

Sower, Seed, and Soil—The Good News and the Heart
Luke 8:4-15
Sermon prepared for WellSpring Church
October 17, 2010
Notes and Quotes

1. The first soil and seed—the wayside heart, the trodden path, the beaten down and hardened heart
 - a. What is this
 - b. How does it come to be?
 - i. Birth—innate hardness of heart from Pride and Rebellion
 1. wrong response to circumstances: Grief, sadness, loss, Overriding guilt and shame, and the poor witness of others.

Valley of Vision says,

“Preserve me from the falls by which others stumble,
that thy name may not be blasphemed or wounded
that thy people may not be grieved
that thine enemies may not be hardened
that my peace may not be injured” (“A Minister’s Covenant”
<http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/dailydevotion.php>)

- ii. sin
 1. the sins of others driving over and through my soul
 2. my sin which hardens and the hardening which causes more sin. (Boice)
- iii. Refusal to allow the rule of God in my rebel heart Note that the seed in Matthew is called the word of the kingdom—The word of the kingdom is the declaration that there is a new realm of rule—Is there any greater sadness and tragedy that the hardened hear would rather stay under the rule of a ruinous, destroying soul-hating tyrant than to accept the freeing, liberating, emancipating rule of the One who has nothing but the soul’s best at heart?

Boice

“Virtually all of God’s attributes—whether sovereignty, holiness, omniscience, immutability, or even the divine love—are offensive to the natural man, if properly understood. So rather than repent of sin and turn for mercy to God who is altogether sovereign, holy, knowing, and unchangeable, men and women suppress what knowledge they have and refuse to seek out that additional knowledge they that could be the salvation of their souls.”

- iv. suppressing the truth—Romans 1:21-31
- c. What are the dangers?
 - i. Impenetrability

R.C. Trench wrote: [the man] does not recognize himself as standing in any relation to the word which he hears, or to the kingdom of grace which that word proclaims. All that speaks of man's connection with a higher invisible world, all that speaks of sin, of redemption, of holiness, is unintelligible to him, and without significance. But how has he arrived at this state? He has brought himself to it; he has exposed his heart as a common road to every evil influence of the world, till it has become hard as a pavement, [13] till he has laid waste the very soil in which the word of God should have taken root: he has not submitted it to the ploughshare of the law, which would have broken it up; which, if he had suffered it to do its appointed work, would have gone before, preparing that soil to receive the seed of the Gospel.

ii. The Birds of Satan

“...Satan appears yet more distinctly as the adversary and hinderer of the kingdom of God, the reason why he snatches the word away being added— *lest they should believe and be saved.*” How natural it would have been to interpret *“the fowls”* impersonally, as signifying, in a general way, worldly influences hostile to the truth. How almost inevitably, if left to ourselves, we should have done so. Not so, however, the Lord. He beholds the kingdom of evil as it counterworks the kingdom of God [under the rule of a personality], *“the wicked one.”* ...what renders his case the more hopeless, and takes away even a possibility of the word germinating there, is, that besides the evil condition of the soil, there is also *one* watching to take advantage of that evil condition, to use every weapon that man puts into his hands, against man's salvation; and he, lest by possibility such a hearer *“should believe and be saved,”* sends his ministers in the shape of evil thoughts, worldly desires, carnal lusts...” (R.C. Trench, Notes on the Parables, publ. 1861)

d. What Can I do? What must be done?

- i. Break up your fallow ground—get the plow of the Word of God, the Plow of the Demands and the terrors of the law into your mind and heart. Jer. 4:3
- ii. call out to God for his heart softening mercy—Now today!
- iii. do not waste your sorrows
- iv. get yourself out of the highways
- v. watch out for the fowls of Satan
- i. Most of all realize that there is a ware of eternal consequence and spiritual dimension going on for your soul. “So that they may not believe and be saved” There is a warfare of eternal dimensions being waged with the most diabolical hatred against the souls of man—if you are here today without Christ, if my words seem to you a mere foolishness or naïve babbling—you are now right now under the attack of the evil one who is gleefully seeking to keep your soil hardened and the seed from having any good effect.

The devil, no doubt, is everywhere. That malicious spirit is unwearied in his efforts to do us harm. He is ever watching for our halting, and seeking occasion to destroy our souls. But nowhere perhaps is the devil so active as in a congregation of Gospel-hearers. Nowhere does he labor so hard to stop the progress of that which is good, and to prevent men and women being saved. From him come wandering thoughts and roving imaginations--listless minds and dull memories--sleepy eyes and fidgety nerves, weary ears and distracted attention. In all these things Satan has a great hand. People wonder where they come from, and marvel how it is that they find sermons so dull, and remember them so badly! They forget the parable of the sower. They forget the devil.

Let us take heed that we are not way-side hearers. Let us beware of the devil. We shall always find him at Church. He never stays away from public ordinances. Let us remember this, and be upon our guard. Heat, and cold, and draughts, and damp, and wet, and rain, and snow, are often dreaded by Church goers, and alleged as reasons for not going to Church. But there is one enemy whom they ought to fear more than all these things together. That enemy is Satan.

2. The Second soil is the heart of the shallow ground
 - a. What is this?
 - b. How does it come to be?
 - i. An emotional response to the Gospel
 - ii. A dependence on feeling and experience
 - iii. A lack of understanding, an inadequate understanding of the whole gospel—a failure to count the cost—or even to know it!
 - c. What are the dangers
 - i. Shallow understanding
 - ii. false and premature joy. There must be joy in and with conversion. There is danger and concern where there is neither original joy nor ongoing joy. But there is often an impulsive and shallow joy. The decision was impulsive, shallow, emotional, poorly understood and considered. There is another deeper and truer joy that comes when the gospel is truly understood. (Matt. xiii. 44), who "for joy thereof" went and sold all that he had, that he might purchase the field which contained the treasure—that is, was willing to deny himself all things, and to suffer all things, that he might win Christ.
 - iii. A failure to count the cost of Christianity and to be aware of the ongoing and never ending struggle and hard warfare against the enemies of our happiness.
 - iv. temptation, trials and testings
 - d. What shall I do
 - i. Seek to send you roots down deep

- ii. suck deeply on the things of God—even shallow soil can produce if properly watered. Drip irrigation
 - iii. Find shade—get the support of a community of faith
 - iv. do not rely on your experience or on your feelings
 - v. Know the cost; count the cost. Know the responses of the true faith A true rooted Christianity will have the kinds of responses that we see in John 6:68; Heb, 10:34; 2 Cor. 4:17, 18; Heb. 11:26

- 3. The third Heart's soil—The thorny, infested, or distracted heart. The seed takes root, sprouts, grows—but thorns and weeds come and choke out its life. Notice the progress Jesus gives. The first soil is impenetrable, the second is penetrable but shallow, and the third is penetrable, deep and yet filled with thorns. Kent Hughes calls the soil of this heart—the preoccupied heart. There is something other than the god news and the news of the world to come that has captured the interest of this heart. It is again the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. It is Jesus says the cares and riches of this world. Better we would say the corroding cares and choking riches of this world.
 - a. What is this? It is actually good and fertile soil. It is a soil where plants may grow. But it is filled with bad seed as well as good seed
 - b. How does it come to be?
 - i. There is an ongoing deceitfulness of our hearts—there is the remains of indwelling sin.
 - ii. There is in many of us a naivety about our hearts and the power of sin in them—we do not understand the reality of it (Rom. 7)
 - c. What are the dangers—the slow choking death by three weeds in particular. Here I think is where many of us are. There is a dullness, a flatness, a Luke-warmness, a loss of the first love and verve and vibrancy. Our relationship with God is like a marriage that has become old hat, kids, jobs, age, aches, pains, a dulling and stultifying sameness and familiarity. Like the couple in the movie "Date Night" said, "we've become really excellent roommates." There are three weeds
 - i. Cares of the world—the daily concerns of life and health and job and marriage and children and the world and politics and the state of the world—diseases, terrorists, and so forth
 - ii. Riches: money, getting money, and getting the things that money
 - 1. can buy
 - 2. promises to give—security, status, ease, comfort
 - iii. pleasures of this life—the delights of this world and its distractions— soul-ruining entanglements They are many
 - 1. video games, computer games
 - 2. TV, Movies, Music
 - 3. Exercise, deiting,

- 4. hobbies
- 5. adventure
- 6. travel
- 7. food and drink
- d. What shall I do
 - i. Diligence and Vigilance!—

Listen to J. C. Ryle here: The things of this life form one of the greatest dangers which beset a Christian's path. The money, the pleasures, the daily business of the world, are so many traps to catch souls. Thousands of things, which in themselves are innocent, become, when followed to excess, little better than soul-poisons, and helps to hell. Open sin is not the only thing that ruins souls. In the midst of our families, and in the pursuit of our lawful callings, we have need to be on our guard. Unless we watch and pray, these temporal things may rob us of heaven, and smother every sermon we hear. We may live and die thorny-ground hearers.

- ii. Put the things of your life in a proper Godward and eternal perspective.
 - 1. Cares and worries
 - a. Consider the trustworthiness of God
 - i. Is God Sovereign?
 - ii. Is God good?
 - iii. Is God Wide and loving?
 - b. Realize that worry is a manifestation of Pride—thinking that I can handle these things. Come back often to I Peter 5:6-7
 - c. Realize that worry is a sin—or at least the temptation to doubt the goodness of God!
 - d. Pray your dependence to God morning and evening
 - 2. Riches
 - a. Remember the moth and rust
 - b. remember the deceitfulness of riches
 - c. remember the warning of the camel and the needle's eye
 - d. Pray the wise prayer of Agur in Prov. 30:8.9
 - 3. Pleasures of this world
 - a. This is not a denial of all pleasures, they are not all bad
 - b. There must be an awareness of the soul-corroding nature of earthly, worldly, fleshly (both physical and mental and emotional pleasure)
 - c. Practice self-denial

- d. Make Moses your model, (Heb. 11:26), make Paul your model (II Cor. 4:17-18) or better yet make Jesus your model Hebrew 12:1-3
- 4. The fourth Soil—the fertile and productive heart
 - a. What is this?
 - b. How does it come to be?
 - i. Grace of God
 - ii. Attention to the dangers of
 - 1. hardness
 - 2. shallowness
 - 3. thorniness
 - c. What are the Fruits?
 - i. Fruit of Spirit
 - ii. Archibald Alexander Thoughts on Religious Experience
 - 1. A clearer view and deeper horror of sin
 - 2. An increased vigilance against besetting sins and temptations
 - 3. increasing spiritual mindedness
 - 4. a deeper desire for and awareness of the glory of God
 - 5. a “dailyness” in our work toward growth\
 - b. Attention to the hindrances to Growth (More from Alexander)
 - i. misunderstanding of free grace
 - ii. dependence on feelings and emotions
 - iii. struggling in one’s own strength
 - iv. general and unspecific resolutions to change
 - v. a generality in our thinking about Sin—and not about Sin and sins.
 - vi. A neglect in Improving our walk
 - d. What shall I do
 - i. dig
 - ii. till
 - iii. feed
 - iv. water
 - v. break up
 - vi. Call on God for the increase! I Cor. 3:6-7 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.