

- I. *Twin brothers grew up in the same house with a horrible father*
- A. Their father had been kicked out of school.
  - B. He was abusive to these twin brothers and their mom.
  - C. He was addicted to drugs and alcohol.
  - D. He cheated on his wife with no regret; He was a thief and lawbreaker.
  - E. and their father spent his life IN and OUT of jail.
- II. *These twin brothers grew up to become men with families of their own.*  
*\*The first brother turned out JUST like his father:*
- A. He didn't care about school; He was abusive to his wife and kids.
  - B. ...addicted to drugs and alcohol...cheated on his wife.
  - C. He stole things, broke the law.
  - D. and just like his father, he spent much of his life in jail.
- III. *\*BUT the other brother chose a different path for his life:*
- A. He worked hard in school.
  - B. He was loving, present, and engaged in the lives of his children.
  - C. He turned away from drugs...He was faithful to his wife.
  - D. He obeyed the law and was a blessing to his community.
- IV. These brothers were interviewed separately but were asked the same question:
- A. "How did you end up the way you are?"
  - B. The brother in jail simply replied,
  - C. "How could I NOT end up like this? Look at my father."
- V. When they asked the other brother, seated at home with his family around him, "How did you end up the way you are?"
- A. He replied: "How could I NOT end up like this? Look at my father."
- VI. The brothers experienced the *same* father, but each chose to respond in completely *different* ways.
- A. In Luke chapter 8, Jesus tells a parable about how people can hear the same message of God's good news...yet based on the condition of their HEART, they will respond in a variety of ways.
  - B. Last week, we learned that a person's heart is like a well in which all the issues of life flow out of...so we must KEEP our heart/GUARD it with all diligence. Today, we will consider the heart as SOIL.

*Luke 8:1 (NLT)*

*Soon afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby towns and villages, preaching and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him,*

- A. some people embraced His message with enthusiasm
- B. others were skeptical & dismissed it; some were downright hostile.
- C. *How can this be?* Was it because of some variation in Jesus' teaching?
- D. No. The variation of response was based on hearts of His listeners.

*Luke 8:4-8 (NLT)*

*<sup>4</sup>One day Jesus told a story in the form of a parable to a large crowd that had gathered from many towns to hear him:*

*<sup>5</sup>"A farmer went out to plant his seed. As he scattered it across his field, some seed fell on a footpath, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it.*

*<sup>6</sup>Other seed fell among rocks. It began to grow, but the plant soon wilted and died for lack of moisture.*

*<sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns that grew up with it and choked out the tender plants. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on fertile soil. This seed grew and produced a crop that was a hundred times as much as had been planted!" When he had said this, he called out, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."*

*"Jesus told a story in the form of a Parable."*

VII. What is a PARABLE? Greek: parabolē (par-ab-ol-AY)

- A. "to throw alongside"
- B. a placing of one thing by the side of another

VIII. Jesus takes what is Unfamiliar (the Kingdom of God) and places it alongside something familiar...

- A. something everyone knew about (it's like a Farmer sowing seed)
- B. So that people might get a better glimpse of that which is unknown.

IX. So this is a story about seed and soil...

- A. but Jesus wants us to wrestle with something deeper.
- B. Parables are not childish nor are they easy to understand...
  - 1. They are NOT for sluggish minds...
  - 2. Parables require something of us:
    - a) reflection, investigation, & contemplation.
  - 3. Quite often, parables actually RAISE more questions than they answer!

*Luke 8:9-10 (NLT)*

<sup>9</sup> *His disciples asked him what this parable meant.*

<sup>10</sup> *He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables to teach the others so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled:*

*'When they look, they won't really see.*

*When they hear, they won't understand.'*

X. The disciples do something genius: *"What does that parable mean?"* (we can do this today, too)

- A. Why did they ask Jesus what the parable meant?
- B. *Because they WANT to learn...Their hearts are OPEN to God.*
  - 1. (But not everybody wants to learn...to understand or follow Jesus)
- C. Jesus says this is WHY He uses parables when speaking to the crowds. He quotes Isaiah 6:9  
*"I use parables to teach the others so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled:*

*'When they look, they won't really see.*

*When they hear, they won't understand.'*

XI. This is a difficult saying of Jesus.

- A. It doesn't mean that Jesus deliberately stops people from understanding,
- B. *but that* people will respond differently based on their willingness to understand, their openness to God.

XII. To those who reject God: *parables REPE.*

- A. To those believe God, to those seeking God:  
*parables REVEAL* truth & equip them to bear fruit as disciples of Jesus

XIII. Do YOU seek to know & understand Jesus and His message?

- A. Then you will go BELOW the surface and you will wrestle with the parable to grasp Jesus' DEEPER truth.

XIV. Illustration: "Trav, You're Turning on the Lights!"

*Luke 8:11 (NLT)*

<sup>11</sup> *"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is God's word.*

XV. sowing, spreading "seed" is any situation where the truth of God's Good News is declared & taught.

- A. Who is the farmer in the parable? Does Jesus say? **No.**
- B. The farmer would be anyone who spreads the message of God
- C. the immediate reference is probably to Jesus' own preaching...
- D. ...the disciples will soon be "farmers" spreading the message of God...
- E. and all those who come after, including you and me, are "farmers" spreading the good news of Jesus.
- F. the SEED is LIFE. It is Salvation. Nothing wrong with the seed. It is perfectly good.

XVI. Illustration: Duane Grassman, Missionary in Mexico (bag of "seed")

*Luke 8:12 (NLT)*

<sup>12</sup> *The seeds that fell on the footpath represent those who hear the message, only to have the devil come and take it away from their hearts and prevent them from believing and being saved.*

XVII. Soil #1: *The Path*

- A. The common ground in Palestine was split into long, narrow strips;
- B. Between the strips were **paths** which people could walk on to pass through.
- C. The surface was HARD and unable to be penetrated.
- D. The PATH represents people with a **HARDNESS of heart**...lack of interest.
  - 1. Jesus refers to the DEVIL: this is the work of our adversary, Satan,

2. to do whatever possible to distract us and keep the truth of God's Word from penetrating our hearts & minds.
- E. this person's heart is indifferent & inattentive to anything God says.
- F. (would rather watch another TikTok video or episode of Bonanza)
- G. ...is this the soil of your heart?

*Luke 8:13 (NLT)*

*<sup>13</sup> The seeds on the rocky soil represent those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they believe for a while, then they fall away when they face temptation.*

**XVIII. Soil #2: The Rocky Ground**

- A. Picture a thin layer of dirt over a slab of limestone.
- B. There is an initial response & reception to God's Word...evidence of life sprouting up!
  1. Woo-Hoo!
  2. but it is only a surface belief...just following the crowd.
  3. they said "yes" to an emotional appeal, but it is only superficial...
    - a) this type of faith will not mature or endure adversity & trials.
    - b) it doesn't take much to change their mind.
- C. It's not the blazing sun that kills the plant...it's because they have no root.
  1. ... these people are "top heavy"

**XIX. Illustration: A Swedish Warship named "The Vasa" (wasa)**

- A. It's maiden voyage was on August 10, 1628
- B. On its maiden voyage, it sunk after sailing less than a        nautical mile.
- C. The problem: It was TOP-HEAVY
- D. too much weight above the water; not enough weight below
- E. the hull of the Vasa was divided into 3 decks and a bottom compartment containing the ballast, which consisted of large, tightly packed stones.
- F. the ship was found to have an intact hold full of stones, but it was NOT ENOUGH to counter its weight above the water line
- G. The seed of God's Word must be watered & nourished through reflection, prayer, obedience, confession, and Christian community and service.
- H. ...is this the soil of your heart?

*Luke 8:14 (NLT)*

*<sup>14</sup> The seeds that fell among the thorns represent those who hear the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity.*

**XX. Soil #3: The Thorny Ground**

- A. This thorny soil is FERTILE,
  1. but so weed-ridden that the good seed is ultimately suffocated because it has to FIGHT with other things in the ground for nutrients.
- B. this is a heart that has competing concerns. Distracted by life's worries, riches, status, and pleasures.
- C. this is a divided heart:
  1. faith in Christ vs. Worries, love of worldly things.
- D. The concerns of this world CHOKES OUT the seed of God's Word in a person's heart.
- E. God wants to GROW us in maturity... But those with the heart like thorny soil never grow into maturity.
- F. These competing priorities render the soil useless and unfruitful.
- G. ...is this the soil of your heart?

*Luke 8:15 (NLT)*

*<sup>15</sup> And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God's word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest.*

**XXI. Soil #4: The Good Soil**

- A. According to Jesus, this soil is: a noble and good *HEART*.
  1. a heart that HEARS the Word...that MAKES ROOM for Scripture.
  2. a heart that RETAINS the Word

3. *a heart* that PERSEVERES in God's Word & HOLDS FAST to God's Word
4. *a heart* that PRODUCES a crop...BEARS good fruit.
- B. We can describe the good soil by comparing it to the first three soils:
  1. The good soil welcomes God's Word IMMEDIATELY so that it cannot be snatched away.
  2. The good soil welcomes God's Word DEEPLY so that it is not withered by adversity
  3. The good soil welcomes God's Word EXCLUSIVELY so that other concerns do not strangle it.
- C. The good soil is *hospitable* and *receptive* to the message of Jesus.
- D. ...*is this the soil of your heart?*  
...*do you want it to be?*

XXII. We can look at this parable in Two Ways: As Farmers and as Soil

- A. We are **FARMERS**: we sow seed
  1. (we spread the Good News of God's Grace in Jesus Christ)
  2. Jesus told this parable to his disciples because they would soon be sent out to spread the seed of Jesus' good news, and their message, too, will be met with MIXED RESPONSES.
  3. We are disciples of Jesus and are ALSO called to SPREAD the message of Jesus.  
(*you mean preaching? sermons?*)
  4. The point is this: Speak God's truth...cast the seed WIDELY!
  5. Open your mouth to declare the praises of God.  
*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, Romans 1:16 (NKJV)*
- B. We are **SOIL**:
  1. We receive seed (we hear God's Word)
  2. The question of the day is: How do you "hear" the Word of God?
  3. What Jesus implies (but doesn't say) is: Be Good Soil.
    - a) It's not a progression of moving from one soil to another...
    - b) Nor is the Thorny soil BETTER THAN the Rocky soil...
  4. No! Jesus only commends the 4th soil: the good soil.
  5. The first three soils are seen as equally tragic.
  6. The purpose of seed is to bear fruit, and none of the first three soils provided that opportunity.

XXIII. Be Good Soil.

- A. Do you have a heart that is hospitable to God's Word?
- B. ...that it might take root in your life and produce good fruit?

XXIV. Cultivate the Soil of Your Heart.

- A. It begins with a prayer: "*Lord, change & heal my heart.*"
  1. "*I don't know Your Word, but I want to.*"
- B. **READ** God's Word, **LISTEN** to God's Word, and **MEDITATE** on God's Word (don't neglect God's Word!)
- C. **TALK** to God in **PRAYER** about what He says in His Word.
- D. **ASK** God to help us understand His Word.
- E. **OBEY** God's Word. **SUBMIT** to the authority of God's Word,
- F. **ALIGN** your life & behaviors to what God prescribes in His Word.
- G. **HOLD FAST** to God's Word in a society which neglects it, mocks it and downright hates God's Word.
- H. Lastly, **GET OUT OF THE WAY** & let God do His work in your heart!
  1. Robert Capon says, "The fullest enjoyment of God's Word is available to those who *interfere with it least.*"

XXV. A Noble and Good Heart

- A. Welcomes God's Word to **TAKE ROOT DEEP** inside our inner being where it cannot be snatched away from us.
- B. Perseveres when trials come our way...
  1. ...when the sun beats down, we will not wither and fall away.
- C. Is not consumed by the concerns, worries, and distractions this world holds.
- D. Allows God to bear fruit in us, so that our very existence brings glory to God and benefits others.