



## river west church

### Parables Part 2:

#### The Parable of the Soils

Mark 4:1-20

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### **The Seed of the Gospel...The Soil of Your Heart**

Last week, we learned that Jesus spoke in parables because He wanted to test the hearts of His hearers. We learned that the parables are not simple illustrations that Jesus used to make His teaching easy to grasp. In fact, it's kind of the opposite. Parables are a method of communication in which a Gospel truth is "veiled" just beneath the surface of a story or riddle so that the one who hears must engage in order to understand that truth. In one sense, you could say that a parable reveals the true condition of your heart towards the Gospel. The person who longs for the treasure of the Gospel to take root in his life will gladly receive and learn and respond to the parable. The person who has already rejected Jesus and His message will hear the parable, reject it as cryptic nonsense, and walk away justified in his mind. We see this played out all the time in our world whenever the Gospel is preached. The same message can have a radically different response in a person's life depending on the condition of that person's heart. For some, the Gospel falls like a seed in good soil. It germinates and grows into a fruitful plant. For others, the Gospel is heard yet rejected. It creates no permanent impact or fruit.

### **The Purpose is Fruit**

In the Parable of the Soils (also known as "The Parable of the Sower"), Jesus tells a story to a large crowd that had gathered around Him about a farmer who went out to scatter seed. In the story, the impact of the sowing is determined by the condition of the soil on which the seed falls. Although the parable describes four different soils, the point of the parable is ultimately a contrast between two responses to Gospel truth; fruitful and unfruitful. When a farmer sows seeds, his purpose is to produce fruit, not simply a nice plant. Such is the case with the Gospel. God's purpose in sending forth His word is the fruit of salvation and a new life that is ever being transformed by the word of truth (Isaiah 55:10-13). Like a seed that goes down deep into rich soil, God's purpose is for His Gospel word to take root in your life and begin to produce glorious fruit. The Christian life is a journey of continual growth, transformation, and fruit bearing because of the power of the Gospel word at work deep within. Is that how you would describe your Christian walk?

### **How Do You Hear?**

The interesting thing about this passage is that when Jesus describes the four types of soil/people, all of them are said to "hear" the word. The difference is that, in the case of the fruitful soil, the kind of hearing that is described is an ongoing, warm acceptance of the word of God in a person's life. It is like soil that is continually cultivated and nourished to encourage growth and fruitfulness. The implications of this are startling, but clear. For Jesus, the point is not whether you hear, it's how you hear. The Gospel is not simply a set of truths for a person to comprehend once and agree with. The Gospel is a life giving word, like a seed, and the Christian life is a continual journey of longing for that word to grow in your heart and life. Today we are going to let Jesus talk to us about the condition of our hearts towards His word of truth. Do we know how to cultivate and maintain "good soil" for the Gospel? Do we continually long for

Gospel growth and fruitfulness in our lives? May the LORD be glorified as we answer these questions together.