

Hello brothers, sisters and friends,

So, last week, we looked at the Jesus being the Sower and the sad choice that some are doing today - closing their eyes and ears, and how that fact must not stop us from reaching out to them. One key thing I hope we can catch from this particular study is how Jesus describes the soils and what He sees, so we can reach out to them, following in His footsteps.

So, this week, I'd like to look at the next 2 soils - and in many ways that are very interesting, because they describe most of the people around. And, it's my understanding and belief that if we can learn how to recognize and understand where they are coming, then we can help them, and more accurately show them the Truth of God's Word, leading them to a relationship with The Truth, Jesus Himself.

Okay, so let's begin by looking at each of the texts - Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8, and covering any necessary notes from the parable, and then look at Jesus' explanation. Btw, as usual, I'll be quoting the NKJV from <http://www.blueletterBible.org/>

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So, here we go:

Parable of the soils, Part 2 - heart full of rocks, and scorching hardships

"Behold, a Sower went out to sow... 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." (Matthew 13:5-6)

"And it happened, as he sowed... Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away." (Mark 4:4a, 5-6)

"A Sower went out to sow his seed... Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture." (Luke 8:5a, 6)

Okay now this is the parable. Let's just notice a few parallel notes from the text. **"they [seeds] did not have much earth... immediately sprang up... But when the sun came up, it was scorched..."** ~ I obviously only quoted Matthew 13, and as you can see, the other gospel texts say much the same thing, and this will come out more clearly in Jesus' explanation of the parable. For now, just note it - not much soil, looked good rather quickly, but the sun (a test) came out and it produced no good fruit, and withered away.

Okay, now I'd like to look at Jesus' explanation of this part:

"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." (Matthew 13:20-21)

"These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble." (Mark 4:16-17)

"But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away." (Luke 8:13)

The word "joy" there is the Greek word: "*charas*" which simply means '*gladness or calm delight*'. So, what we are looking at here with this second soil are those who hear something that really grabs their attention, and they respond out of calm delight. Something tells them that it will be exciting - they ought to try it. I'm sure this probably helps us to see how the modern-day patterns play into this: go from 'pleasure' and 'laughing moment' to the next - from entertaining thing to the next new entertaining thing, from one pleasure and thrill to the next - 'from moment of smiles' to the next. This philosophy is so ingrained in our culture and shows up in many ways. That's why it's also just as popular to think that marriage will be 'bliss' just because we found that 'perfect spouse'. And another thing this philosophy shows up in is the belief that after we walk an aisle, say a few words, smile, and fill out a card - we are saved and Jesus will solve all of our problems - no more pain, no more discipline, no more sickness, or trials... at least not for me. Others, possibly, even probably, but certainly not for me... It's a fantasy that we have to break out of if we are to have a genuine and meaningful relationship with Christ.

I'm sure all of those easily fit. But, to go more general again - whatever reason they come, whatever wish they think will come true - that apparently fuels a starting, though in the case of the stony soil, temporary joy and commitment. Now, the genuine followers of Christ persevere beyond this point, but these apparently start the 'engagement process', if you will, and then cut off the relationship cold when they see that their Disney-land fantasies aren't going to come true through this new commitment. So, when a little pressure, the slight starts of a whiff of persecution for being named as being a follower of Christ and/or a 'goody-two-shoe' are heard - their gone. Why? Because they came to Jesus with false pretenses. They came with their own preset negotiating rules. They never realized that they threw away all hope when they chose to knowingly do what they knew was wrong - the first time...

Look around. There are many around us that look just like that. In fact, some could even be reading this short study, even now. How do we reach them and teach them to become genuine followers of Christ with a genuine salvation from where they are in self-deception? Reach out to them with the truth. Point out to them that all who are in Christ are a new creation - they are radically different on the inside, and though that may not always show on the outside, it will continue to grow in importance in

their heart, and in time will start to show in their lives as well.. but, I'm getting ahead of myself, for we will likely cover much more on this when we get to the 4, 5, and 6th soils. :)

So, again, how do we reach them? Teach them that if they are alive in Christ - they will be growing. If they are in Christ, they will desire to read, study, and follow God's Word. If they are bought by the blood of the Lamb of God, His Name will be precious to them. Also reminding them that they don't know when they are going to die, so they need to keep getting ready to see Him, and growing in holiness and blamelessness so that they do not have to be ashamed at His coming.

And most important - pray for them. And always reach out to them in love, even when passionately pleading with them to grow in repentance. :)

Another key note we need to see because it adjusts our perspective is a little extra note in Jesus' response to His disciples:

"Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given." (Mark 4:24) A most fascinating note. This is why I say that truth is tangible (in a way) - it can be gained, or (if not treasured as valuable) it can be lost too... Every day, we are going through trials and troubles that are testing us to see how much we value and are trying to obey the truth of God's Word and Jesus' teachings that we do know. - That's food for thoughts, yes? :)

And I would have missed an important opportunity if I do not mention here one other key note:

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:9)

"And He said to them, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'" (Mark 4:9)

"When He had said these things He cried, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'" (Luke 8:8)

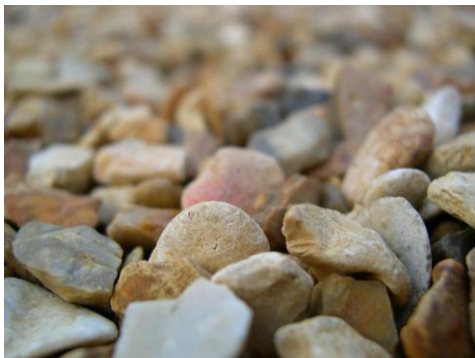
A starting note - According to Mark 4, Jesus apparently repeated this very phrase after explaining this key parable to His disciples. I plan to get back to that, because the nuances in that key repetition are foundational for followers of Christ. Here though, this is Jesus talking to all of us - the multitude and those who stayed close around Him on a regular basis - those who were/are His disciples and those who were/are not.

So, what can we learn from this? If you and I can hear His Word and truth, the core question needs to be: are we listening or hearing? Hearing includes understanding - it includes mentally engaging on these vital eternal matters. It includes applying the truth we hear from God's Word to our lives. For example, when we hear a clear teaching about running from what is evil, do we walk away and say 'Wow, great message today!' and continue on, same as usual, no change in heart, motives, motivations or words and actions, as if nothing happened? Or do we say 'Wow, I've got to change some things... Father, my Master, I need You to teach me what I'm still holding onto that is evil and that is hurting me: fantasies, lies, entertainment, wrong

attitudes, pride, rebellious choices I refuse to let go of... show me them, Father. And teach me to walk in Your ways...' (however your and my conversations goes with Him will have your and my personal style, but should look similar enough to that. If we don't have that conversation, in our minds or with Him in prayer, then we can rest assured that we didn't care about that truth enough to hold onto and practice it. Now, if we don't understand it, He understands that too, but we need to be diligent to request that He teaches us what that means and how to put it into practice... the actions and response isn't really what Jesus or I am trying to emphasize - it's what our core, our heart, does with truth that I'm talking about. If we value truth, it will show in every detail of our lives. If we discard The Truth for a false truth, it will also show, and if we willfully refuse to learn His truth, that too will show. With that said - you know your heart, and I know mine. If this brings conviction on us, then we need to pray over it, until we find the peace that comes with walking in the light and truth of God's Word that we do know. If you have questions that I can help with, of course, just ask and I'll help and provide verses as I can.

So, what does this look like, in America today? An easy example to work with would be those who come to Christ because God loves them and they can be part of a loving family - something they don't have here on Earth. That's a good start to get them interested and exploring God's Word, but if they never let go of their conditions on the friendship with God - i.e. 'I'll do this for you, if you do that for me', then they don't continue on to salvation. However, if along with God's love, they also embrace God's holiness and the beautiful fear of the Lord that leads to righteous living, then they continue onto becoming a 4th, 5th and 6th soil, proving to be a genuine disciple of Christ.

Next I'd like to look at thorns and distractions that hurt those who are in the 3rd soil category, and how to reach them with truth of God's Word.



(continued in part 3) ~