

Scripture Texts: Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-10, Luke 8:4-15

Tonight's subject: The Four Hearts

The first paragraph in tonight's lesson comes from the March 27th review of lessons 6 to 10. It is now time to look at it again. At that point the study was derived from one comment in the story line! One word, "Listen"! With so much to consider let me encourage you with the following info.

Here is a general outline of what we will examine from this parable before we finish. First, we'll discover the 4 Hearts picture of this parable. Each heart is described in profound detail in the story. (not yet done) Secondly, sample prayers will be given to teach us to pray over the condition of each heart with the goal to move to the Prepared Heart development of Discipleship. This will increase our ability to discern the "heart" of a person, issue, situation or atmosphere. You have to learn what you are dealing with. What is the "heart" of the issue? (not yet done) Third, we will examine each Key Issue in the story. Then we will relate the progression of each Key Issue to our lifeline to better see where we are and how well do we identify with the "Unseen Heart" in the story! (we've mostly completed the key issue part. Our lifeline has not been touched) Fourth, we will learn to see this pattern every time the gospel is shared by the 5 fold ministry and how we can cooperate with this process as we are workers in the vineyard! (the concept has been identified, every study we further our knowledge about cooperating with HOLY SPIRIT) Fifth, we'll see the Key Players in this process. What role do they play in my life? Who is the sower, the seed, the heart, the enemy, the problem, the promise?

Regarding the third point, we have traveled through the parable once. The second part of the third point is yet to be done and will probably be our greatest challenge. Tonight, we now address the first point referred to. This one is generally the only information that has been further studied by some believers/disciples. Let's look at the state of each of these four hearts as described in the parable.

When considering the parable we should be grateful JESUS explains the soil to be the heart of the hearers of the gospel. There is no telling what interpretations would exist to explain this parable if JESUS hadn't explained it so clearly himself. Remember, we have already established JESUS knows we just cannot afford to misunderstand this parable. This explains the very clear explanation. So what does the seed falling by the wayside represent? Verse 19: The seed is referred to as the word of the kingdom, or in Luke 8:11, the Word of God. This kind of ground represents the person who hears God's Word but does not understand it. Because of their lack of understanding, the devil immediately moves in and snatches the word from their heart. Hard ground represents the first type of heart which is the hardened heart or hard heart.

The hearers of God's Word need to beware. When God's Word goes forth, Satan is always waiting for an opportunity to snatch it out of the heart of the hearer. Satan even tried this on Jesus. When Jesus was baptized, he heard His Father say, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This was a great moment of affirmation for Jesus. Yet the devil was watching too, and he likely heard the voice. So when Jesus went into the wilderness, immediately after His baptism, Satan came to Him with three temptations. Although each temptation was different, each one also contained an attempt by the devil to make Jesus doubt His own sonship or identity, and to snatch out of Jesus' heart the word that had been planted at His baptism. Surely we can determine that if our adversary is so vile and determined to steal the GOD seed even from CHRIST Himself, we don't have to think long that the thief will attempt to steal from our heart the LORD's intention. We should further see this. What allows the enemy to steal or not from us is the condition of our heart. If our heart is hard, the devil is in business. If our heart is not hard the devil's business is much more of a challenge to his plan. It is not enough for us to just think and say "Satan, you cannot rob me". The adversary looks beyond the words we claim to the actual condition of our heart. Confession is good. It is the right direction to begin and continue going. But we must possess what we profess. We must declare that the adversary cannot take from us the Father's purpose. Take nothing for granted. Learn from my mistakes and it will help you see your mistakes. Again, we have the hard heart to learn from.

If the seed is the Word of God, then it is clear that the sower is anyone who preaches, teaches or testifies to God's Word. See 1 Corinthians 3:9 which tells us that believers are God's field. See also 2 Timothy 4:2 which says that the word should be preached regardless of whether it is the right season or not. It is always the right season for the teaching and preaching of God's Word. We'll go into this deeper in further study.

What does the seed on stony places represent? Verses 20-21: There is a lot of stony ground in Palestine. There the bedrock is so close to the surface and the soil so shallow that it is difficult for a plant to send down roots. This shallow ground represents a shallow heart. So our second heart description is the shallow heart. This kind of person not only hears the word, but receives it with joy and believes for a while (Luke 8:13). But their heart is shallow, and God's Word is unable to send down roots and to grow. The plant that is unable to send down a root into the ground is easily scorched in the full sun. Because of this, the person with a shallow heart easily falls away when the heat is on.

According to Matthew's version, the sun represents persecution because of the Word. According to Luke's version (8:13), the sun represents temptation. Temptation and persecution will cause the shallow-hearted person to lose faith. It's easy to follow the Lord in good times and not so easy during trial times. How many times have we seen someone respond so favorably to the gospel and for a season they "appeared" as Wesley would say to be going on to perfection? Then what happens to them?

Just as quickly as they started following CHRIST they fall away! They dry up, give up and mess up and we are left wondering what is up with that person! We shouldn't be as bewildered by this phenomenon as we often are. JESUS warned it would happen! What are we witnessing in this person? Their conduct and attitude reveals how shallow is their heart! They have no depth of heart maturity to carry on the race when the difficulty increases. They back off and often completely fall away from involvement in Christian discipleship. In short, they remain immature in Christian nurture and character. What we have failed to realize is this. This is the place we all begin the Christian journey. We begin in this state of immaturity. This is perfectly normal and understood by our LORD. The problem is we don't understand it. We must overcome the obstacles to grace we will eventually face in life. So when we fail or are severely tried in trails and temptations do we sin and give up or sin and repent? To the degree we sin and repent will be to the degree we one day overcome that sin and defeat it. The problem is not sinning. The problem is continued sin that only reveals our immaturity and lack of discernment. Shallow hearts must be broken before GOD by His intervention! Ask HIM to do this in your heart.

What does the thorny ground represent? Verse 22: The thorny ground is the heart of the person who hears God's Word, but the word is choked by four things. 1) cares of this world; 2) deceitfulness (delight / pleasure) of riches; 3) desires for other things (Mark 4:19); and 4) pleasures of life(Luke 8:14). It's easy to get caught up with the things of this world and to lose sight of our reason for being. Paul not only warns against the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10), but also points out that we should not get entangled in the affairs of this life (2 Timothy 2:4). When we do, as this parable points out, we become unfruitful. The problem here is the lack of continued willingness to yield our will to GOD! We must learn quickly to surrender our will to JESUS and to ask HIS grace to die to our self and will on a continued basis. There is never a state reached in our walk with JESUS that we don't have to die a deeper death to our self. No matter how well we think we know this, we'll be surprised at what happens to our life through our attitude when we cease being conscious of the need to die every day as Paul stated in 1st Cor 15:31. So the third heart is the unfruitful heart that increasingly becomes unfruitful due to the believers unwillingness to continue submitting their will to CHRIST. Shallow and unfruitful hearts will not be avoided if we do not study our vulnerability to one or both of these pitfalls.

What does the good ground represent? The good ground is the person who hears God's Word, understands it, accepts it (Mark 4:20), has a noble and good heart (Luke 8:15), and as a result of their patience (Luke 8:15), this person bears fruit. Jesus describes the level of fruitfulness as thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and one hundredfold. To review, this is not to be confused, as it often is, with 30%, 60%, and 100%. If a man invests \$100 and makes 100%, he will end up with \$200. But the man who invests \$100 and makes a hundredfold has made another \$10,000. Imagine the implications of this in Christian character and influence and Kingdom advancement!