

We are in Matthew chapter 13, The Parables of the Kingdom. The first parable is verses 1 through 23, this is The Parable of the Sower, where Jesus presented that a man went out to sow, or to spread, his seed and his seed fell on four kinds, or conditions, of soil. And so, we are studying those four conditions and the spiritual truth that is found within the parables.

Beginning at verse 18 we have The Explanation of The Parable of the Sower. The first, in verse 18 we saw The Command. After the disciples separated themselves from the crowds because Jesus said, "The one who has ears to hear, hear," and they came forward to hear. He, alone with the disciples, gave them a command, "**You, yourselves, therefore hear The Parable of the Sower.**" So, He is specifically centering on the disciples themselves and no one else, you yourselves, and then another command to hear.

Verse 19 is The Clarification, or Explanation of the First Soil. The seed that fell alongside of the road where it was hard packed. And we established two things from verse 19 that carries us through the other verses in understanding of the parable.

(1) The identifiers. We identified three things in the parable:

"While anyone hearing the word of the kingdom," so seed, the seed being spread is the Word of the kingdom.

"The evil one comes." Earlier in the parable Jesus said the birds come and take the seeds. So, the birds represent the evil one coming and removing the seed.

Thirdly, "and the evil one comes and takes away that which has been sown in his heart." So, the soil represents four kinds, or conditions, of people's hearts and how people's hearts responded to the Word of God touching the soil of their hearts.

So, we have the seed being the Word of God, we have the birds represent the evil one, and the condition of the soil represents people's hearts. So, the evil one comes and removes the seed, the Word of God, from the heart of the person whose heart is hardened, and the Word of God does not penetrate.

(2) But we also saw a second thing from this that we want to see - a characteristic of all four kinds, or conditions, of soil beginning with verse 19. This first soil, even the man with a hard-packed heart, hardened heart, it's the term *hearing*. In all four situations and conditions the person is continually hearing the Word. We are not talking about people who have left off from, or don't go to hear the Word of God, we are talking about people *who are hearing*. It's a present participle, which means they are continuously hearing the Word while all these other conditions exist, and it has an effect. It has an influence on God's Word upon their hearts. So, this one whose heart is hardened, this person continually hears the Word, but the seed does not penetrate because of the hardness of heart and the evil one comes in the form of birds and removes the seed from the heart.

Secondly, in verses 20 to 21, the seed that fell in the rocky places or stony places. This is not stone mixed with dirt but rather a cement slab underneath a thin layer of dirt to where the seed falls into the dirt and begins to burrow itself but can't go much further because of the cement slab underneath it and it has no place to go. So, this person, we will see five things, or we have seen five things, in verses 20 and 21.

(1) This person also is continually hearing the Word.

(2) This person receives what God's Word says with joy, excitement, with a focus on the external. A focus on that which stimulates. A focus on experiences that please the eyes and the human on the outside but is not focused on their heart.

(3) Because we are told in verse 21, this person has no root and we saw from Matthew 7:24-27 the importance of laying a foundation, the importance of focusing on developing and strengthening the root system in order to make it through the difficulties of life. This person has no root because they're focused on the external, on the emotional, on that which stimulates.

(4) Fourthly, we saw that everything this person participates in is temporary, it wears off. They have to go back for more stimulation and more emotion or to see more things externally for their security or even for their entertainment. The things of God, when He works in your life and makes changes, it is permanent. It is permanent here and it lasts all the way through eternity. It is not temporary. So, if wears off, it's not from the Lord.

(5) And then lastly, fifthly, when this person who has no root receives the word with joy, which is all temporary, when trials and tribulations and persecutions come, this person becomes offended and leaves. Many people have become offended at just the thought or the mention of the fact that believers suffer through difficulties and trials. It is through those times that the soil is cultivated so that the seed can grow without interference. But for some people they don't believe that the Lord would allow His people to go through hardships and sufferings and they are offended and they themselves are only temporary, and they leave.

Last week we started with verse 22, The Clarification, or Explanation of the Third Soil. This seed fell into the thorns, or into the weeds. And again, for the sake of understanding the importance of what Jesus is teaching, we emphasize again this person, who has the seed fall in the midst of the weeds, is also continuously hearing. But Jesus mentions two things, that while this person is continually hearing the Word this person is also continuously involved in other things outside of the Word. And Jesus said these two things, look at the end of verse 22, these two things choke out the Word and he becomes unfruitful.

So, last week we emphasized the first of these two things, that **while hearing the Word of God this person is caught up in the care of this age**. And as we mentioned last week, the word *care*, **μέριμνα**, was introduced to us by Jesus back in Matthew 6:24-25. In verse 24, Jesus said, "**You cannot serve two masters.**" He didn't say you couldn't believe in two masters, He said you can't serve. You cannot actively follow and serve two masters. "**For either you'll love**

**the one and hate the other, or you'll cling to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."** μαμμωνᾶ, the Aramaic for *the material physical world in which we live*. He says, "You can't serve both." Therefore, in Matthew 6:25 Jesus said, "**Because of this, Take no thought for your life.**" There is the word μέριμνα. Don't allow the attention of your mind to be occupied with your life, even the necessities of life: "**What you eat, and what you drink; and for your clothing, what you shall put on. For the Lord knows what you need, and He'll provide for you what you need.**" You don't need to be occupied with it because you can only be occupied with one thing; either the things of the Lord, or the things of this world.

We emphasized to you the two phases of the Christian life last week. Salvation and transformation. Salvation occurs when a person receives Christ and they are born of His Spirit and His Spirit comes in and takes control and takes ownership. We are told by Paul in Ephesians 1:13 that the person who believes and receives that person is filled with the Spirit of God and sealed. My soul is filled with His Spirit. My soul is also sealed by His Spirit. Nothing can penetrate, and His Spirit cannot get out. So, I am totally protected. This salvation condition is eternal. It never changes. Once you've been born of the Spirit of God, once you receive Christ, it is eternal.

The second phase after a person is saved is that a person is transformed. And this is very important. I'll repeat from last week, but if I repeated it every week I'd be doing my job before the Lord, my responsibility before the Lord because this is critical and crucial and important. After you are saved, you still have the old experiences of the old life on the cortex of your brain. He saves your soul. He saves your spirit. But from the time that you are saved, God's Spirit then takes the Word and He transforms and rewrites the cortex of the brain, which is why so many people who profess to be Christians have such a struggle within the human life. Whether it is personally, or in family life, or with neighbors, with people on the job, whatever the case may be; they have trouble because they have never been transformed by the renewing of their mind. They might profess to be a Christian, but they haven't been changed, they haven't been transformed. Paul said in Romans 12:2, "**Stop being continually conformed to this world but be continually being transformed by the renewing of your mind.**" So, receiving from God's Spirit through His Word is crucial for the healing and the changing and the transformation of the mind.

So, what Jesus is saying here, "While continuously hearing the Word of God but also while continually having your mind occupied with the things of this age and of this world, the influence of the Word of God is choked." That person is not being transformed.

Also, we saw last week that spiritual growth is affected by being involved with the cares of this life. We saw from Hebrews 5:11-14 that the writer of Hebrews wanted to teach about Melchizedek to the people, to the Hebrews that he was writing to, but he says, "It's hard for you to understand because you have become dull of hearing." The Greek text indicates that they were not dull of hearing at one time. And he says, "Solid food belongs to those who are spiritually mature." But he says, "Because you have need again of drinking milk and not solid food, you're not one of those mature ones. A mature one," he goes on to describe, "is a person

who has had their senses exercised by the Word of God." A person who is a milk drinker is somebody who has not had their senses exercised and can't handle the solid food.

Now for the second activity. It is says in verse 22, "**While hearing the Word and the care of this age** (that we just discussed) **and the deception** (or deceitfulness) **of wealth**" (or riches) coupled together with the care of this age. There is nothing worse that a person can be occupied with than money. The desire for money. You can do what you want to if you have money. You can buy or purchase what you want to if you have money. Therefore with the culture in which we live, it offers us the opportunity that if we spend our time occupied with striving towards money that we will get ahead in life. The key is occupied. We all need finances and God promises to provide those finances for us; but to strive for money - for whatever the purpose - occupies the attention of the mind, stunts spiritual growth, and cancels out the influence of the Word of God for transformation.

Paul mentioned this in I Timothy 6:6-10. In this chapter at the beginning he says, "Stay away from the people that come in with their various philosophies and them trying to get you to motivate yourself to go for money." "That's really what it's all about," they'll tell you. I Timothy 6:6 says, "**But godliness and contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is clear we are not able to carry anything out. And having food** (that is sustenance) **and having clothing** (that is coverings) **let us be content with that. But they that desire to become rich fall into temptation and a trap, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown people in ruin and destruction.** Verse 10, **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.** The word *love* in the text is the word for *affection*: φιλέω: *friendliness, affection*. **Setting your affection on money is a root of all kinds of evil.** It's plural in the Greek text, all evils find their root in the love for money. **Which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith.**

Interesting the word *covet, to covet, or covetousness* in the New Testament is the Greek word **πλεονεξία** that means *to desire to have more than what you have*. Not being content with what we have today. We want more so we strive and that's covetousness. Striving for more than what we have.

**For the love of money is a root of all evil, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith.** They've gotten away from trusting the Lord and putting their faith in Him and receiving from Him whatever provision God has for them. **And they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows** (with many pains). Because they went for the trap, they fell for the trap.

Money is presented here in our culture as the gateway to the physical world. We look at the physical world and everything out there - as far as advancement in the world or the material goods in it, even the places to go - it all takes money. And if we don't have it we do whatever it takes, or we try, to respond by getting more money. All these things can be allurements to strive after to earn more. Because after all, more money is a better life according to our human philosophy. All this is to take us away from our focus in Christ. The care of this life, it doesn't have to be money, but money is inclusive. How much of my time and how much of my attention

does it take for me to grind out what I need for what I want? And it all takes me away from my focus in Christ.

Now it is interesting, because I want to point out to you, we've already emphasized *while hearing the Word* at the same time this person is also occupied with the care of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth and riches. Thinking it will get us where we need to go and get us the things that we need. This is a panorama view of a week. Go one time hear the Word. Spend the rest of the week occupied with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth. Do we not have to be responsible and care about these things? We can, by faith. The Lord might not want us to have it. He might not want us to go certain places. Whatever He gives us. You see, we follow behind Him, whatever His provision gives us is what He wants us to have. To go beyond that, to go for more than that takes my whole occupation of the attention of the mind. It takes my whole life. It takes me sacrificing my life to get it and that's what this text is talking about. No matter how much you go hear the Word, if your mind is occupied with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches, then the transformation process for you is stunted. The influence of God's Word is canceled out, it's choked out, and the growth process is stunted.

Don't think that this is uncommon because probably (I'm guessing, I use my percentage figure on all of my guesses) 99.9% of Christians in America have had the influence of the Word of God choked out. No matter how many times they go to hear it, they've had their growth stunted. They are still babes in Christ and can't handle solid food because all week long, every week, every month, every year, they are out involved in being occupied with the things of this life; rather than following the Lord with relation to the things of this life. It is forging ahead to make it for myself that is the problem.

Now, Jesus spoke about the answer to this very issue. I draw your attention to Revelation 2:1-5. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, Jesus gave seven messages to the seven churches that were in Asia Minor. And there's a message for each Church of what He thinks, what His evaluation is of that church, and what they need to do to make things right. It's a tremendous study for all churches to go through because every church is one of these churches if not all of them. But it's interesting that the first message to the first church, the church in Ephesus, has the most important message.

Revelation 2:1-5, **"To the angel or messenger of the church in Ephesus write; These things says the one holding the seven stars in his right hand, and the one who is walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands."** These two things are descriptions of Jesus in Revelation chapter 1. He was holding seven stars in His right hand, which were the seven churches, and walking in the midst of the golden lampstands, which were the light in those churches. Listen to the seven things. [Editor's note: Actually, there are eight things.] And if you were to list them for yourself, you'd be saying to yourself as I have done, "Well, if Jesus were to tell me, 'These are the seven things that you're doing which I approve of, thumbs up,' I think that I'd be doing pretty good, even if I was just doing half of them." But there is one thing that they were doing that canceled everything else out. It doesn't make any difference what they were doing.

In verse 2 He says, (1) **I know your works.** People are into works. (2) **I know your labour,** thirdly, (3) **I know your patience.** That is ὑπομένω, it is the word for *endurance*, endurance for Christ, laboring for Christ, working for Christ, all good characteristics from the evaluation of Christians and their life. Fourthly, (4) **you are not able to tolerate evil.** Fourthly, (5) **and you have tested those who say they are apostles, and they are not, and you have found them liars.** People come in and say, "I am an apostle of Christ." "Well, let's see about that. We'll put you to the test," and they found them to be liars. They did not follow the same doctrine as the apostles. They were not sent by the apostles. They were not sent out by the church. That's a good quality. Put people to the test. People who can't tolerate evil, that's is a good quality. Verse 3, the fifth thing (6) **You have tolerated,** in general. Sixthly, (7) **You have patience,** in general. Seventhly, (8) **And on account of my name you have labored and you have not fainted.** You know how weary you can get. And if you're like me when you become weary and discouraged and depressed the first thing you think of is, "I want to quit." He says, "You have labored and have not grown weary. You haven't fainted."

Verse 4 is His message, **Nevertheless I have something against you, because you have left your first love.** You see it matters not what we do, it's our priority and focus in Christ. Jesus said, "You've left your first love." The word *love* is the word ἀγάπη for Jesus Christ. You are focused on everything else, even works and labors and endurance and putting people to the test and making sure the church is run right; but you've left your first love.

You see we've learned and we are coming full circle with Matthew 6:24 where He says, **"You cannot serve two masters for either you will love the one and hate the other."** We have come full circle. Our decision-making is based on that which we love the most and that which we fear the most. Period.

When I find myself compromising in my decision-making with Christ and going my own way I do it with the justification that the Lord will have grace on me but my friends or relatives they won't and I do not want to face their wrath. People will not understand. They will disown me. They will bring persecution against me. So, just out of fear of what these people will do, fear out of what people think and the fact that we love these people a lot and we love these activities a lot. And we make decisions based on what we love the most and what we fear the most. And Jesus said, "You are good church workers but your decision-making is that you're making decisions for what you love the most and what you love the most is not Christ."

What you love the most or who you love the most is the one that you'll be occupied with, focused on. Not one day a week but all throughout the week, seeking Him about all of these cares that come up in the world, about all of these financial matters. We seek Him because we are going to be following Him and we are going to be following His lead and we want what He wants. It doesn't matter what the outcome is or what the consequences are.

Jesus said, **"You have left your first love."** You have another love that you're occupied with, another love that you're focused with that is not Christ. You believe in Christ and you're a good church worker, but in everyday life you love other things or other people more than the Lord. You fear other people and other things more than the Lord. You have left your first love.

Listen to what He says in Revelation 2 about what you are to do about it. Three things. **Remember therefore from where you have fallen.** Where did you get off track? Where have fallen away? Secondly, **And repent.** Make a decision for change. Promote the Lord to where He belongs, the first love in your life. And thirdly, **And do the first works.** Remember back when you surrendered your life to Christ when you got saved? It's kind of worn off and the human has filtered in. **And if not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will remove your lampstand from out of its place, if you should not repent.** No more light. No more spiritual light coming out from the church itself and for the people who refuse to repent. He commends them for their church work and their Christian work. But on a personal basis, personal life, they have left their first love.

So, all week long, even while hearing the word of God, once a week, twice a week, and you can hear it every day. I get reports back from people in this fellowship and people outside of our physical fellowship who listen to Bible studies and listen to the Word of God every day. They listen to one study because they want its influence. They want to be changed and transformed. They want to grow spiritually and be able to handle the solid food and become spiritual adults, rather than spiritual children tossed around by every storm that comes around. That's their desire. But after hearing the Word if they leave off from that and get occupied, not deal with, but get occupied with the cares and concerns of this life and the deceitfulness of riches, it can choke out the influence of what they heard. You see what the Lord is doing? He is saying, "This is not a go hear the word relationship. This is hear the word and have a walk with me all the rest of the time as well." It's not just a relationship in hearing the Word. It is a relationship of walking this life with Christ.

And so, the answer to the problem is make Christ the priority again. Not because of duty, or not because we know we should, but notice that Jesus said this relationship is built on not duty but love. The decisions we make show who and what we love the most in life. Now I know it breaks my heart and it probably does yours also when the Lord reveals to you that someone else or something else or some other activity means more to you than the Lord does. And He will come to us and He will discipline us and He will deal with us, even allow us to be caught in our own consequences of the entrapments of the decisions we've made.

So, the weeds, the thorns, choke out the influence of the Word for that person who is continually hearing and involved, occupied with the cares of this life, not just deal with them, but occupied with them, and occupied with the deceitfulness of wealth and riches. It says in our text in verse 22, this person, the word is choked out and he becomes unfruitful. You see there's no transformation. There's no spiritual growth because there is a compromise. It is not a hundred percent walking with Christ.

We will all suffer from this because our culture and society makes everything available and we are constantly occupied with the cares of this life. But see that's what walking with the Lord is all about. It's all about submitting these things to Him and following His lead in all of the major issues in life. Let His provision take care of the need. Then I don't have to break ranks, strive and put forth personal effort to try to fulfill it, because then it just gets worse. The importance of the influence of the Word.

**Matthew 13:1-23 Part 4  
Bible Study Transcript**

Next week we take verse 23, the fourth soil, and this is the only soil that bears fruit, so you might be interested in that one.

Let's close with prayer.