

The Good Soil

Welcome

Joining us online/New, Celebration Groups, Pastor Chip Martin,

Introduction

Starting back in the book of Luke.

Recap:

- 4 Gospels and Acts. Luke was written to a gentile audience, or in other words, Luke was writing to those who did not have a Jewish background, they didn't know the Old Testament as well, they did not go to the synagogue.
- It is the longest Gospel with 1151 verses. The next longest is Matthew, followed by John, then Mark is last.
- Luke is a prequel to the book of Acts.
 - Luke is about the life of Jesus, Acts is about the life of Jesus' followers, and the ignition of the early church. Together, Luke wrote more words of the New Testament than any other author.
- Luke was not one of the 12 disciples, he was a gentile, a doctor, and a scholar. He was being funded by a wealthy gentile named Theophilus, who wanted to know whether the things he was hearing about Jesus were true. The book of Luke, and the book of Acts are reports to Theophilus regarding the validity of the claims being made about Jesus Christ.
- Luke starts with the miraculous birth of John the Baptist, followed by the Miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. He gives us the only account in all the scriptures of Jesus as a young boy in the temple, when his parents leave Him there, freak out, come back and find Him teaching the religious leaders.
- Jesus grows up, gets baptized by John the Baptist, The heavens open, and God speaks, "this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." People marvel, Jesus, immediately goes off into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan for 40 days.
- He overcomes Satan, and then begins ministering to the people. Teaching with authority, Healing people of diseases, Casting out demons, and even raising people from the dead.
- He calls 12 men to follow him, and begins discipling them, living almost every waking hour with these men.
- As you might expect, from someone preaching with authority, Casting out demons, healing the sick, forgiving sins, and raising the dead back to life, Jesus begins to gain quite the crowd of loyal followers. He is likely surrounded by hundreds if not thousands, at all times. A lot of people love Him...
- And a lot of people HATE HIM. Jesus would regularly say extremely difficult things to hear. Directed particularly toward the Scribes and Pharisees, but also toward the crowd as well. Jesus seemed to care very little about the approval of those who followed him, and almost every time a crowd gathered, he would teach them about something that struck the hearts of each person. Jesus would routinely say things that forced people to choose to continue following Him or not.

- Many left, and I would suspect many more hated him for saying the things he said. “The son of man is Lord of the Sabbath”, and “Woe to the rich”, “turn the other cheek”, “bless those who curse you”.
- Today we are looking at one such passage. He has a big crowd, they are all listening intently, and he begins to tell them something very difficult to hear. Let's read

Luke 8:4-15

And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, 5 “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. 6 And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. 8 And 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.”

9 And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, 10 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.’ 11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12 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. 13 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. 14 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. 15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

Context/Story

So here we are, Jesus is preaching to a huge crowd from multiple towns. People wanted a show, and instead of giving them what they want, Jesus discerns the hearts of those following him. Jesus knew that this was a superficial crowd. As was often the case, people were following Jesus, for the experience. They wanted a piece of the action, but none of the commitment. And Jesus knew that, so he tells them a parable about soils.

- Parallel in Matthew 13:1-23
- Jesus’ entire early ministry was surrounding the sea of Galilee. And that sea, even today is ringed with fields. Meaning if you went there today, you would find people sowing seed, very similar to the parable Jesus is talking about. This is one of the most easily understood parable of all of the parables Jesus gave. It is entirely possible that even as Jesus spoke these words, He was watching a man sow His seeds in a nearby field.
- 4 places the seed could fall.
 - The path
 - Disciples don't understand
- He explains, this all has to do with people’s hearts receiving the Word of God, or rejecting it.

The Duty of the Sower

- Explain
 - The Sower is throwing seeds everywhere!
 - The sower does not matter - I have big hands, can fit a lot of seeds in mine, But my Daughter's hands are little, not much fingers, mostly hands. (m&m's)
 - the Word of God is scattered willy-nilly, here and there. God doesn't have to buy the seed. It's free. He's got an infinite supply. And It pleases Him to scatter it on every type of ground. He might as well cover the whole earth with it. And I've talked with some Christians who object to this sort of free for all seed scattering procedure. I had a friend of mine who a few years back we were talking about evangelism, and he told me that he tries to make sure, to the best of his ability, that the person he speaks the Word of God to, or the person He shares the Gospel with is ready, willing and able to receive it.
 - The reason, I was told, was because Jesus told us not to cast our pearls before swine. I didn't know then what I know now about that being a gross misunderstanding of Matthew 7:6. But regardless, I asked how he knew who was ready to receive the Word and who wasn't, and he said he looked at their lives for the necessary fruit. The fruit, he said, was an indication of God at work in their life, and so if God was at work, then that person must be ready to receive God's Word.
- Prove
 - This is absolutely contrary to scriptural mandates. The seed is to go everywhere.
 - Mark 16:15 - And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.
 - Matthew 28:18-19a - And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations
 - Romans 10:17 - So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
 - Psalm 19:4 - Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
 - Proclamation comes before salvation, if we are trying to wait for people to get their lives together before they can hear about Jesus, we will be waiting a long time. It is only through proclamation of God's word that people will have the ability to get their lives together.
- Apply
 - there's only one reason to leave us here. The only thing we can do here that we can't do there, the only thing we can do here better than we can do there, the only thing we can do here and can't do there is throw seed, just throw seed.
 - God draws people from every type of soil to Himself! If He can draw you and I to Himself, He can draw anyone.
 - Don't carry one seed around all your life thinking I really want to be careful where this thing goes...

- So how does that work? How does God draw people with hard hearts to Himself?
 - Let's take a look at the 4 soils and see if we can understand what is being said.

The Receptiveness of the Soils

1. The Path

- a. In ancient Palestine, everyone walked... or rode animals. And they walked through fields as the main thoroughfares. And the result is a very dry, hard beaten path right next to fertile soil. Seed falling on that sort of Ground would never produce. First, as Jesus says, because of the birds. But also, because it would get trampled.
- b. All of the first three people portrayed are ultimately hard in heart, but the hardness is especially clear in the person described in verses 4 and 19 since that individual never shows an interest in the Gospel. His heart is calcified to the point where it resists all penetration by the seed, which is devoured by the Evil One and his minions, who were often represented by birds in first-century Jewish literature
- c. The Same sun that melts the Ice, Hardens the clay - Puritan Truism
- d. This reminds me of the pharisees...

2. The Rocky Soil

- a. In the second soil, the seed takes root, It sends its roots down, it sends its stump up or its branches up and all of a sudden, the roots hit rock bed and can't go anywhere so that the force and the energy moves upward and the plant springs up at a more rapid rate than normal, making the farmer assume maybe this is the greatest crop we've ever had, when the fact of the matter is, it isn't because the roots desperately need the water that is down beneath, but they can't penetrate the rock to get it.
- b. Barriers that prevent god's word from truly taking root.
 - i. Revealed through Persecution
 - 1. some people appear to be thriving believers until persecution reveals their true colors
- c. Reminds me of the fair weather followers in the crowd

3. The Thorny Soil

- a. We know from our own lives, in our own gardens how difficult weeds can be. They grow faster than any other plant, they take nourishment from the other plants, and they are frustratingly hard to kill. You cant just pull out the top, you have to dig down and get the root, otherwise they will come back bigger than before.
 - i. All my children with dandelions...
- b. Cares, Riches, Pleasures, of Life
- c. Idols (The American Dream, Comfort, self indulgences, weekend getaways, New Cars, Money is a big one)

- d. This is an especially dreadful fate, for the one ensnared in such things does not usually realize the seriousness of his situation until it is too late, considering himself Christ's follower even though he serves his riches
 - e. Philippians 3:8 - Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ
 - f. We've all seen that happen. The soil appears good, even maybe a certain sense of desperation. But there's other stuff in there that's never really been cleaned.
 - g. Reminds me of Judas
4. The Good Soil
- a. What is fruit? What is the goal of all of this? Time and again, the scriptures refer to Righteous living as fruit. The most common example is found in...
 - b. Galatians 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
 - c. It is life change, it is christ likeness, it is good deeds that glorify God. It is worshiping Jesus, It is following Him, it is obedience through difficulty. It is maturity. It is serving the church, It is going out with your own bag of seeds and sowing them everywhere you can! That is what fruit is.
 - d. Not every christian will produce the same amount of fruit, but every christian will produce fruit. The idea of a christian who never produces fruit is a myth. They are not a christian. That is why James tells us that faith without works is dead.

What Soil are You?

1. Explain
 - a. Don't Assume you are the good Soil. Far too often we will read over this parable and throw ourselves into the good soil camp without ever thinking twice. But the determination of what makes for good soil is harvest! Is there fruit in your life from the seed of the word of God? If there is, what does it look like? If there is not, why not? FRUIT IS THE DETERMINING FACTOR ON WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE GOOD SOIL.
 - b. Works don't save you, but they ARE evidence of your salvation.
 - i. many christians in America are not bearing fruit, and I believe it's because most American christians are actually thorny soil! We get choked out by the things of this world. It is so easy to get distracted or take God's blessings for granted!
2. Prove
 - a. Matthew 7:13-14 - Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.
3. Apply

- a. What scares me the most are the people who are lukewarm and don't care. It's one thing to know you are lukewarm and have a desire to not be lukewarm anymore. But There are people in churches all across America, and likely people in this room even now who believe that they can get to heaven without truly and faithfully loving Jesus, but I don't see anywhere in scripture where that can be true.
- b. The idea of the non-fruit-bearing christian is something that we have concocted in order to make christianity easier. Chrsitianity is not something that can be done half heartedly. It is not a label that you can display when useful. It must be central to everything you do and are. - Francis Chan

You have Heard, Will you Understand? (Conclusion)

- Can thorny soil or rocky soil get to heaven? It doesn't seem like Jesus intended that to be the case when he gave this parable.
- My intention is not to make true believers doubt their salvation this morning. In the midst of our failed attempts of loving Jesus, His grace covers us. Each of us has Lukewarm elements and practices in our lives, that is what makes Jesus' sacrifice so incredible! It is clear that no matter how many times we mess up and fail. God restores us.
- Gospel - That's why Christ Died!
- But If you realize your maybe not the best soil, now would be a good time to get things right with God. Allow God to remove the thorns in your life, dig up the rocks, break the hard ground! God is the God who created you, he can make your soil fertile once again!

Invitation

Pray



What is a Celebration Group?

Celebration groups are small gatherings of people that meet regularly for friendship, accountability, study, shared burdens, prayer, laughter, and occasionally tears. Celebration groups are an essential expression of the mission of Celebration Church. They're a place where we learn more about Jesus and live life together. They're the place where we wrestle with the truths and application of the Bible and encourage one another toward the life that God intends for us.

Each Celebration Group is unique, shaped by its neighborhood and the people who attend. However, you can expect a weekly gathering in a residence that involves food, conversation, prayer, discussion for applying the Bible to practical living, and service in the neighborhood. At the heart of each Celebration group is the desire to see an authentic community marked by love for Jesus, one another, and the neighborhood.

Why should I join a Celebration group?

The God of the Bible is a Trinitarian God who is one and three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. God has made us in his image, which means we are made for community and friendship. And when we are not living in community we suffer because life in a sinful world is too complex and tempting to journey alone. Therefore, Celebration groups are a place where we can live in relationship with one another through the ups and downs of life.

How do I get connected to a community group?

The easiest way to get connected is on Sunday before or after the service, stop by the Welcome Table in the lobby. A Volunteer will personally walk you through the process and connect you to a group.

Or you can register for a group online at: celebrationmontrose.org/ministries/celebration-groups



LUKE 8:4–15 The Good Soil

INTRODUCTION The gospel has the power to save and transform our lives but it must land on receptive hearts. We are reminded in the Parable of the Sower that if our hearts are not tender then the gospel will not take root.

DISCUSSION

- What do seeds need to take root and grow?

EXPLANATION

- Why does the sower scatter seed in all these places?
- Why does Jesus speak in parables?
- How do these descriptions connect with conversations Jesus has had in his ministry?
- What is the indication of good soil and of the gospel taking root?

APPLICATION

- Where in our lives are our hearts like the hard path?
- Where in our lives are our hearts like the thin soil?
- What are the thorns that are choking out truth in our lives?
- How does the fruit of our lives reflect the receptivity of our hearts?
- Where are we scattering the seed of God's word?

THE 5 W's (broken up into gendered groups)

- Word (How have you gotten into the word this week?)
- Wife/Husband/Family (How are you doing with your spouse/family?)
- Wellness (What are you doing to take care of yourself?)
- Work (How are you handling the work God has given you?)
- Witness (Who have you witnessed to, or prayed for this week?)