THE PARABLE
OF THE SOWER
Mt. 13:1-23

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Joint Heirs 20141116
I. The Occasion:

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. (Mt. 13:1 NIV)

A. Near the Mid-Point of His Public Ministry
B. In Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee

Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. (Mt. 13:2 NIV)
II. The Parable

3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. (Mt. 13:3-5 NIV)
II. The Parable

6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear.”  

(Mt. 13:6-9 NIV)
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

10 The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” (Mt. 13:10 NIV)

A. What is a “Parable”?

1. Comes from Gk. παραβολή (parabolé).
2. Means “comparison” or literally “placing along side”
3. A short discourse that makes a comparison
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

B. The Understanding of the Twelve:

1. They had already been called by Jesus and named “apostles” (Mt. 10:1-4)
2. They had been under His teaching for a year
3. They still did not understand easily
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

B. The Understanding of the Twelve:

He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.” (Mt. 13:11 NIV)

1. Special Revelation--The apostles received special revelation not given to others
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

B. The Understanding of the Twelve:

1. *Special Revelation*--The apostles received special revelation not given to others

- Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. (Mt. 16:17 NIV)

- I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness. (Mt. 16:17 NIV)
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

B. The Understanding of the Twelve:

1. Special Revelation--The apostles received special revelation not given to others

   a. We can read their writings with the expectation of receiving information from God that we can get in no other place.

   - Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. (Mt. 16:17 NIV)
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

B. The Understanding of the Twelve:

1. *Special Revelation*--The apostles received special revelation not given to others

b. The Bible is a product of special revelation from God

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.” *(Mt. 16:17 NIV)*
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

B. The Understanding of the Twelve:

2. *General Revelation*—What we can know about God from His creation and from the nature of man himself

a. Knowledge that is universally available to all persons
1. **General Revelation**

1. The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
2. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.
3. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.
4. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. (Ps. 19:1-4a NIV)
1. General Revelation--

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Ro. 1:18-21 NIV)
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

B. The Understanding of the Twelve:

2. *General Revelation*--

   a. Knowledge that is universally available to all persons

   b. Makes us aware of our need

   c. Makes clear that we are guilty before a righteous God

   d. Makes clear that we are lost and need saving

   e. But does not save
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

B. The Understanding of the Twelve:

2. *Special Revelation vs. General Revelation* --

   a. Only special revelation explains what God intended by creating the universe

   b. Only special revelation communicates what people need to know to be saved

   c. The Gospel is part of special revelation
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

B. The Understanding of the Twelve:

2. *Special Revelation vs. General Revelation*—

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Jn. 14:6 NIV)
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

C. Jesus makes all the difference:

Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. (Mt. 13:12 NIV)

1. Whoever has Jesus will be given everything he needs in abundance

2. Whoever does not have Jesus will lose everything
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

C. Jesus makes all the difference:

3. All people fall into two categories: those who have Christ and those who do not.

11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (Mt. 13:12 NIV)
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

D. Those outside of Christ:

13 This is why I speak to them in parables:
   “Though seeing, they do not see;
   though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:
   “You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
   you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

(Mt. 13:13-14 NIV)
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

D. Those outside of Christ:

15 For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’ (Mt. 13:13-14 NIV)
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

D. Those outside of Christ:

1. They are blind to the truth—sounds like foolishness to them

   The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. (1 Co. 2:14 NIV)

2. They have closed their eyes and stopped their ears.
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

D. Those outside of Christ:

3. In our fallen state, we refuse to hear what God says to us (Ro. 1:18-25)

They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. (Ro. 1:25 NIV)
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

D. Those outside of Christ:

4. We are like the people who stoned Stephen

57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. (Ac. 7:57-58a NIV)
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

D. Those outside of Christ:

5. It takes the action of God to break through the barriers we have so carefully erected against Him

10 As it is written:
“There is no one righteous, not even one;
11 there is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God. (Ro. 3:10-11 NIV)

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. (Jn. 6:44 NIV)
III. Why Jesus Taught in Parables

D. Those outside of Christ:

5. People come to Christ as we share the Gospel and God opens their hearts.

14 One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. (Ac. 16:14 NIV)
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

For Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: (Mt. 13:18 NIV)

A. What Jesus is about to explain to the apostles (and to us through them) is:

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS IN OUR WHOLE LIVES FOR US TO UNDERSTAND
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

For When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path.  (Mt. 13:19 NIV)

A. The Seed on the Path:
   1. Mark adds: the sower is sowing the Word (Mk. 4:14)
   2. Jesus describes one of Satan’s primary objectives
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

A. The Seed on the Path:

1. Jesus describes one of Satan’s primary objectives:

   REMOVE THE WORD FROM OUR HEARTS AND MINDS
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

A. The Seed on the Path:

1. Jesus describes one of Satan’s primary objectives: remove the word from our hearts and minds

2. This man is like hard soil:
   a. He is hardened to the Gospel
   b. He has convinced himself that:
      1) There is no God (or at least there is not contact with God) (Ps. 53:1)
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

A. The Seed on the Path--this man is like hard soil:

1. He has convinced himself that:
   a. There is no God (or at least there is not contact with God) (Ps. 53:1)
   b. He alone is responsible for his life
   c. He needs no one beyond himself

2. He is probably a secular humanist
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. (Mt. 13:20 NIV)

B. The Seed on rocky places:
   1. This man is like shallow soil
   2. He has been attracted to the truth of the Word:
      a. He dimly perceives its value and beauty
      b. But it has never taken root in him
      c. He sees many advantages to being a regular church-goer
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

B. The Seed on rocky places:
   1. This man is like shallow soil
   2. He has been attracted to the truth of the Word:
      a. He dimly perceives its value and beauty
      b. But it has never taken root in him
      c. He sees many advantages to being a regular church-goer
      d. He would identify himself as a Christian
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

B. The Seed on rocky places:

1. This man is like shallow soil
2. He is not a born again believer
   a. He has never made a conscious decision to give his life to Christ
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

B. The Seed on rocky places:
   1. This man is like shallow soil
   2. He is not a born again believer
      a. He has never made a conscious decision to give his life to Christ

But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. (Mt. 13:21 NIV)

b. When believers he knows begin to face difficulties, he quickly distances himself from them

c. Enduring hardship or persecution is not in his plan
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. *(Mt. 13:22 NIV)*

C. The Seed among thorns:

1. This is the man whose life is compromised
2. His life is filled with thorns—the things and values of the world
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed among thorns:
   1. This is the man whose life is compromised
   2. His life is filled with thorns—the things and values of the world
   3. He could be either a born again believer or just a nominal church-member, but he has heard the Word and seen value in it.
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed among thorns:
   1. This is the man whose life is compromised
   2. However, he is distracted from its truth by two things:
      a. Concern about this life
      b. The false promises of wealth
   3. He does not see his life from God’s perspective:
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed among thorns:
   1. This is the man whose life is compromised
   3. He does not see his life from God’s perspective:
      a. He does not believe that God is in control of his circumstances
      b. He does not believe that God always acts toward him in love
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed among thorns:
   1. This is the man whose life is compromised
   4. He believes that he is ultimately responsible for everything in his life
   5. He fears that he will not be able to control all the challenges he faces
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed among thorns:
   1. This is the man whose life is compromised

6. This man has been deceived:
   a. Anything false or misleading is from Satan
   b. Satan is “the father of lies” (Jn. 8:44)
   c. Deception is his primary tool
   d. This man has been taken in by Satan’s lies about what the world offers and about what he himself wants and needs (2 Ti. 2:26)
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed among thorns:
   1. This is the man whose life is compromised
   7. We too are deceived:
      a. We all live in a culture permeated and twisted by Satan’s great strategy of misinformation
      b. We grew up in a society immersed in an artificial and false view of reality—a way of seeing the world around us which he has carefully constructed over the years of human history
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed among thorns:
   1. This is the man whose life is compromised

7. We too are deceived:
   c. We all find ourselves too easily taken in by Satan’s deceptions on a daily basis. It is just natural for us to see things Satan’s way
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed among thorns:

1. This is the man whose life is compromised

7. We too are deceived:
   c. We all find ourselves too easily taken in by Satan’s deceptions on a daily basis. It is just natural for us to see things Satan’s way

8. The result of Satan’s misinformation is to cause this man to fail to manifest any of the real distinctives of the follower of Christ (e.g., the fruit of the Spirit—Gal. 5:22-23) because they are produced by the Lord Jesus working through the Holy Spirit (Jn. 15:5).
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed among thorns:

1. This is the man whose life is compromised

9. You cannot always tell if a person is a real Christian or not; only God knows their heart.

a. There is such a thing as a carnal Christian whose lifestyle looks like an unbeliever’s (1 Co. 13:1-3)

b. If the man in Jesus’ parable is not born again, Christianity is just tacked onto the surface of his life and not built in.
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable  
C. The Seed among thorns:  
   1. This is the man whose life is compromised  
   9. You cannot always tell if a person is a real Christian or not; only God knows their heart.  
      c. If he is born again (i.e., an immature or carnal Christian), he needs to follow the directions in Heb. 12:1-2.  
      d. If he continues to live like the world, he will waste his life and be like one of those Paul describes as entering Heaven like one escaping from the flames (1 Co. 3:11-15).
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. (Mt. 13:23 NIV)

C. The Seed on good soil:
   1. This is the man whose life is like fertile soil
   2. In his life, the word has taken root and flourished
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed on good soil:
   1. This is the man whose life is like fertile soil
   2. In his life, the word has taken root and flourished
   3. The power of the truth of the Word is continually delivering this believer from Satan’s false view of reality and is opening his eyes to the truth of God—the truth about what is really going on.
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed on good soil:

1. This is the man whose life is like fertile soil

4. He sees things the way they really are:
   a. God is in control
   b. Everything is working out according to His plan (Ro. 8:28-29)

5. Because of this:
   a. He is at peace (Php. 4:6-7)
   b. He lives the faith-rest life
   c. He is not distracted by Satan’s lies
   d. He is not worried by problems
   e. He is not fearful of the future (Heb. 4:9-16)
IV. Jesus Explains the Parable

C. The Seed on good soil:

1. This is the man whose life is like fertile soil

6. The effect of this in his life is to produce what God calls on him to produce (Jn. 15:8, 16)

7. That production goes way beyond what we ever dreamed we could do.
V. Applying the Principles of the Parable

A. This is not so much the parable of the sower as it is the parable of the soils.

B. The central lesson is that God’s Word flourishes in my life depending on how I receive it.

1. I choose what kind of soil I am:
   a. Hard
   b. Shallow
   c. Compromised
   d. Fertile

2. I must take heed to how I listen to His Word.
V. Applying the Principles of the Parable

C. If Satan’s primary goal is to keep God’s word out of my heart,

1. I must use every means possible to immerse my mind and heart in His Word.

2. It is the main weapon with which God has equipped me to defeat the enemy of my soul and of the souls of others (Eph. 6:17).