



Sermon Notes

US N°. 86

Date: Dec. 30th, 2013

Title: Tale of Two Gardens

1. Parable of the Sower or the Parable of the Soils. Mt. 13:1-23, "On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "*Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. [Luke 8:5, "and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it."]* Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. [Luke 8:6, "it withered away because it lacked moisture."] And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" ... "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. [Luke 8:12, "then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."] But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. [Luke 8:13, "who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away."] Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. [Luke 8:14, "when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity."] But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. [Luke 8:15, "having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience."]"
- a. The soil of the path; message not understood and/or disregarded. The seed is either trampled underfoot, and/or stolen by Satan so that they will not believe to be saved.
 - i. Prov. 1:29-31, "Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies."
 - ii. Heb. 4:2, "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it."
- b. The rocky soil;
 - i. Ps. 106:12-14, "Then they believed His words; they sang His praise. They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert."
 - ii. Zec. 7:12, "Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts."
- c. The soil and the weeds & thorns;

- i. Jude 1:3-4, *"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."*
- d. The good soil; produces 100, 60 and 30 fold (see *Parable of the Talents*)
- 2. There are two immediate threats within this parable to those within the Church: the rocks and thorns.
 - a. The greatest danger of the rocky soil is its lack of depth. A plant can only grow and produce in direct relation to its resources around its roots. Shallow soil provides few nutrients which make for smaller plants. Shallow soil provides little gripping power for root systems so that when storms come, plants fall. And shallow soil holds a small reservoir of moisture so that when the sun shines brightly, the plants wither. A good plant will send down a tap root to hold it in place and to draw upon deeper reserves in stressful moments. A person with a rocky faith is content with a surface-level faith in God's Word. A major factor to surface-level faith may even be how the faith was explained to them in the beginning! This contentment is counterproductive, leading an individual to skip the dedication required to stand firm. To stand firm requires increased understanding in depth with application of God's Word learning from Jesus' life. To squander the initial faith, even if received with joy and enthusiasm, mirrors seed sown along the path with rocks right below the surface.
 - i. Ez. 36:26, *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."*
 - ii. Eph. 3:17, *"that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,"*
 - iii. Ps. 1:1-3, *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."*
 - iv. Ps. 92:13-15, *"Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the LORD is upright..."*
 - v. Jer. 17:7-8, *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit."*
 - vi. Ez. 47:12, *"Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine."*
 - b. The greatest danger of weeds & thorns is that they rob the plant of its needed resources: water, nutrients, sun, etc. Weeds & thorns put very little back into the soil so that the soil grows poorer and poorer; weeds are *"haters."* They steal the purpose from the plant. People with rebellious faith destructively permit worldly priorities and aspirations to compete with faith in God as primary, rather than fully committing to Jesus Christ, despite knowing better. The result is predictably putting worldly ways in positions to interfere with their walk with God. This happens over time as choices in life solidify & reveal ones' degenerate character, like when God's Kingdom's seed is sown among thorns. To counter this self-

destructive character pattern requires deliberate attention to make diligent efforts to pull up these competing worldly weeds. This responsibility to take steps to eliminate obstacles operates in tandem with our tending to God's Words growing in our soul as number one.

- i. Jn. 15:8, *"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."*
- ii. Ez. 17:8, *"It was planted in good soil by many waters, to bring forth branches, bear fruit, and become a majestic vine."*
- iii. Luke 9:57-62, *"Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, 'Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' Then He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.' And another also said, 'Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.' But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'"*
- iv. Eph. 5:1-21, *"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.' See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God."*
 1. Respectable sins: anxiety & frustration, discontentment, unthankfulness, pride, selfishness, lack of self-control, impatience & irritability, anger, judgmentalism, envy & jealousy, sins of the tongue and worldliness.

3. Unengaged

- a. Mt. 16:24-26, *"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?'"*
- b. The term "unengaged" is the most offensive in missionary terminology. It is a blatant acknowledgement of the missionary community's refusal to fulfill the minimal apostolic prerequisite of being present among all peoples and beginning the work of gospel proclamation. It is offensive to the LORD of hosts, who is the

creator of all, has provided a great salvation in Christ, and desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. It is offensive to Christ himself, whose sacrifice is sufficient atonement for all men, whose mandate concerning all peoples is clear, and whose presence is promised to all who obey. It is offensive to the Holy Spirit, who convicts men and women of sin, righteousness and judgment, gifts God's people with all that is required to accomplish all He commands, and intercedes for us in our weakness with groaning too deep for words. It is offensive to the Church, the pillar and support of the truth, through which the manifold wisdom of God is displayed to rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm, and whose onslaught upon the gates of hell cannot be withstood. And it is offensive to the global missionary community, called as apostles, carriers of the message which alone on earth is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe, and stewards of the mysteries of God. It is Satan's favorite word and the foundation of all hell's joy. It hangs on the tongues of angels and demons and is the core of the dialogue between their supreme leaders when the usurper is summoned to heaven's court. It is a heinous word – the most loathsome of all. And it is time to be done with it.

- c. We're at war, it's so long a war of two fronts but a war of multiple fronts, multiple enemies, multiple levels of combat and it's much more confusing than ever before.
- d. Hybels of Willow Creek church confessed, *"We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and became Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become "self feeders." We should have gotten people, taught people how to read their Bible between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own."* They had made their people spiritually passive and dependent upon their million-dollar programs and their paid, professional staff. In the process, they had not equipped their people to feed themselves spiritually, not to mention to disciple others or plant new churches. All of us need to rethink all of our assumptions about what church is suppose to be and focus on discovering the principles and practices that God uses to make disciples, and create Church-Planting Movements that build His kingdom. If most pastors continue to focus on growing their existing church attendance rather than on building God's kingdom by equipping their people to be disciple-makers, then we will continue to get the stagnant results we currently see in the Western church. The goal of the Church must be that every believer is involved in ministry and that every believer is trained and equipped to be a disciple-maker or church planter.
- e. Tale of two gardens; how green is your valley? Jos. 24:15, *"And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*
- f. Col. 1:9-12, *"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light."*