

Parables of Jesus, pt.2, 5.7.03
Matt.13.1–9, 18–23

Read Text

Must consider the crowd. They fell into one of these categories.

It's the same seed, same level of application. The only difference is the condition of the soil.

The soil isn't different, but its condition is.

How do we make sure our hearts are receptive soil?

Hardened heart – (use hand illustration: open hand, palm up & flat) comes through arrogance, sin; the soil became hard after a lot of trampling. The constant trampling of feet left the path hard. Sin habits make the heart hard. Several times a year I get into a conversation with someone who has left a spouse. The reason is sometimes b/c their heart got hard b/c it was trampled on by spouse's sinful behavior. You trample on your spiritual life by living in and pursuing after sin.

Let there be no doubt this can and does happen to believers. In fact, all soil conditions can be reflected in the life of the believer at the same time.

We can harden our hearts by participating in sin or being too heavily influenced by the culture (the church of Laodecia). Instead of shaping the culture, the culture shaped them.

Heb.3.7f. – Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

Heb.3.13 – But encourage one another daily, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

“Harden” – make stubborn. It’s a choice. You choose to receive the truth or reject the truth. Your mind is shut. You have an unteachable spirit.

Nebucha hardened his heart b/c of pride.

You keep from having a hardened heart by being vigilant against sin.

(Illustration: Turn palm up as a shield –like your saying “Stop” with your hand.) You don’t open the doors. You deal with sin quickly. You get help

To combat hardening of your spiritual life, You must:

- Confess sin. Close the doors.
 - Example of sun baking clay and getting hard.
- Deal with sin others have committed against you
- Walk in humility before the Lord. Know that you could fall and miss the activity of God.
- Constantly looking and listening for the clues. Open and receptive heart before God.

The second group, He quickly receives the word with joy but soon falls away.

All identify with that. Quickly receive it with joy; get caught up in the emotion of it all and then when the testing comes we drop it.

Illustration: one hand balled up as a rock; the other perched on top, like the roots of plant trying to get through

Why does he fall away? No root. It wasn’t that the trouble or persecution was so difficult but that the soil was so shallow.

His heart was instable & shallow. There is no deep roots (Mk.4.16f). We must deepen our roots.

How do we deepen our spiritual roots? It's not six easy steps. You grow roots by being faithful and devoted to the Lord over the long haul. Only mushrooms grow overnight or chia pets. You consistently follow the Lord, do the right things, serve in ministry, give, grow in your relationship with other believers, don't give in or give up, you move forward. You stay consistently close to God. **(Illustration now of hands clasping each other)**

It's the A of ABLE. But just doing the disciplines doesn't guarantee a close walk. The spiritual disciplines are tools that if used in combination with a heart that really wants to know God will help develop strong roots with God.

There is no such thing as instantaneous roots.

Roots aren't the pretty part of the tree either. But roots sustain the life of the tree.

You deepen your spiritual roots by abiding, staying close, to God. I have seen men grow great churches and be dead on the inside. So full of life outwardly, yet dead inwardly. The problem? They had quit abiding close to God.

Illustration this past week of huge oak in park cut down and completely hollow on the inside, yet leaves still growing on it.

The third group, these are those who hear the message, but the cares of the world and the glamour of wealth strangle out the activity of God.

Illustration of one hand strangling the other.

BUSY Story

You can't serve God and money (would you worship a tool, a hammer); you can't have God and this world. The Father will not share his chair with anyone. You shall have no other gods before Him. A god is something that is vitally important in your life – status, friends, money, education, sports,

In the end times, people will be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

I can usually trace all spiritual burnout, weariness, fatigue, lack of joy, lack of love for my wife & kids to putting something before my relationship with God.

What is the answer? You go back to the 1st of the 10 Commandments; you go back to the 1st part of the Great Commandment .

Illustration: one finger on hand pointing to God. He's # 1.

Use hands to illustrate each point

- Flat hand & then hand like "Stop" sign
- Hand in ball with other like roots trying to penetrate it & then hands clasping each other.
- Hand growing and the other hand strangling & then one hand with finger pointing up to God, as to say, "You're #1"
- Both hands open, as a sign of abundance.