

SERIES: GETTING TO KNOW JESUS

SUBJECT: What's the Condition of Your Heart?

SCRIPTURE: Mark 4:3-9; 14-20

SERMON NO. 8

Introduction

Our text speaks of four types of soil that the farmer was scattering his seed upon. There was a hard soil; a shallow soil; a cluttered soil; and a prepared soil.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF SOIL. (4: 3-9).

1. One kind of soil was the soil of the path. (4) It came to pass as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. When I was a child we lived in the country. We had no indoor plumbing, just a well and an outhouse. Our garden was located between the smokehouse and the outhouse. In order to get to the outhouse we had to walk over the rows through the center of the garden. The soil along this path became packed down so hard that no seed ever came up.

2. Another kind of soil was the rocky ground. (5-6) And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth. When the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. On one end of our garden there was a type of flat slate rock that lay just a few inches beneath the soil. Needless to say the seed never came up here.

3. The third kind of soil was the thorny soil. (7). Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. There was a ditch and terrace at the lower side of the garden that run from one end of the garden to the other, separating the garden from another field. This ditch was full of weeds and briers, and had roots that ran into the garden. The vegetable seed would germinate and began to grow, but the weeds and briers was sucking the nutrients from the ground, and the plants never grew healthy.

4. The fourth kind of soil was the prepared soil. (8) Other fell on good ground and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred. Weeds, rocks, and hard packed places were not found in this soil. This soil had been cultivated properly and was ready to receive the seed, and provide an environment that was conducive to good plant growth.

Each type of soil represents..

II. A PERSON'S HEART WHEN HEARING THE WORD OF GOD.

That means every person in this room is the represented by one of those 4 kinds of soils. Which one are you? Do you know? Let's take a look...

1. The first soil condition is the hard heart. This ground was unbroken and packed down tight. And the truth in God's Word has no opportunity to be imbedded into it. The seed is just bouncing off the hard surface of your ground and it just lays on top of it.

This heart is so hard that it won't even consider what I'm saying right now. In most cases, this is because sin has hardened it. If this is you, God knew all about you centuries before you were born. He says....

John 3:19 This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

The main thing that builds a wall between a hearer of truth and the God of truth, is sin. If this is your soil this morning, by the time you start driving home, the Word you heard today will be stolen from your heart. That's because Satan does not want the word to remain near you for very long. He will steal it away through human reasoning, by secular ideas, and through pride that tells you, you don't need God. What a tragedy that is, if this is the condition of your heart!

2. The second soil condition is the shallow heart. On the surface, this soil looks good. It looks cultivated, it looks eager to receive the seed of God's Word. But where no one but you and God can see, in the deep recesses of your life, you're shallow.

The book of Acts talks about a group of people called the Bereans. Their characteristic was that they searched the Scriptures to see whether the things they heard were true. The heart condition of the shallow heart is quite the opposite. If shallowness is your heart condition, then you are a person who is quick to accept, and quick to reject, because you were never really convinced in the first place.

Jesus says that people of this kind of soil received the Word of God with "gladness". That's not what Christianity is all about. The Christian life is guaranteed to bring you joy, but no where are you guaranteed happiness. In fact, there is a price to be paid for a relationship with God: we will be persecuted. we have to give up some wants. we have sacrifices to make. and we have crosses to bear.

this is why many in our day and age try faith in Jesus, but eventually turn away. Because there is a very wrong belief that is taught by some churches that says you will never have troubles if you follow God.

The truth of the matter is that God is with you on the mountaintop and in the valley. He is with you in good times and in bad. He has promised never to leave us or forsake us. But He has never promised us an easy time of it.

If you have a shallow heart this morning, when persecution comes, or difficult times take place, you won't ask questions like, "What is God trying to tell me or teach me?" Or "How is He trying to mold and shape me?" Instead you'll ask the question, "Why me?" Shallow-soil-people want Jesus on their own terms. If this is you, you probably haven't even considered that faith in God will demand sacrifice and commitment and accountability. So, when things begin to get too hot, and uncomfortable, you'll shrivel up and die. Because your roots don't go deep into the truth about a relationship with God.

3. The third soil is those who have a cluttered heart. If this is you, the soil of your heart is soil that's filled with weeds and thorns.

If your heart is cluttered, that means you're caught up in the affairs of this world. The focus of your life is pulled in all kinds of different directions-Material things; activities, and constant busy-ness. And faith in Jesus is just one more "thing" in your life.

If you have this kind of heart, you do want a deep relationship with God. You're not shallow or unable to put down roots. Your problem is that you want it all.

You've bought into the deceitfulness of wealth. In other words, the devil has sold you a bill of goods about what money will do for you. You believe that all your problems will be solved if you can just get that extra thousand, or ten thousand, or fifty thousand. But it's a lie. Going after wealth will just take up your time, and keep you from intimacy with God.

These are all those things you want to possess which end up possessing you. These are the things you think you owe yourself. This is the entertainment, which pushes God out; the debt you incur that robs God of what belongs to Him. These are the activities you choose which wind up coming before the services of the church. These are all choices on your part. And the bottom line to it is that your choices choke out the Word of God from making a difference in your life.

4. The final soil is the "prepared heart". If you have this kind of heart, you're living on target in understanding all of Jesus teachings; and the key to experiencing the abundance in living that Jesus promised to give, is having a prepared heart, being prepared soil.

CONCLUSION

I accepted Christ as my Savior in August 1956 in Greenville, Mississippi. In August, 1963 I answered God's call to preach and entered New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. As I faced an unknown future I made a decision never to go backward, let up, or back away.

Today my past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I know who I am, I don't have to be right, recognized, praised, or rewarded.

This year, 2006, approaching my 73rd birthday, my home is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough at times, but my guide is reliable, my mission is clear, I must preach His Word.

I will not be bought, compromised, detoured, diluted, or led astray.

I will not flinch in the presence of adversity, nor negotiate at the table of the enemy.

I will not stoop at the pool of falsehood, popularity or man's requirement.

I won't give up, shut up, or slow up until I've preached up for the cause of Christ.

When He comes to get His own, I will not face Him ashamed.
What about you?