

Mark 4:8, 4:20 Week 4: The Prepared Heart-Good Soil

8 Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundred times as much."

Other seeds

The seeds that God sows are the same, but notice that for the good soil the word seeds is plural, unlike the others. Maybe what Jesus is telling us here is that before we go congratulating ourselves on having the kind of hearts where the word is producing a crop, we should stop to consider that we didn't accept Christ's offer of salvation the first time we heard it either—because of the poor condition of our old hard, rocky, shallow, crowded hearts. It took many times hearing the Gospel before the light suddenly dawned in our hearts.

fell into the good soil--In whom a crop is produced?

Born Again

First, you must be born again. We can't be the spiritually alive, people of the Kingdom of God, these New Creations in Christ without first being born again, just as Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3 and 6 **3 Jesus responded and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ... 6 That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit.** The first key to being fruitful for God is to allow God's Word to penetrate your heart, and believe on Jesus for your salvation!

Trust

Dependence on the Father involves a life of faith and trust. It requires believers to surrender our own limited understanding and control, acknowledging God's sovereignty and wisdom—that He has all circumstances in His hand. Proverbs 3:5-6 **"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."** God has promised to provide for us, so we don't have to worry about being provided for. Luke 12:22-28 ²²**And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I tell you, do not worry about *your* life, as to what you are to eat; nor for your body, as to what you are to wear.** ²³**For life is more than food, and the body *is more* than clothing.** ²⁴**Consider the ravens, that they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!** We can depend on the Lord to provide for us. And, if we will live our lives this way, then we will be fruitful. **Jer 17:7-8 Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, And whose trust is the Lord. 8 For he will be like a tree planted by the water That extends its roots by a stream, And does not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought, Nor cease to yield fruit.**

Obey God's Word

Exodus 19:5: **"Now if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you will be My treasured possession out of all the nations."** Leviticus 26:3-4: **"If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit."** Deuteronomy 5:33: **"Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper."** These verses emphasize that obedience to God's commands results in blessings and fruitfulness in various aspects of life. His commandments are there, because by them we will live—God gave them for our good—to prosper us. Jesus said that if we love Him, we will obey His commandments. They are for our good, and it's in our best interest that we obey them.

Forsake Sin

1 John 1:6-7 **6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.** And

again in 1 John 3:6-10 **6 No one who remains in Him sins continually; no one who sins continually has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.**

You cannot turn away from God without turning toward sin, and you cannot turn from your sin, repent, without turning to God. That's why Jesus' central message was **Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.** Your willingness to turn from your sin, and allow God to remove those rocky places in your heart, and create in you a new heart will greatly determine your fruitfulness. 2 Tim 2:21 **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.**

Die to Self

Gal 2:20 **20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.** Rom 6:11-12 **11 So you too, consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore sin is not to reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,** Gal 6:7-8 **7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a person sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.**

Abide in Christ

and as they grew up and increased,

If we are cooperating with the Holy Spirit, and have been allowing Him to remove those rocky places in our heart, preparing our soil for the deep relationship in Christ, we must also, day by day choose to abide in Christ—to choose Him over all other things. If we are to grow and increase in Christ, one thing is absolutely necessary—to abide in Christ. Jesus told His disciples that the key to fruitfulness in Christ, is to abide, remain in Him. John 15:4-8 **4 Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.** Jesus was very clear that fruitfulness in the Kingdom of God depends on our personal connectedness to Him! Jesus' words **The one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me, you can do nothing** let us know that all of our fruitfulness flows from our personal and deepening relationship with Him.

and as they grew up and increased,

Rom 6:8-14 **8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all time; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 So you too, consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

Endure hardships, Trials, Testing(s) and Persecutions

Those who abide in Christ can endure all of the hardships, trials, testing(s), and persecution that come along with following, abiding in Christ, and refusing to follow the world. 2 Tim 2:3-10 **3 Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him.** There are more important things than our comfort, our desires, our wishes—God's Will is more important. If we have been enlisted as a soldier, then the needs of our Great General, and where and how He wants to use us are what is important. And we are to bear up under hardships as good soldiers.

Pursue Holiness

1 Peter 1:14-16 **14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written: "You shall be holy, for I am holy."** Heb 12:14-15 **14 Pursue peace with all people, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;**

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for His good pleasure. This walk in the light, as Jesus is in the light, following Him, obeying Him is how we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in this sanctifying walking out, working out of our salvation. And, if we will do this, we will always be fruitful and blessed.

The explanation

20 And those are the ones sown with seed on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundred times as much."

Those who hear the word and accept it—following Jesus and His commandments are those who produce a crop. Since this parable is about the Kingdom of God breaking into the human experience in the person of Jesus, it's important to remember that this is God's harvest and God's kingdom 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, where Paul writes, "**I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the growth**" It's not about our efforts, or our work, but God working through us. We must contribute the willingness to be used, and the effort through the use of the spiritual gifts that God has given us, but the actual growth and transformation are the work of God the historical inbreaking of God's kingdom in Jesus, the sower of the gospel. The astounding harvest bear fruit, **thirty, sixty, and a hundred times as much** is due to God's providential power. But, we must cooperate by allowing God to use us. As Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-16 **14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**