to us in 13:18-19 (read).

To understand this part of the parable we have to backtrack in time. There were no GPS's; not even tractors, nor even seed drills at the time of the giving of this parable. Seeding of crops was done by a method where you begin at one end of the field and you take grain by the handful and throw it out in arc like fashion. It is different from planting rows since one seeks to cover the whole area. The grain was held in a container and then taken by the handful and cast out. In this way you could seed an area as broad as you could cast the seed. As a matter of fact, that is where we get the word *broad-casting* from. In radio broadcasting you can get a message out over a large area.

Naturally there are paths from field to field. And as you seed alongside a pathway, you want to sow as close to the path as you can and naturally, when you broad-cast seed, some falls on the path. You can well imagine that it does not take the birds long to see the sower and they follow and pick up the seeds where they are easy to get.

Luke 8:11 tells us plainly that the seed speaks of the Word of God. Then in verse 12 he tells us that the Word is sown in the heart. So the soil represents the human heart. The hard soil of the pathway of Matthew 13:19 represents the hard heart that does not understand the Word of God. The person is not soft and receptive. Consequently the seed lies right on top and the birds easily find it. Matthew 13:19 now tells us that the birds represent the wicked one, the devil. Luke tells us that the devil quickly snatches

up the Word lest these people should believe and be saved.

Now if I understand this parable right, we are responsible for the kind of soil we are. That is, if we are hard soil, it is because of how we have chosen to be. Sin makes us hard. Compromise hardens us. Involvement in questionable things, when our conscience smites us makes us hard. Pride makes us very hard.

Are you listening to this message and you are hard and cold. These words do not penetrate at all? May God allow into your life trials and problems and difficulties, maybe even a tragedy if need be, before you slip into an eternity in hell fire because of your hardness.

IV. THE GOOD SOIL (13:23)

Well, we have already looked at soils 2 and 3, so we go on to the fourth soil. Isn't it amazing that we have four kinds of soil and of those four kinds, two are entirely useless if not detrimental to the kingdom of God. The third, though it keeps the seed alive, it does not bear useful fruit. It is zapped of its productiveness. How will the kingdom survive that is represented by this parable? Well, through the fourth kind of soil. Thank goodness this first parable does not stop on such a sad note as either of the first three soils. Jesus went on to say in Matthew 13:8, "But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

In verse 23 He interprets this point like this: "But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." Now, just here we must ask some questions. First, what makes this soil fruitful? And second, just what does it mean to be fruitful? And third, how can I become fruitful?

So we begin with our first question: What makes this soil fruitful? Well, Matthew, Mark and Luke all say that the kind of people represented by this soil hear

the word. So, to become fruitful, one must first hear the Word. So Scripture says faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Whatever the means of hearing the Word of God might be, it must be heard or taken in. And this word is in the present tense. To be a fruitful Christian, one must go on hearing the Word. That means reading our Bibles, going to church and so on.

And then, to be fruitful, Matthew adds that this soil represents those who hear the word AND understand it. This word, 'to understand' is the word 'suneemi'. It means to put together. This person represented by the fourth soil can put the facts of Scripture together with life action. For example, when Scriptures says to repent, he repents. When Scripture says to believe, he believes. He understands. He is able to put facts together with life.

Mark adds to hearing and understanding, receiving (Mark 4:20). In order to be fruitful we must receive the Word. So when I read or hear the truth I must receive it. I must embrace it and make it part of my life. If one would be fruitful, one must receive the Word. That does not mean simply accepting it. It means to actively take it and apply it. I take hold of it and take it to myself. We read the Word and actively take it in and apply it to life. When it says, "Do not steal", that is all we need. We do not steal. We come to church and actively receive the Word. Do you wish to be fruitful for God? Do you wish to have power with your children so they will obey you? Then do not be a hearer only, but a doer of the Word!

But there is more. Luke adds to those who hear the Word and understand it and receive it, that they keep it. The fruitful person keeps the Word. So, the fourth kind of person represented here in these four soils, hears the Word, understands it, receives it and keeps it. Now every one of these action words is present tense. He doesn't just hear once. He doesn't just understand once. He doesn't just receive it once, nor does he just keep it once. He hears and goes on hearing; understands and goes on understanding new things; receives and keeps on receiving, and keeps and goes on keeping the Word.

And when a believer does that, all three evangelists agree that this kind of person brings forth fruit. The HOW of fruitfulness is dependent on our growing relationship with the Lord. A regular habit of reading God's Word and regular prayer times is absolutely essential to this.

Our second question was, just what does it mean to be fruitful? What is being fruitful? I suggest that it speaks first of our own ongoing, personal changing behavior and character through the Word of God. Daily keeping our lives in order and daily gaining in godly character. So the fruitfulness is first of all within ourselves. It involves our own character. And I believe it is not possible to be fruitful to any degree within, without a regular habit of taking in the Word of God.

Then secondly, what impact does my inner life have on those around me? This really is a test of how much impact God's Word is having in my life. So this is a test of just how successful we are in our own spiritual growth. First, just how much impact does my life have on the lives of others? When I sit and visit with others, is it all business and weather and trucks and tractors or quilting and sewing and dresses? When I am with others, how much runs over in my talk that is spiritual in nature?

Here is another test. Just what do my children think of my spirituality? Do their peers have more influence on them than my life? Just what do your children think of your spiritual life?

Here is another test of how our own spiritual growth is. Do I talk to others about the Lord? Do I share Christ with them? And is my talking to others powerless and I find it painful to do it? Well, that may be due to failure of practicing talking to others. But it may be due to the fact that there is truly very little fruit in the kind of soil I am.

Our last question is, how can I become fruitful? What is it that makes this soil fruitful? What kind of a person is it that becomes fruitful? Years ago I worked together with a man, and he and his wife became friends of ours. And they placed a lot of

emphasis on training their children. They spent a lot of time at it. And one day another lady who had observed their obedient children marveled at this well trained family and this lady said to the mother, how did you train your children like that. And this mother said, "You do not want to know." For years she would have been happy to try to answer that question, but she had learned that after people find out how much work it is and how much time it takes, they lose interest.

When we ask how one might become fruitful for God, may I ask you, do you really want to know? Listen as I read Jeremiah 4:3, "For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, 'Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.'" Now the words 'break up' and 'fallow ground' are almost the identical words. Fallow ground is plowed land that is not seeded. This is done to make it productive. It is broken up soil. And this already broken up soil is to be broken up again, cultivated. The clumps of soil must be broken to small pieces if it is to yield fruit. And if these soils are a picture of the heart of man, and they are (Matt. 13:19), then our hearts must be broken up and softened. The seed of the word must fall into soft prepared soil, if it is to be productive.

After we had gone through many of our church problems a few years ago, a man in the community said Pastor Phil needed to repent. And what was I to repent for? I had said something like this: "Some people are saying the devil is having a hay-day in this whole church problem, but it may be that the Lord is having a hay-day too!" I saw it back then. I saw it more clearly later and I still see some of it today. I saw God break up some soil and be able to plant some very productive seeds! And for those folk who experienced that growth and if someone should ask them, "How may I become fruitful?" they might well say, "You don't really want to know."

Almost every part of life, with its trials and troubles God can use to soften up our hearts. God uses trials and difficulties of all kinds to make us soft and pliable. It may be as simple as having to wait extra long in some line-up or having some

vehicle cut me off on the road. And if I bite my teeth and say, "I will get you", I am pathway soil. When someone runs my character down, how do I respond. Do I seek to bring him down in the eyes of others? Then I am hard soil. I am unproductive.

You see, I must be broken up. The clumps must be smashed to pieces. The plow or cultivator must be allowed to slice through again and again and break me to little pieces. And then when I stop fighting, and submit myself to the will of God, and actively seek His likeness and not my own will, now I am becoming soft. Do I like to point to myself in conversations. Do I have to have the best kind of vehicle, the best house, the best this and that? Then I am an unproductive Christian. I have not become soft and pliable. We are barely into a new year, and already I have found self wanting its ugly way in my life.

You see, the hard soil of the pathway in this parable is not conducive to productivity. It is not receptive to the seed of the Word of God. The shallow soil above the rock, the soil of the self life is not productive either. Because of selfishness, persecution and tribulation will stop this soil from producing. Furthermore, the good soil does not have a thorn bush hidden under a some nice soft looking soil. The person represented by this kind of soil recognizes how far to let the cares of this life take his time. He recognizes the deceitfulness of riches. He recognizes the fruitlessness of pleasure. He is not overtaken by such things. He is soft and receptive to the Word and does not allow these things to take root. Listen to Hosea 10:12, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, until He comes and rains righteousness upon you." Break up your fallow ground. How do you do that? By hearing the Word, understanding the Word of God, receiving the Word of God and keeping it.

You see, the soil that produces fruit is soil where the Lord is present. He is present in soft, broken up hearts. He is nowhere nearby to the hard and proud heart. Peter tells us He resists the proud. But He is near to the soft. Listen to Psalm 34:18, "The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such

as have a contrite spirit." The word for *broken heart* is broken to pieces. It is like land that has been worked and the clods are broken to pieces. The word for a 'contrite' spirit means to be crushed. Then listen to Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise."

Then consider Isaiah 57:15, "For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite (a crushed heart, broken up soil) and humble (i.e. lowly) spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite (or crushed) ones."

Then listen yet to Isaiah 66:1-2, "Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite (crushed) spirit, And who trembles at My word."

Here is what God is saying, "Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool. So, where is this house you have built for me? Where is my place of rest? No, you cannot truly make a place for Me to live in and to rest in. But I will tell you where I dwell, and where I find My place of rest. It is with him that is poor and of a contrite spirit. Here is the place I work and here is where fruit is borne for Me."

CONCL: Well, I bring this message to a close. Four kinds of people, into which kind do I fit? The first kind, where the Word cannot even penetrate. As soon as I leave church I am in a different world? Or am I the second kind of soil, where when things don't go right or I am ridiculed for what I believe and trials affect me in such a way that I am offended? Or am I perhaps the third kind of soil, where the cares of this life have rendered me fruitless. Oh, I go to church alright, but honestly, that's about all. I am just a very busy. Or maybe I am caught by the deceitfulness of riches. I must just have a little more. Give me a little time and I will do something in the church. I really, really don't have time to read the Bible. Actually, the

Bible is a very dry thing to me. I need someone to make it interesting for me. Or maybe the pleasures of this life have a hold of you. Any extra time left in life goes into pleasure.

Or are you perhaps good soil? Well, how do I know? Well, here are a few marks of the broken life. I have given what I am about to say to you some time ago in a little handout titled, "Seven Evidences of the Crucified Life." You see the fruitful life or fruitful soil is just simply the crucified life. So I am going to change all the statements in this reading that said, "That is an evidence of he crucified life" to, "That is an evidence of good soil". It goes like this:

1. When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight but your heart is content and restful in Christ, THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF GOOD SOIL.
2. "When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart or even defend yourself, but take it all in patient loving silence," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF GOOD SOIL.
3. "When you lovingly and politely bear any disorder, any irregularity, any unpunctuality, or any annoyance; when you can stand face to face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility...and endure it as JESUS endured it," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF GOOD SOIL.
4. "When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any climate, any society, any solitude, and interruption by the will of GOD," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF GOOD SOIL.
5. "When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF GOOD SOIL.
6. "When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met, and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy nor question GOD, while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstance," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF GOOD SOIL.
7. "When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself, and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF GOOD SOIL.