

Mark 4:5-6;16-17 Parable of the Sower – Shallow Hearts

Now last time we talked about hard hearts, but Jesus knows that he has a second group of people in the crowd—those with shallow hearts. He needs to get their attention too, so he talks to them. See even though Jesus knows that most of the crowd will not listen at this time, he's using this time he has to teach the crowd to wake them up, teach them profound things through what on the surface seem to be simple stories. In this parable, Jesus is going to talk about conditions of the heart, and he's going to explain how the condition of the heart, whether a hard heart, a shallow heart, a crowded heart or a prepared heart determines how we react to God's Word. This week we're going to consider the first type of soil, the hard heart.

We don't Make the Seed--One of the things to keep in mind is that the seed in this parable is the Word of God, not our words. Mankind, with all our understanding and technology, can't create a simple seed, starting from scratch. A lot of congregations are languishing under teaching that is more psychology than scripture. More philosophy than prophecy, more bootstraps than bible, more grease than grace. Paul warns Colossians about this in **Colossians 2:8 to See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.** Was probably never more relevant than it is today. Preaching starts with the Word of God, there's nothing more profound that we can teach!

God values the seed--God lavishly allows his Word, the seed, which He values above His name, to be scattered even among those whom He knows will not receive it (as in the hard soil), or will receive it with no crop of the word (as in this week's soil). Colossians 2:2-3 **2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth [b]that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** See God's Word is God's Word. The seed itself hasn't changed, but the willingness of the sowers on earth to sow it has. How can we expect, if we sow Psychology instead of Word, that there will be a harvest. If there is no call to repentance, no urging to turn, no pleading to cooperate with God in letting Him change their heart, then people won't realize their need.

The Shallow Ground--Then Jesus starts in verse ⁵**Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil;**It's important to remember that in this parable, when it says "other seed", it uses the Greek word *Allos*, which means "another of the same kind" for all of the soil/heart types. This makes it clear that the seed that has potential to produce a harvest hasn't changed, it's the condition of the heart that's different in each of the 4 soils. God's giving them good seed, but the condition of these shallow hearts, full of sin and strongholds doesn't allow for much growth. The rocks are stopping the growth, and that's exactly what happens when we keep holding on to Sin. It impedes our growth in God, and interferes with God's plan for our life.

and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil.--There is a brief flash of life, the plant begins to grow quickly toward the sun. They're excited about the possibility of something new, but there's a problem.

⁶**And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.** We're going to talk about the explanation of this a little later when Jesus explains it to His disciples, but notice that it immediately, rapidly sprang up (with joy) and that this is because they had no depth of soil. It is scorched by the sun because it had no root, no depth, and withered away. In the Kingdom or Outside the Kingdom

¹⁰ **As soon as He was alone, ^[b]His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. ¹¹ And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, ¹² so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE**

AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.”

Notice that this Word in verse 10 is to Jesus’ followers. And notice that it’s not just the 12 Apostles, but all His followers there. Notice also that the crowds, the mixed multitude is not here. These words are to believers. It’s important that we remember that this parable is not about eternal destiny, it’s about conditions of the heart which determines what happens when we hear the Word

The explanation

¹⁶In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; ¹⁷and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. --In a similar way, in like manner—the Word is the same as

in the previous soil, but the heart that it encounters is different. This heart is rocky, full of rocks with little soil. Jesus gives us some big clues in these two verses that the issue here is a lack of personal depth, having the understanding to prioritize important, spiritual things as worth spending time and resources on, or even spiritual maturity and formation. Notice all of the time-words. Immediately receive it, only temporary, immediately fall away. Notice the short period of effectiveness of the Word in this type of heart. Luke 14:27-30

27 Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who are watching it will begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, ‘This person began to build, and was not able to finish!’ So, those who are truly following Jesus must consider that there will be costs, and determine to follow Him, no matter the cost. This requires serious consideration, and that’s exactly what those shallow hearts who don’t consider that being a Christian is going to result in some difficult times. Paul witnessed that he had suffered persecutions, and that everyone who follows Jesus will, saying in 2 Tim 3:12

12 Indeed, all who want to live in a godly way in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. It’s o.k. to immediately receive the word with Joy on the face of it, but this person, if they immediately receive, has probably not yet counted the cost. Which is why many who are initially excited by the New Life fall away from it when persecution comes. They haven’t set themselves on following Jesus, despite any costs, because they haven’t yet realized that there will be costs. The immediately enthusiastic types can be prone to a certain shallowness of soil. With this soil, I think that one of the big issues is that it’s very difficult to tell the believers from the non-believers. That’s probably why some people argue over the eternal destiny of this group.

That’s probably why some people argue over the eternal destiny of this group.

Let’s take 2 cases:

First, there are the unbelievers, the ones who “don’t quite get” what Jesus is all about. They sometimes attend church, and can even be seemingly very responsive to the Word. They hear the truth and respond with joy or tears or other emotions. They seem to be the most receptive of people. As a minister, you think that God is really working in their hearts, really changing them. But these can cause ministers a lot of concern. In people who “don’t quite get what Jesus is all about yet, there can be this “let’s give Christianity the old college “try” and an attempt to *enthusiasm* their way through it, kind of a “fake it till you make it” mentality, and it can look pretty convincing at first. But the key is that it’s THEIR efforts, and not God’s transformation of their lives from the inside out. And, just when you think that God is really making a difference in their lives, you find that they have fallen back into their old sin and you think WHAT?? Their walk seemed to be going so well. They can fool us, but they CANNOT fool God. So what happens when affliction or persecution comes? This person falls away. This word Fall away *σκανδαλίζονται* (*skandalizontai*), from which we get our word Scandal, by the way, is a verb in the Present Indicative Middle, which is used in Greek to show that the person it’s speaking about is acting so as to participate in the

results of the action. So literally, this could be translated: The person is falling themselves away—they're doing it. The person is making the falling away happen. It's a choice on their part. It's the same root word used when Jesus says in Mathew 5:30 **"If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell. "if your hand makes you stumble, cut it off"**. It's refusal of God's Plan in one way or another, and it's NOT GOOD, and it needs to be cut off so that it doesn't lead to hell, but it's not immediately mortal.

Now when a believer keeps these rocks, sin in their lives, they're refusing to cooperate with God's plan for their lives. This limits our growth in Faith. It limits willingness to appropriate the promises of God, and they choose to limit God's work in their lives. So that process that God wants to accomplish of sanctification in their lives is slowed. And this results from a lack of faith and trust in Jesus. Is God more capable of making the best decisions for your life, or are you? Who's really in charge of your life, God or you?

So what now shall we do?--In Acts Chapter 2, Peter boldly confronts Israel with their sin, summarizing in Acts 2 verse 36:**Therefore let all Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ!"** And look at the reaction in verse 37: **37When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"** When Peter's hearers were confronted directly with their sin, God worked in their hearts first! That's what caused them to understand that they needed to take action. It was only then that they were able to ask "Brothers, what now shall we do?" And of course Peter's answer then, is the same as our answer now when someone realizes that they have sinned against a Holy God: Peter replied, in verse 38 **"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** The answer then, is the answer now: When we are confronted with our sin, we should repent, and repentance means to turn from our wicked ways. Get rid of the stones! James picks this up in James 1:21 when he says to believers: **"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls"** (James 1:21). And, again in 2 Peter 2:21-22 **21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be an implement for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.** Cooperate with God. Let Him change your heart. Give up the sin. Let God take the sin out of your life, rock by rock. Let God take it, He's already paid for it! It may seem valuable to you now, but once you give it up, you'll wonder why you carried it around all of this time.