

Hello brothers and sisters, and friends,

Here is part 3 of the study I'm doing on the soils - enjoy and feedback is encouraged and welcomed! Thanks! ~

Parable of the soils, Part 3 - Thorny cares and choking distractions

Okay, next, I'd like to look at the thorny soil. First the text of Jesus telling of the parable, then the explanation.

**"And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them."
(Matthew 13:7)**

"And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop." (Mark 4:7)

**"And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it."
(Luke 8:7)**

Okay, so that's pretty self-explanatory - seed fell among thorns, there was a battle for light and sun and because the seed did not prevail, the thorns did and the seedling died. Now, let's look at Jesus' explanation of this natural process - how it applies to a spiritual pattern and lifestyle worldview.

"Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful." (Matthew 13:22)

"Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." (Mark 4:18-19)

"Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity." (Luke 8:14)

Jesus emphasizes that this plant/heart was growing, but then at a certain point, it was choked. The key to understanding this soil is understanding what choked it, so that we can watch out for those hazards ourselves, and how to warn others and rescue those who are caught in them.

All three parallel passages say it slightly differently

"cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches..."

"cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and desires for other things..."

"cares, riches, and pleasures of life..."

Obviously, though there is some variation in emphasis, there are key similarities. Let's look at them a little closer.

* the word "**cares**" literally means '*distractions and worries of this age*', i.e. keeping up with the fashions, trends and trinkets of the culture.

* the word "**riches**" is just that, '*wealth, money, possessions*' ~ that's pretty self-explanatory, and very applicable to the average American.

* the word "**deceitfulness**" could just as well be translated '*seduction, delusion*' - same idea. But, this isn't too hard to see, because we see people all the time who are absolutely convinced that if they had just a little more or a lot more money, they'd be able to solve all of their life's problems. It's not true, but it is a strongly-alluring fantasy.

* the words "**desires for other things**" is simply 'longing for, lusting after' the rest and/or other things.

So, what chokes out the Word? "**cares**", "**deceitfulness of riches**", "**desires for other things**". Now, obviously we are all surrounded by this stuff. How can we tell if the person we are talking with is being choked by these things? Simple - ask what motivates them. You may be now thinking - huh, what is Steven talking about? Please, allow me to explain and then show a few verses. Throughout the Bible, God likens us to sheep - wayward direction of our own, but no real energy on our own, those who have inspiration and direction are being inspired by one of 2 types of spirits: 1) God or His holy angels, or 2) Satan or his rebellious angels. Many today do not realize that those who are growing in being a genuine follower of Christ can also (for a time, and with much discipline) serve Satan and destroy the work of God.

"But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'" (Matthew 16:23)

"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep'..." (John 21:15-17)

In both of those settings, Peter was shown to be trying to follow Christ, yet he needed a clear rebuke to change what he was doing, because at those two moments (and others), he wasn't serving Christ. We all have those moments - they are crossroads.

Those who choose to repent of whatever is/was tripping them up and leave it behind, choosing to follow Christ better - they grow and are shown to be genuine. Those who stop there and refuse to move forward in their obedience to Christ, show that (at very least) pleasing Christ isn't that important to them, and/or they are still considering other options - many here have not yet entered into the salvation covenant, but are only still looking at their options and deciding if the cost is worth it. If they don't ever turn back to Christ and intentionally continue to grow closer to Him and in more obedience to Him, then it will be evident that rather than leaving behind that distraction and choosing to follow Christ despite the cost, they chose to go back to the life of rebellious sin Christ was trying to redeem them from - it will be clear that they were choked and withered.

Many who appear to be in this category are either looking/seeking or growing on the inside, so we cannot necessarily judge by appearances, but need to challenge/compel them to follow Christ and grow in that passion.

A simple way to explain this to others is to ask them what got them out of bed this morning? Ask a few questions to find out what is valuable to them (as in what they spend the most time thinking about - stuff and passing pleasures or Christ). Then ask them what got them out of bed the last few mornings. If you can help them look back, they will start to notice a pattern, and helping them see that pattern will show them what is truly important to them - whether they say it is or not. And of course, what we truly care about, we make time for. What we do not truly care about, we don't make time for. And the pattern shows the desires and things we value in life, whether they be temporary or eternal, pleasing the world and friends or pleasing Christ.

Here are a couple of passages that talk more on this:

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1st Timothy 6:10)

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24)

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45)

What we talk about the most, and what takes up much of the thinking of our waking hours - that's likely what's most valuable to us. We need to identify whether it is helpful for the Kingdom of God or our own rebellious nature, and make decisions accordingly. And, as we continue to rightly discern and identify these things in our lives, we can better help others to escape those snares that destroy and/or wound people, and be able to teach them the foundational truths and daily details of what it means to live and grow as a genuine, effective, and passionate servant/follower of Christ.

In conclusion for this lesson:

Well, this has turned out to be a little longer than I expected. From my conversations with people, I find that many of these clear Bible truths are foreign to many people in this country. And, if you are one of those who has not seen some of these things before, I hope you will be able to message me a question or two and I'll try to help you with more verses and as simple an explanation as I can give, from my studies, as well as other sermons and resources that may help it make more sense. As I've studied these truths, I have personally found them to be the pattern of Scripture, and as we continue to go through the gospels, I expect that panorama to continue to come out clearly.

Any thoughts? Any questions? Any comments?

Well, very soon, I plan to get to the good news - the good soils: 4th, 5th, and 6th - and how they stand and grow, and what makes them different.

Till next time - I'm praying for each of you. Thanks for your prayers.

your brother/friend and
a growing servant/life-slave of Jesus, SH

