

TITLE: SEARCHING FOR GOOD SOIL

TEXT: MATTHEW 13:3-9; 18-23

INTRO: In the parable of the sower, Jesus tells of the sower sowing seed on four different types of soil. As He always did, He used analogies that His audience could easily understand (farming, cooking, fishing, etc.). As we think about (and practice) evangelism, we can relate to each of these types of soil. Notice that even though 75% are unproductive, **all** still receive seed!

I. SOILS IN NON-CHRISTIANS:

A. Wayside (v. 4, 19)

1. (v. 4) The seed was trodden down, and the birds devoured it. It was completely useless – wasted. The main problem is that the soil, being on a road, was so packed down and hardened that the seed never had a chance.
2. (v. 19) This soil represents the person who hears, but doesn't understand (not because he can't, but because he doesn't care enough about it to try). This person is just not interested (too many other interests; job, family, friends, etc. are too important to ever think about God). So when he comes in contact with a Christian who offers the seed (the Word – **Lk 8:11**), his heart (the soil) is already hardened, and Satan is able to steal his interest.

B. Stony (v. 5-6, 20-21)

1. (v. 5-6) There was not much earth (soil); below was rock. The plant immediately sprung up, having no depth of earth (less to cover it, so it springs up quickly). But the sun scorched them, because they had no root ("they lacked moisture"–**Lk 8:6**).
2. (v. 20-21) This soil represents the person who immediately receives the word with joy, but only initially. He obeys the gospel, but doesn't continue to study; he doesn't get beyond the "milk" of the word. (v.21) He has no root, so he only lasts a little while. Then he falls away when persecution comes. *These are excited about Christ, but never get rooted. They are easily taken away because of persecution (they didn't know how difficult Christianity can be)!

A. Thorny (v. 7, 22)

1. (v. 7) Here the soil seems to be fairly good, but thorns are there too. The sower requires 100% of the soil for his seed. This crop is far too important; he can't settle for just part! When the thorns come in, they choke the crop so it won't fully grow.
2. (v. 22) This soil represents the person who hears the word, but allows it to be choked (this is the same word as in Lk 8:33 – the demons caused the pigs to fall into the lake, and they "were choked."):
 - a. By the cares (distractions) of this world – job, family, friends, finances, recreation, etc. These things are obviously not bad in and of themselves, but can be if we let them control us. This is about priorities.
 - b. By the deceitfulness of riches – the false idea that we can solve all our problems with money (cf. **1 Tim 6:10,17**). This person becomes a Christian, but never puts Christ first. There are always things more important in his life. The result is that he becomes unfruitful. Fruit is what God requires of His people (**Mt 7:19; Gal 5:22-23**).

B. Good soil (v. 8, 23)

1. (v. 8) Same seed as before, but this time it fell on good soil, and produced fruit (that which the sower desired).
2. (v. 23) This soil represents the person who hears and understands the word. **Lk 8:15**–“ *But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.* ”
 - a. Good soil = an honest & good heart. This is someone who truly desires to know & obey God.
 - b. Good soil is evidenced by hearing, understanding, and *keeping* the word. This person puts God 1st!
3. He becomes fruitful:
 - a. By growing spiritually and increasing in his knowledge of God, always striving to possess the fruit of the Spirit.
 - b. By evangelizing.

II. SOILS IN CHRISTIANS: Regardless of what kind of soil we were in the past, what kind are we now, and what will we be?

A. Wayside

1. A member of the church can actually become this type of soil. They become completely uninterested (too many more important things in their lives).
2. This person is much easier to spot than 'Stony' & 'Thorny'; he completely falls away and never returns (**Heb 6:4-6**).

B. Stony

1. This person becomes a Christian, but is easily taken away by persecution.
2. Persecution will keep this Christian from living like one. He has no roots! When challenged about his beliefs, he doesn't know the Scriptures well enough to defend them. He is unable (and unwilling) to give an answer to all that ask (**1 Pet 3:15**). This person may not actually leave the church (although attendance may be sporadic). But spiritually, he is not there!

C. Thorny

1. This person becomes a Christian, but the word is never allowed to grow; other things are always more important. This person's problem is not necessarily with persecution, but priorities!
2. This Christian doesn't fall away completely; he just gets distracted by the world and riches and he becomes unfruitful. Some may even consider him to be faithful.
3. But unfruitfulness is no better than complete disobedience (**Mt 7:19**–bad fruit or *no* fruit)! In a way, it's worse. The non-Christian many times knows he's lost (but doesn't care). But this "thorny" Christian usually *thinks* he's okay.

D. Good soil

This person is the only one of the four who doesn't change (fall away). We describe him as the good soil (see above).

CONCLUSION: We need to do our best as "soil inspectors" while evangelizing. When we understand the type of person we're talking to, it will help us in how we present the truth. But we must also inspect our own soil. Nobody knows better than you where your heart is. You know your focus, your attitude, your priorities. You know what type of soil you are.