

THE BIG IDEA: The sower does the sowing, but the soil does the growing.

The Take-Off

This week, we're going to be looking at one of only 6 parables to end up in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Often referred to as the parable of the SOWER, but it's better to think of it as the parable of the SOIL because what we learn in the parable is that the FRUIT is all about the ROOT, and the ROOT is all about the SOIL.

Over the years, numerous lessons have been taught on this passage, and so today is just one more to add to that list. What we'll see as we go through this parable is that the soil - as we've said - takes center stage, and Jesus describes 4 types of soils.

What I want to do is talk about each type, mention some takeaways and then tie it all together with The Big Idea and a bigger challenge.

Make sense? Good. Let's read a bit and then we'll jump in.

1. Soil is more than dirt

- a. There are 3 main players in this parable: the sower, the seed, and the soil
- b. 2 of those three never change: the sower always sows, and the seed is always sown
- c. But the soil changes
- d. But the soil in the story isn't just dirt; it's a picture of our hearts, and Jesus describes 4 of them
 - Hard (v. 5)
 - hearts that are hard
 - unreceptive to the word
 - Ephesians 4:17-19 / their rejection of the gospel further packs their hearts in hardness
 - Hebrews 10:29-31 / they trample the grace of God and ultimately face the judgement of God
 - End result? The word that could save them is stolen from them.
 - 1 Peter 5:8 / Satan looks to devour
 - John 10:10 / He comes to steal
 - Rocky (v. 6)
 - the rock would be just under a thin layer of dirt
 - no depth means no root and no moisture, dry
 - but there is growth, and we need to remember that quick growth isn't a sign of mature growth
 - lasting growth is the sign of maturity
 - John 15:16 / we want lasting fruit, not flashy fruit
 - Colossians 2:7 (NLT) / How do we get that? Dig deep.
 - How do we dig deep? In Community. CGs, Summer School, personal Bible reading
 - We dig deep by getting in the word so that the word can get in us
 - Thorny (v. 7)
 - crowded, too many things competing for the nutrients
 - we talk about margin a lot, and here it is again
 - "Pull weeds so you can grow seeds"
 - weeds allow the cares of this life to choke out the life of God
 - weeding is intentional and time consuming
 - Good (v. 8)
 - this soil not only produces growth, but a CROP of growth!
 - this is the multiplication that God desires in His kingdom
 - verse 15 shows us the peek behind the curtain of good soil:
 - ▶ there has been repentance (cultivation of the heart by the word) / Psalm 51:10; 139:23-24; Ezekiel 36:26
 - ▶ there has been a hearing of the word
 - ▶ there has been an honoring of the word (valued enough to "retain it")
 - ▶ there has been a perseverance in the word (didn't stop, quit, or search for a quicker or easier way)

2. Three takeaways

- a. If you're like Jesus' disciples, you may be wondering the same thing they were in verse 9: what's it mean?
- b. "Great story, Jesus, but what do we do with it?"
- c. I can see at least 4 takeaways from the parable:
 - Throw seed everywhere!
 - the sower didn't ignore 3 types of hearts in order to only focus on the good hearts
 - his job was to sow the seed - it's our job, too
 - I love how commentator William Barclay puts it: Some seed may fall by the wayside and be snatched away by the birds; some seed may fall on the shallow ground and never come to maturity; some seed may fall among the thorns and be choked to death... but that does not stop him from sowing; and that does not make him give up hope of the harvest; the farmer sows in the confidence that, even if some of the seed is wasted, none the less the harvest will certainly come.
 - This is about growing, not just sowing
 - the seed doesn't represent evangelistic tracts (not that they aren't good)
 - it is the word - the gospel - and the gospel is for lost people and found people, babes in Christ and mature believers in Christ
 - all of us can, at various times, find ourselves in each of these types of heart conditions
 - the indicator is how we respond to the word we're hearing, which leads to the next takeaway
 - A lack of growth is a SOIL problem
 - Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 55:11 and Jeremiah 1:12 clearly state that there is nothing broken about the power of the word of God
 - There's nothing wrong with the sower or the seed
 - I love listening to Colin Cowherd - one of his trademark sayings is "That's a YOU problem."
 - Lack of growth - according to this parable - is a SOIL problem, and we have an awful lot to do with the soil of our hearts

The Landing

That leads us to The Big Idea and an even bigger challenge: the sower does the sowing, but the soil does the growing. The challenge then is to do the work necessary to ensure that our hearts are "good soil"

Proverbs 4:23 - above everything else, GUARD YOUR HEART

- pay attention to your speech (v. 24)
- to your vision (v. 25)
- to your direction (v. 26)
- and to your convictions (v. 27)

That's how we prepare the soil of our hearts so that we can not only hear and receive the word, but grow and multiply our growth into an amazing crop of growth!

The sower does the sowing, the soil does the growing.

Let's pray.