

MATTHEW

13:1-23

Matthew 13:1-23

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 2nd March 2025 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Matthew 13:3-9

Introduction

We have reached chapter 13 in Matthew's gospel account, and this morning we're going to slow the pace a little, as what we have before us to study today is fundamentally important. In fact, critically so. For if we get this wrong, then we'll make grave mistakes in understanding and sharing the gospel. Grave really being the right word.

I would actually go as far as to say that this will be one of the most important sermons you'll hear this year, or perhaps any year. And that might sound pretty arrogant. But I say that not because of my preaching, but because of this passage that we're going to look at. Not because of *my* words, but because of *Jesus* words that we read right here. For the topic that it deals with is salvation. And that is a matter of life and death on an eternal scale.

J Vernon McGee, in his Thru the Bible commentary, said this:

...the Gospel of Matthew is probably the key gospel to the Bible. It is the open door to both the Old and the New Testaments. If that is true, then chapter 13 is the key to the Gospel of Matthew. This makes chapter 13 all-important.

J Vernon McGee

So, what *is it* we're going to study? Well, if you've *read* ahead (which I urge you to do *each* week), then you know we're going to get to the parables of Jesus. Not all of them are found in this chapter — indeed we'll cover several more in later chapters of Matthew too — but 7 of them are recorded here in chapter 13 alone.

Parables

So, what is a parable? Well, the dictionary definition isn't bad, for it states that parable is *a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson*. Another way we could describe them is as *a little story with a big message*. But I think a clearer definition is that parables illustrate truth and make it clear by comparison with something that is already familiar to us.

Indeed, the word *parable* comes from the Greek word *parabole*, which comes from the words *para* meaning *alongside* and *ballo* which means *to cast, or to throw*. The idea here then is that these teachings of Jesus place a story alongside truth or a principle. And, as we'll read in this chapter, this was done that those who are interested in truth will understand what is being said *more* clearly, but that that the lazy, the uninterested, would not.

Now, parables were common in Jesus' teaching ministry, but the use of parables was not *exclusive* to Him, and one of the most famous examples, of course, is that of Nathan the prophet as he confronted King David about his sin with Bathsheba, and he told a story of one man who had one sheep, whom a man with many sheep had taken away from him — to illustrate what David had done to Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. There the story vividly showed the terrible sin David had committed. What was the result? David, who we read was a man after God's own heart, realised that he had sinned against God. It's a clear example of someone listening to a parable with an open heart.

Now, in that case, Nathan not only *spoke* a parable, but also *explained* to David how it related to him. And here in Matthew 13, we see that Jesus explained two of these parables that *He* gave. As such we not only have an explanation of those two parables, but principles of interpretation that we can and should apply to the other 5. For example, Jesus tells us that in the parable of the sower, the birds represent Satan. And so where we see birds in other parables of His, we can be sure they don't mean something good! We need to be consistent in following the interpretation Jesus gave.

Setting

As for the background and setting for this teaching, we had *read* back in verse 1 of chapter 12, that *at that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath* — and how the Pharisees tried to place blame on His disciples. Then, in verse 9, we read that *when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue* — and, outraged that Jesus would have the audacity to heal someone on the Sabbath, we read in verse 14 on; *then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all.*

By the time we got to verse 46 we *read* how one specific man (who was demon-possessed) was brought before Him, and Jesus healed him of his blindness and muteness — but once again the Pharisees were aghast at what He had done, and accused Him of healing by the power of Satan, which made no sense, as we looked at last week. There were some hard hearts there indeed. And that brought us to verse 46, where evidently now inside, we *read*; *while He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him.*

And so, where exactly was He? Well in verse 1 of chapter 13 we'll see Matthew record that *on the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea*. And, so, Jesus had been in a house. Who's house? I think there are two reasonable options, which is either Peter's house, or Matthew's own house, where we know he had previously held a great feast for Him. Either way, it appears it is here, in the region around Capernaum, that events of chapter 13 took place.

So what did Jesus say? Well, as a quick overview of what Matthew records in this chapter:

Overview of chapter thirteen

Overview of chapter thirteen

- **v1-9** — The parable of the sower
- **v10-17** — The purpose of the parables
- **v18-23** — the parable of the sower explained
- **v24-30** — The parable of the wheat and the tares
- **v31-32** — The parable of the mustard seed
- **v33** — The parable of the leaven
- **v34-35** — Jesus teaching in parables fulfilled prophecy
- **v36-43** — The parable of the tares explained
- **v44** — The parable of the hidden treasure
- **v45-46** — The parable of the pearl of great price
- **v47-52** — The parable of the dragnet
- **v53-58** — Jesus rejected at Nazareth

The first nine verses record the parable of the sower, which Jesus then explained in verses 18-23. However, in between those, we'll read Jesus explain the purpose of the parables. Verses, 24-30 record the parable of the wheat and tares, that is later explained in verses 36-43, and in verses 31 & 32 we'll read the parable of the mustard seed, before verse 33 records the parable of the leaven (one of the shortest of these parables).

In verses 34-35 we'll see Jesus point to how His teaching in parables fulfilled prophecy, then in verse 36 on (as already mentioned) we'll read His explanation of the parable of the tares. Next, in verse 44, we'll read the parable of the hidden treasure, while verses 45-46 record the parable of the pearl of great price. The finale parable is the parable of the dragnet, as recorded in verses 47-52 — though there is possibly another parable within those verses too. Finally, the chapter concludes by noting how Jesus was rejected in His hometown of Nazareth, making this the third longest chapter in Matthew's gospel account.

So then, there are at least seven parables that Jesus gave, two of which He explained, plus the purpose of them is given by Jesus Himself, and they range between 1 and 9 verses in length. Some are also recorded by Mark and Luke in their gospel accounts, though not all, and, this morning, we'll look at one of those that is indeed also recorded by them, which is the parable of the sower, which was our reading this morning.

Chapter thirteen

And so, let's get going. We read in verse 1:

Matthew 13:1

On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea.

So again, this followed right on from all that we read in chapter 12:

Matthew 13:2

And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

And look, we could skip past this, but I want to call out a few things. First, the willingness and hunger of these people to hear Jesus' words that they were willing to stand up and listen. But second, that *that* boat had to come from somewhere, from *someone*. A simple act, that provided a way for these people to hear and see Jesus speak.

And we should remember that as important as it is to have someone be willing to study God's Word, and willing to stand up (or sit down) and speak it, it is also necessary to have someone to operate the PA, to do the recording, the editing, the publishing on the web site. Just as it is necessary to have someone open up the building, to put the heating on, to make sure chairs are out, the building is tidy, and the loos are clean. All these things serve the same purpose, that we might gather here to hear God speak to us through His Word.

And so, let me challenge you. What thought do you give to all that is done in order for our Sunday morning services to take place? Do you give any thought to how you might also contribute, that every part would do its share, including you?

If you're not sure how, or what that might look like, then let me suggest that the first place you can start as of next Sunday is by being at our 7am prayer meeting where we pray for the teaching of the Word that day, that it would be faithful, and that it would be helpful in our lives. Where we pray for the band, for all those serving, reading, praying, welcoming and more. And where we pray for the Word being taught to our little ones at Sunday School. The details might *seem* insignificant to you, but just as someone provided the boat here, so there are many practical needs in our fellowship, and there are many things that need our prayer.

Now, as we continue, we will read the first of the parables that Jesus spoke — and the temptation is to start thinking about what *we* think it means. But since the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible, we really ought to read it, and *then* read Jesus explanation of it *first*, before we draw our *own* conclusions. We read in verse 3 onwards:

Matthew 13:3-9

Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. 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. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

So in other words, Jesus said *"Listen up! Pay attention to what I'm saying, that your hearts and not only your ears, may be attentive"*.

Matthew 13:10

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

Of course, this was a change in approach from how Jesus had taught before. Why? Because there were those that had rejected Him. We read:

Matthew 13:11-12

He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

That is, those who genuinely want to learn more about Him will find that He opens their eyes to the scripture. As one person put it; *they will gain even more insight. But those who want nothing to do with Him, will have even the little understanding they have taken away*. In that sense He will grant those with hard hearts their desire, just as we read in Romans chapter 1 that God gave such over to uncleanness, gave them up to vile passions, and gave them over to a debased mind.

We read in 2 Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Is this harsh? No, because these are such that wanted nothing to do with the light of the gospel in the first place. And so the gospel, and the Bible, will remain a mystery to them. We read more of Jesus' words in John chapter 3:

John 3:18-21

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

And so then, with so many having rejected Jesus from the Pharisees to the towns of Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum, He now speaks in a way that only those who really want to hear Him, will truly do so. We read on:

Matthew 13:13

Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

And I don't think I can put it better than Finnis Dake does, for he writes:

They can see, but they refuse to see; they can hear, but they refuse to hear; they are capable of understanding, but they refuse to accept the truth, desiring to hold on to their old religious traditions and professions in preference to walking in the light of new truth.

Finnis Dake

And Jesus continues, noting how this was prophesied in Isaiah chapter 6:

Matthew 13:14-15

And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'

What a sad thing, that over time these people had become dull in their hearing. Not because they needed an audiologist, but because their hearts were hard. And how many people are sadly like that in our town, in our country, and in our world today.

Matthew 13:16-17

But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

That is, you are blessed because your soft and open hearts have heard and seen all these things. And what blessing, for just think how much Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Isaiah, and more would have loved to have seen what Jesus disciples did — to see Jesus walking, talking, preaching, healing!

Peter echos this sentiment in his first letter. We read there:

1 Peter 1:10-12

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

There has probably been a no more appropriate time to say "*what a time to be alive!*" than this moment. However, let's not forget what we read in John chapter 20:

John 20:29

Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

That's us! And indeed, we have such tremendous blessing too. For we also have seen so much of God's plan revealed, and we have the whole Bible, the whole counsel of God before us.

Now, continuing on, Jesus said:

Matthew 13:18

"Therefore hear the parable of the sower:

That is, since you can understand these things, since you have a softened heart, pay attention to the meaning of this parable. And how we ought to do the same, for this parable is *key* to us understanding *how* to share the gospel. And it is key to us understanding people's *reaction* to it.

In Mark's gospel account, he also records that Jesus said, regarding this *specific* parable; "*Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?*"

So, let us not only listen, but hear what Jesus has to say as He explains it.

We read back in verses 3 and 4:

Matthew 13:3-4

Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.

And now He explains in verse 19:

Matthew 13:19

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

So, being consistent to apply what we will *later* read in verse 37 (where Jesus explains the parable of the tares) to what we read here, *the sower is Jesus*. Though as we know from His command in chapter 28, He has chosen to use *us* to share the gospel — that is the great commission we *all* have.

The *seed*, we read here, is the good news of the gospel. Mark records Jesus describes it as the *Word of God*. And, we see, there are those that (while they hear it) do not understand it, and Satan comes and snatches away those thoughts from them, and they remain unsaved. A point that is made clear in Luke's record of this explanation. He writes:

Luke 8:12

Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

Now, it's important to consider that there was nothing wrong with the seed, but rather the *soil* was the determining factor. That is, it is ultimately people's *hearts* that determines their response to the good news. And in this case, the seed fell by the wayside, which was the hardened soil paths that ran through the fields, that had been compacted over time. And that's just like those Jesus has already spoken of in this chapter, who had hard hearts, that had become dull of hearing. Who could see, but refused to see. Who could hear, but refused to hear. That were capable of understanding, but refused to accept the truth.

And oh, how many are like that around us today. How many do we know on the periphery of this church — who have heard the gospel, but everything else is more important to them than where they will spend eternity. These are those who have been told of their sinful state, and the wonderful gift of salvation Jesus offers, but whom dismiss it as conjecture or fairy tales, who say "well you believe what you want to believe, but I'm not going to". It's terribly, terribly sad to see.

However, should that cause us to give up on those that have hard hearts, that have heard the gospel, but haven't responded to it? Not at all. We should continue to pray for them, and fervently so. We've seen those in our church who have come to know the Lord after decades of their family praying for them. I think I've mentioned before, but Sian's paternal grandad came to know the Lord in his final years, 26 years after her grandmother had done so — and she faithfully prayed for him throughout all those years.

Let us keep praying that hearts would be softened, because these are those whom, unless they turn to Christ, will one day stand before God without excuse for refusing the gospel, and without a Saviour for their sin. And they will face the eternal consequences for their choice.

The wayside hearer is one who has heard the gospel, but with a hard heart, they are an unbeliever still.

Now, next, Jesus had said (as recorded in verses 5 and 6):

Matthew 13:5-6

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.

And now He explains in verses 20 and 21:

Matthew 13:20-21

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.

So, here is the person who hears the gospel, or something of it, and becomes very excited about it. Far from the one with the hard heart, they are enthusiastic about the things of the Lord. They're listening to worship songs, they have Christian fridge magnets, they may even be excited about telling others they are a Christian. But as the emotion of the moment settles down, along come trials, difficulties, and off-hand comments from their old friends, their school mates, their work colleagues or their family, mocking them for the faith they claim to have found. And what do they do? They stumble, they fall away, and they return to their old life.

We often call such folks backsliders, but that's an unhelpful term, for we're not talking about a Christian who has slid back, but an unbeliever who never slid forward in the first place. We are talking about someone without roots, one who is not, and never has abided in Christ. We are talking about false converts. What could produce such a terrible situation? Us. "*Us?*" You might exclaim. Well, yes. For while we are not responsible for someone's heart, or how they *respond* to the gospel, we are responsible for how we *share* the gospel. Let me give some context...

A Christian magazine once reported the results of a large evangelistic crusade that involved 178 churches. Out of 4,106 decisions for Christ, only 3 percent joined a local church. That is, that crusade produced 3,981 backsliders, as they get called. Another group of churches in Texas once reported that they had secured 30,000 decisions for Christ at a convention, yet six months later they could only find 30 going on in their faith. And these are not isolated events. In fact it's sadly common from small churches to large crusades. So, what's going on?! For this is terrible news.

Well, unfortunately the gospel isn't being shared faithfully. Rather than share the Biblical gospel, the church at large has focussed on life improvement. That is, we ask people if they feel like something is missing from their lives. We ask if they want to be fulfilled and happy. Then we tell them how wonderful Jesus is, that His death has brought everlasting life full of peace, happiness, and contentment to those who make a decision for Him.

Then, we invite them to respond to this good news. What happens? They receive this news with joy, for this world is a mess, and they genuinely want to give this Jesus thing a try and see if it scratches where they're itching. But then they find they are mocked for being a Christian, and that they still face trials, difficulties, and loss. And they walk away from the faith they thought would make their life better. The gospel of life enhancement has failed.

Let me put it another way, using an example I know some of you are familiar with. Imagine you are on a plane, and along comes the air stewardess and asks you to put on a parachute, because it will improve your flight. You're a bit sceptical at first, but you think "*well, I haven't got anything to lose*" and so you give it a try.

But half hour later, as the tea and coffee is brought round, the same air stewardess accidentally knocks a hot cup of tea over your lap — and you jump up, feeling the pain of that boiling hot liquid on your legs. The parachute hasn't helped *at all*. Further still, as you return to your seat, you notice that the other passengers are laughing at you, and jeering at you because you thought that the parachute would improve your flight. So what do you do? You take off the parachute, throw it to the side, and you think "*it'll be a long time before I wear one of those things again!*" — and rightly so.

Now, consider what would happen if the real reason for a parachute were given. Again, imagine you're on a plane, but this time the air stewardess tells you to put on a parachute because at any moment you're going to need to jump out of the plane at 10'000 feet. Not only can you not put it on fast enough, but you cling to it, and don't even mind that it makes you feel uncomfortable sitting in your seat. Furthermore, when the stewardess knocks that cup of tea onto your lap — while you *still* feel the pain — it makes no difference to your view of the parachute, because you didn't put it on for a better flight!

That's what the correct sharing of the need for a parachute has done to you. Even the mocking of other passengers wouldn't deter you from wearing it, because you're far more concerned about the jump to come, than you are about what they think of you.

And that's what we must do with the gospel. We need to give people the real reason that they need a Saviour, which is not to improve the flight, but to be saved from the jump to come. You see, when we open up the law of God — The Ten Commandments — and we make an honest assessment of how we compare to those, we, and those we share the gospel with, will recognise that we do not compare well, for our sin is exposed, as is our helpless situation before a just and holy God who will one day judge each person according to their works.

And look, this isn't something I'm making up — for we read in Galatians 3:24 that the law was our tutor (or schoolmaster) to bring us to Christ. That is its purpose. And in Psalm 19:7 we read that "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul". The law is there to act as a mirror does to a filthy man — it reveals that he is not clean, and needs washing! But, likewise — just as a mirror cannot help a man wash — so the law cannot make a man clean. It can only reveal his sin. And that's why it drives us to Christ, for He alone can forgive us for our sin. He alone can save us.

So, what does that mean for us as believers? Well, first, we must share the gospel faithfully — for the last thing in the world we should be creating are false converts, who *think* they are saved, who even *call* themselves Christians and show excitement about worship songs or coming to church, but who have never truly repented of their sin and put their faith in Jesus to save them, because they don't even know the sorry spiritual state they are in.

We can't try and *attract* people to the faith by listing all the blessings of fellowship, community, and brotherly love (for the Bible is clear that Christians will also suffer persecution, trials, and go through all manner of difficulties). Rather we must let the law of God *drive* people to Him, that they might be desperate to receive the mercy and grace that can only be found in Christ.

But second, we must remember Jesus' words here, that there *will* be those who receive the Word with joy, yet have no depth. Who, in the end, are false converts. For many a mistake has been made by assuming that anyone who says they are a Christian, are in fact a Christian. That is simply not the case, for the false convert, we read here, is one that (at first) receives the word with joy.

Simply put, the stony ground hearer is the false convert who has no root, who does not abide in Christ, who only responded in a superficial way to any message they heard because they want their life to be improved. They have not gone to Christ in repentance and faith. They are indeed an unbeliever still.

Now, moving to the next type of soil, Jesus had said in verse 7:

Matthew 13:7

And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.

And now He explains in verse 22:

Matthew 13:22

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.

So then, this is the person who hears the gospel, but everything this world has to offer crowds out the Word of God. It's not that they have a *hard* heart (like the wayside hearer), but that they have a *distracted* heart, having become altogether entangled in this world, with their career, power, money and possessions taking priority and preference over anything else. And thus, despite hearing the glorious gospel, they bear no fruit of repentance.

Mark, in his account, notes that Jesus warned that *the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful*. And the danger of this is real, for the world today is continually feeding us new things to desire, new things we must have, new goals we must set, new aspirations we must fulfil. Bucket lists, shopping lists, and Amazon wish lists. The lists go on.

And the serious warning Jesus gave, of course, are His words that we find in Mathew 16, which are:

Matthew 16:26

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

It is foolish of course to lose your soul for the sake of temporary trinkets. But lest we think that the draw of this world can't affect anyone who *is* a believer, we should note the example of Demas, who is mentioned three times in the New Testament. First, Paul mentioned him in his final greetings in Colossians chapter four, writing:

Colossians 4:14

Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.

And around a similar time he wrote in his letter to Philemon:

Philemon 1:23-24

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow labourers.

But roll forward 3-4 years to when he wrote his second letter to Timothy, and we find he writes:

2 Timothy 4:9-10

Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

That is, this man who had walked with Paul, and served with Paul, who no doubt had seen so much take place through Paul's ministry, had become distracted by the things of the world, and had walked away from serving God. More than ever, we should consider what we read in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Let us not become distracted Christians, noting what else Paul wrote to Timothy, including:

2 Timothy 2:3-5

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

Let us run our race with the dedication and focus our goal deserves.

Considering this third type of soil, then, this is also an unbeliever who hears the Word, but they never come to saving faith in Jesus, because the things of this world have their hearts.

Now, finally, Jesus had spoken of the fourth type of soil back in verse 8, where He said:

Matthew 13:8

But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

And now He explains in verse 23:

Matthew 13:23

But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

So what Jesus is saying, is that when genuine conversion takes place, when someone truly repents and puts their faith in Him to save them from their sin and the punishment they deserve, there is fruit. How much fruit varies from person to person (remember, that to whom much has been given, much will be required), but fruit should indeed be present. It should be persistent. And that fruit should be good fruit. Fruit worthy of repentance. Fruit that honours God. Of course, it shouldn't come as any surprise that God's Word, the Bible, tells us what that fruit should look like...

We read in Romans 1:13 that Paul desired to have fruit among those in Rome, that He might be able to preach the gospel there and see souls saved, just as he had done elsewhere. And indeed, soul-winning — that is leading others to Christ — *is* fruit of being saved. Spurgeon even warned that if you have no desire to see others saved, then you are not saved yourself. Putting it another way; *healthy sheep reproduce*. And healthy Christians lead others to Christ.

As for other kinds of fruit, in Romans 6:22 we read that holiness is a fruit, while in Romans 15:28 we see that financial giving, and the giving of material things, is considered fruit too. Of course, we recently studied the book of Galatians which in chapter 5:22-23 lists the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control. And furthermore, Colossians 1:10 also makes clear that good works are a fruit of salvation too, while Hebrews 13:15 notes that praise to God should be the fruit of our lips.

Of course, it should be that, as you mature as a Christian, that you want to do these things more (I know I also regret having not done them more in the past). But how does that fruit come about? Well, there must be seed, and there must be good soil, but there must also be watering of that soil, and a cultivation, a nurturing of the plant that grows there that it would indeed produce fruit, that it *wouldn't* become entangled in the things of this world. So how does that take place in our lives? Well, the apostle Peter used another analogy in his first letter, writing:

1 Peter 2:1-3

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

And this is a picture that will never leave me, is see our children desperate for that bottle of milk like a nest of baby birds sit there open mouthed as their mother brings food back to the nest. That's the sort of desire we should have for God's Word, that we might grow, and that we might produce much fruit in our lives. That's what should happen with this fourth type of soil. **For the good ground is the genuine believer, who, having come to repentance and faith in Christ, knowing the lengths He went to save them, produces much fruit in response.**

As we draw to a close, let us consider what the apostle Paul prayed, about the people in Colosse, to whom he wrote:

Colossians 1:9-10

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

May that be something we pray for each other, that there would much fruit in our lives too.

Application questions

So then, if you are a Christian, if you are good ground hearer, there are three questions I specifically have for you today:

- Are you sharing the gospel faithfully? Or at all?
- Are you distracted by the things of this world? (yes, the thorny ground hearer is so distracted by the things of this world that they never turn to Christ, but what a tragedy it is that if we do turn to Christ, that we also become distracted and entangled in this world as Demas was)
- Are you bearing Christian fruit?

For the audio recording of this Bible study, and for additional studies, please see the DCF web site:



Deal Christian Fellowship
Simply teaching the Bible, simply

 <https://dcf.church>