

20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning Week 35 (August 25-31, 2013)

Jesus often used parables when He taught the messages of the kingdom of heaven. We will look at some of these in the next few weeks.

Sunday -- August 25 (Matthew 13:1-17)

I want you to read this entire passage to begin your study. It not only introduces the first parable, but it also answers the question (v. 10), "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" Jesus uses simple stories (parables) to illustrate much bigger Biblical truths. Many of His listeners have no idea what He is talking about, but His disciples get Him to explain their meaning privately (v. 11-16). Note that even the prophets who wrote in the Old Testament did not fully understand the meaning of their utterances (v. 17). We are living "in the last days" when God promises to pour out His Spirit on all people (see Acts 2:17-21). We have no excuse for failing to understand the Word of God because the Spirit promises to guide us into all truth (see John 16:13). In tomorrow's study, our Lord will explain in detail the parable you read today (v. 3-9).

Monday -- August 26 (Matthew 13:18-23)

Jesus teaches us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). The parables our Lord teaches in Matthew 13 all deal with His coming kingdom on earth. He carefully explains two of these stories so that His disciples will be sure to grasp the meaning. In today's text, He teaches four possible results that can occur when the Word of God (seed) is preached. As He explains, Jesus probably points to the edge of the field nearby where the animals and the workers have beaten down a path while entering and exiting the field. Seeds that fall on that hard ground are doomed to fail because the soil is not able to receive them (v. 18-19). This parallels those who come to church with hard hearts. Although the message may be pure and powerful, the seed is unable to enter the hard soil. Having illustrated the **pathway** soil, Jesus is ready to move to the two soils that are just as unproductive.

Tuesday -- August 27 (Matthew 13:18-23)

The second soil described by Jesus is one that I have seen far too much in my ministry. (Don't miss the fact that the seed (Word of God) is consistent; only the soils differ.) The 2nd seed lands on **rocky** soil where it finds a fertile home in the shallow dirt (v. 20). This parallels those who want a Savior to forgive their sins, but who have no desire for a Lord to guide their lives. This artificial salvation experience often comes during times of fear or distress, when a person gets desperate enough to promise God anything. Many, if not most, forget their pledge to God as soon as they receive whatever they are begging Him to give them. I emphasize this because we are nearing a time when we will experience persecution **because of the Word of God** (v. 21). The politically correct crowd is ridiculing Biblical standards right now, but conditions will get much worse before turning into **physical** persecutions. I'm afraid that those who have a "shallow" faith will not be able to stand against the enemies. It is fine and proper to accept Jesus during a time of high emotions, but it is imperative that the young seed receives nutrients to make it grow. Are you growing in your love and knowledge of Jesus and His Word? If so, you have no fear of being nicknamed "Rocky."

Wednesday -- August 28 (Matthew 13:18-23)

The 3rd seed falls among the **thorns** that grow up and choke the young plant, making it unfruitful (v. 22). Jesus teaches, "By their fruit you will recognize them" (Matthew 7:16). Worse yet, He says, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 7:19). Fruit bearing (maturing in your faith) is not an option for a true Christian; it is standard equipment for all who are truly "born again." In verse 22, Jesus gives two specific examples of idols that can turn your heart away from Him: worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth. Are you allowing these things to choke the Word of God planted in you? Can you list other things (even good things) in your life that compete with Jesus and His Word? Examine the soil that God's Word lands on. Is it **pathway, rocky or thorny**? If so, cry out to the Lord to make your heart the **good soil** that appears in tomorrow's study.

Thursday -- August 29 (Matthew 13:18-23)

Jesus teaches that **good soil** will produce a crop up to a hundred times what was sown (v. 23). Seed sown by gardeners in Palestine produced an average yield of less than eight times what was sown. God's Word yields a considerably better return! I love to see my congregation **applying** the truths I have taught. As they leave the sanctuary and go out into the world, they encounter others who need to know the Biblical concepts they just learned in the worship service. As they teach others the truths they just accepted, God's seed continues to grow in the lives of the recipients. Also, each new truth received and believed gives **us** a better foundation for more truth to take root (see John 16:12-15). It is easy to see how this one seed sown on good soil can produce a hundred times what was sown.

Friday -- August 30 (Matthew 13:18-23 review)

Before we leave this parable, allow me to share some light I have only recently received. I used to think that I could identify each of the four types of soil by observing my congregation while I was preaching the gospel. I have come to realize that each of us can be **any** of the four types of soil at different times. For example, sometimes we come to church with hard hearts and the Word cannot penetrate (pathway). Often, those who willingly accept Jesus' message of **forgiveness** will reject the first message that convicts them in another area of their lives (rocky). More often, we think we are ready to hear His Word, but we cannot clear our minds of other plans or concerns for the day (thorny). On other occasions, the Holy Spirit opens our hearts and minds so that we clearly understand and apply His Word (good soil). Next time you sit in church or have your personal study time, try to identify the type of soil on which His Word is falling. You may have your eyes opened to the deep truths of this parable.

Saturday -- August 31 (Matthew 13:24-30)

This text presents the 2nd parable about the kingdom of heaven that Jesus explains in detail to His disciples. He continues the analogy of the seeds sown in the field. This time, however, weeds appear in the same field as the wheat that was sown. Read this parable carefully and see if you can determine the meaning prior to next week's study when we will look at Jesus' thorough explanation. For starters: Who sows the good seed? Who sows the weeds? Who is this enemy that sowed the weeds among the wheat? What does He mean by saying, "Let both grow together until the harvest?" What takes place at the harvest? Who is dealt with first? We will answer these and other questions in our study starting tomorrow.