

## THE FOUR SOILS (2)

### Why don't people believe in Jesus?

#### A. Introduction

1. The parable of the sower, as Jesus calls it, is a significant parable.

This parable brought a change to the way Jesus taught publicly.

"Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable." (Matthew 13:34)

"With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything." (Mark 4:33-34)

Jesus spoke in parables (where two things are placed alongside each other for the purpose of comparison) to reveal and conceal.

To reveal the truth about the Kingdom of God to those on the inside and to conceal the truth from those on the outside.

"He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" (Mark 4:11-12)

For those on the inside, like the disciples, who believed that Jesus was the promised King, the parables are going to help them understand more about Him and about His Kingdom.

For those on the outside, like the religious leaders, who had rejected Jesus and were refusing to see Him as their King, the parables are going to hide the truth about Jesus and His Kingdom.

2. The parable of the sower is also a foundational parable.

It has an important role to play in our understanding of all of Jesus' parables.

"Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?" (Mark 4:13)

If you are unable to understanding this parable which is not particularly complicated, how will you understand those which are more obscure?

3. The parable of the sower explains why it is that people respond to Jesus, ultimately in two different ways.

The story itself is straightforward.

A sower scatters seed which lands on different kinds of soil and produces different results.

"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown." (Matthew 13:3-8)

The explanation, for those who hear it, is straightforward too.

The sower is Christ, and those who go in His Name.

The seed is the Word of God.

The scattering of the seed takes place as God's Word is proclaimed and is heard.

And the soils represent the different ways that the hearts of people respond to the Word of God when they hear it.

Cyril of Alexandria: *"Christ has recounted the three ways of disaster, and... the three grades of glory."*

The first three soils represent the three ways of disaster, and the fourth soil, the three grades of glory.

4. In the parable, the first soil the seed lands on, is the path.

"As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up."  
(Matthew 13:4)

"As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up."  
(Mark 4:4)

"As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up." (Luke 8:5)

Between the fields of Israel there were pathways that people would travel on.

"At that time Jesus went through the cornfields on the Sabbath." (Matthew 12:1)

Because of the many thousands of feet that had walked on them, these paths were made up of hard packed soil.

So, when the seed the farmer scatters lands on this hard soil, it is unable to penetrate the surface and remains on top of it.

This enables birds to swoop down and eat the seed before it has time to grow.

5. This soil is describing how some people respond when they hear the Word of God.

"When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart." (Matthew 13:19)

"Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them." (Mark 4:15)

"Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved." (Luke 8:12)

This soil draws our attention to two reasons why people don't respond to God's Word and believe in Jesus.

## **B. They have a heart that is hard**

1. Some people have hearts that are hard like the path.

"But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said." (Exodus 8:15)

"The magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said." (Exodus 8:19)

"But they will reply, 'It's no use. We will continue with our own plans; each of us will follow the stubbornness of his evil heart.'" (Jeremiah 18:12)

"But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed." (Romans 2:5)

"They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts." (Ephesians 4:18)

These kinds of people alternatively are described as being stiff-necked.

"I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people." (Exodus 32:9)

"He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God's name. He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the LORD, the God of Israel." (2 Chronicles 36:13)

"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!" (Acts 7:51)

## 2. What makes a heart hard?

One word: Sin.

Refusing to trust in Jesus and submit to His rule.

"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." (John 3:19-20)

## 3. When the Word of God encounters a hard heart it will be met with resistance.

What might this look like?

It looks like someone who hears the Word and is hostile towards what they hear.

It looks like someone who hears the Word and is not interested in thinking about it any further.

It looks like someone who hears the Word and has no intention of acting on it.

## 4. The result is that though they hear the Word of God it makes no impression on them.

Their listening amounts to nothing.

The Word fails to take root in their hearts and lies on the surface.

## 5. Application:

Pray for their hearts – to be broken; to be humbled; to be tender.

Pray for our hearts – to be eager and expectant; to be hearing; to be obedient.

## **C. They have an enemy that is evil**

### 1. The enemy is Satan, the devil, or the evil one.

"As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them." (Mark 4:15)

He is hard at work.

He is poised and ready to, like a bird, swoop down and snatch away the seed.

He wants us to dismiss the Word as soon as we hear it.

"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

He wants to distract us so that we forget about what we hear.

And if someone's heart is already hard, it makes the devil's work easier for him as the Word lies exposed on the surface ready for him to take it away.

## 2. How does Satan take away the Word that was sown?

Sometimes he acts directly upon the person.

"So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head." (Job 2:7)

"Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus." (Luke 22:3-4)

Sometimes he works by his agents.

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Ephesians 6:12)

The truth is that Satan can use virtually anything to do this.

## 3. Satan does this Word snatching work because he is evil.

"Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved." (Luke 8:12)

He wants people to remain blind to the truth.

He wants people to remain in their sins and under God's wrath.

He wants to keep people away from the gospel.

He wants to stop believers growing in Christlikeness.

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

He wants to stop local churches from growing in size, in maturity, and in unity.

## 4. Application:

Beware of the birds – pray against the devil's work; make every effort to hear.

"He who has ears, let him hear." (Matthew 13:9)

Beware of being a bird – that we don't distract people from hearing the Word of God by what we do.