

***Fix Your Eyes on Jesus the Teacher: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."***

***Focus Passage: Matthew 13:1-9***

### **Sermon Recap**

The state of the soil determines the fruitfulness of the harvest. The state of the heart determines the fruitfulness of a life. What is the state of your heart?

#### The Hard Heart (v.18-19)

The seed on the path never makes it into the soil due to the hardness of the soil. The hard heart does not allow the seed of the gospel to penetrate. This leaves the heart vulnerable to the lies and accusations of the evil one. These lies can include: "Jesus is just a good moral teacher," "I am capable of creating my own meaning of life," "what is true for you may not be what is true for me". Accusations might include: "I am too far gone for God to love me" or "my life has no value."

#### The Shallow Heart (v.20-21)

The seed on the rocky soil may sprout, but the soil is too shallow for the roots to take hold. The shallow heart may have had an emotional experience with Jesus and be searching for a "blessing" rather than a "Savior." Jesus teaches us that tribulation WILL come, and the person who does not have the seed of God's word rooted deeply in the heart risks falling away.

#### The Divided Heart (v.22)

The seed sown among thorns isn't fruitful because the thorns choke out the plant's vitality. The divided heart has its eyes fixed on things other than Jesus. The "cares of the world" and the "deceitfulness of riches" are constantly diverting attention from Jesus' kingdom to a kingdom of our own making. The divided heart has heard the word but never gives the word its full attention.

#### The Listening Heart (v.23)

The seed planted in good soil produces an astounding harvest. Even the smallest harvest from the good soil (30-fold) is three times a typical good harvest for a farmer (10-fold.) This listening heart *hears* the Word, understands it, and bears great fruit for God's Kingdom.

The state of the heart determines the fruitfulness of the life. Is your heart hard, shallow, divided, or do you have a listening heart? The parable mentions a farmer sowing seeds and various types of soil but doesn't say anything about plowing. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are prepared to till the soil of our hearts so that hard, shallow, and divided hearts become hearts that will hear his Word and produce a fruitful harvest in our lives.

1. Ask someone you trust to give you an honest assessment of how they see the state of your heart.
2. Ask Jesus what He wants to tell you about the state of your heart. Ask him to till the soil.

### Interpretive Helps:

- “At its simplest, the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt to its precise application to tease the mind into active thought.” – C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*
- In the use of “10-fold” or “30-fold,” the word “fold” refers to return on investment—how much the farmer earned compared to what he paid for the seed.

### Group Gathering

#### Group Check-in — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Discuss how it went as everyone tried to take steps of obedience to what they sensed God saying to them.

#### Allow the Word to Speak — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

##### READ Matthew 13:1–9; 18–23

1. Matt 13:1 begins with “that same day.” Look back at Matthew 12 and see what else may have happened that same day. Do you see Matthew making connections between the two chapters?
2. Read Isaiah 55:10–11 for an Old Testament agricultural metaphor written over 600 years before Matthew’s Gospel. What is the source of fruitfulness in Isaiah 55:11? What relationship, if any, do you find between the “words that go out from God’s mouth” and the state of your heart?

#### Put the Word into Practice — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Have you experienced God figuratively plowing the soil of your heart? How have you seen a change in the state of your heart over time?
2. Who will you ask to give you an honest assessment of how they see the state of your heart? (Issues indicating a hard, shallow, divided, or listening heart)

**The Big Question:** What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group.

**Further Resources** – Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the “Sermon Slides” link at the bottom of [www.wcchapel.org](http://www.wcchapel.org)