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PARABLE OF THE SOWER
Matthew 13

INTRODUCTION :

You remember what our grandparents or parents said to us when we were kids. God has given us 2 ears and only one mouth to show us that it is more important to listen.

The Bible even says that :

James 1:19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

My kids already know when I'm not listening to them. They will be telling me stories but they know I'm not listening when I answer, "Hm..talaga." Sometimes, they will demonstrate that to me and I will feel embarrassed.

Now, what we're going to hear today from God's Word is our Lord showing us different types of listeners to God's Word.

Matthew 13 : 1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear."

18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Pray

Background :

- This is what you call a parable
- Parables are earthly stories with spiritual or heavenly meanings

This is one of those parables that our Lord explained its meaning.

There are three main symbols here or metaphors that our Lord Jesus Christ used here – the sower, the seed and the soil.

Who is the sower?

We can get an idea if you look further in verse 37 of the same chapter.

Matthew 13: 37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man.

Of course, as we all know, the Son of Man is our Lord Jesus Himself. And what was He doing at that time, He is preaching.

Now, every time someone is preaching God's Word, that's the sower.

Romans 10 : 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

The preacher is the sower who preaches the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not his message, it's God's message. When we stand in the pulpit, our role as preachers by God's grace is not to give our own message but to preach Christ and His message and this is the reason why a preacher worth his salt, will make sure that what he is preaching is God's Word that did not come from his imagination or opinion but by the proper interpretation of God's Word found in the Bible.

What is the seed?

Our Lord already explained it. **It's God's Word.**

18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom

20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word

22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word

23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word

Which brings us now to...

What is the soil?

19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart.

The soil is the heart of the listener.

Now by God's grace, I want you to see this.

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.

As you can see here, it's a large crowd and He needed to get on a boat and that's where He preached.

Now, in modern society, we think that the measurement of the success of the church is a large crowd.

But again, our Lord isn't interested in the large crowd per se. That's not what God looks at. What does God look at?

1 Samuel 16:7 For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

Right now, that's what God is doing, looking at the heart.

2 Chronicles 16:9 The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

By the way, at the end of the day, this same crowd who was following Him was the same crowd who in the end wanted Him to be crucified.

THE HEARTS OF CHURCH GOERS

Now by God's grace, I was intentional of saying CHURCH-GOERS instead of CHRISTIANS or DISCIPLES. It's because not everyone who has gone to church or goes to church are really Christians.

1. DISINTERESTED

3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

18 Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

These are people who go to Jesus but is not really interested in what He has to say because they have a different motive.

Remember, we have to look at the context.

Between verses 9 to 18, this is what transpired.

10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"

Here's the reply of the Lord.

11 He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

So who is them?

13 This is why I speak to them in parables:

*"Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.*

Remember, our Lord was speaking to the crowd. Part of the crowd as you will see in verse 12 are the Pharisees.

Again, Jesus Christ through the signs and wonders and His preaching was already showing the people on how to enter the Kingdom of heaven and yet these Pharisees see Jesus as a disturbance, as a threat that needs to be eliminated and that's why they're always testing Him. They have a different motive.

Illustration : Time and time again, whether here or in the Philippines, I will be seeing people attending church and I praise God that they do but in the end, I will see the motives on why they are attending church and it's not really to listen to what God has to say, they are not really seeking God – some motives are it's because their crush or the one they are courting is attending church or another motive I saw several times is they want to recruit people in their networking or they see the people as potential buyers and once they've exhausted the market, they move on or they attend church simply because their family is attending church.

I've seen one church-goer before, she will be alive and kicking, loud voice at the start of the church and automatically when the sermon starts, she immediately falls asleep in her chair and then after the sermon, she will be alive again and laughing.

Beloved of God, there's only one motive that God honors and that motive is if you are here to really seek Him.

Again look at what God says :

Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart

God is looking at the heart. Does this person really want to know who I AM?

2. DISTORTED

5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

Now, look, our Lord said

the soil was shallow

who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time.

Yes, they are seeking God but they are seeking only what they can get from God and not really on what God wants to say to them in their lives.

Remember, this is the same crowd who followed Jesus because He healed the sick.

Matthew 12 : 15... A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill.

You will also see the same story in the Gospel of John

John 6:2 and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick.

And afterwards, they saw Jesus miraculously fed around fifteen thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fish

John 6: 10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). 11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

Of course, they will follow Jesus because they get healed, or they see people get healed (in short, wow, free entertainment) and then while being entertained, they get fed miraculously, so it means, they see him as source of provision.

But when Jesus started speaking about Himself and the need to believe on who He is, they left Him.

John 6: 26 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

John 6: 34 "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."

35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.

After hearing this statement and some added explanation from the Lord, here's their reaction.

60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

Illustration : Again, I've seen this several times in church. People attending with a distorted motive.

Jesus healed the sick and I've seen people attend church because they were sick and looking for healing but when they get healed or when they are not healed...

*no longer followed him.
they quickly fall away.*

Or Jesus fed the people which means He's seen as a source of provision and same people who were attending church because they were asking God for a job and when the job comes...they not longer attend church except for Christmas.

Or some people, they were being entertained because of the "show" or the "crowd" or the "activities" in the church but when there are no more activities...they fall away and not follow Christ.

Illustration : My daughter and I were discussing that yesterday that some ministries think that their job is to create a lot of activities for the members. By God's grace, we are family here but the church is not a social club whose job is to provide activities to entertain you. We are here to love you, care for you and show the love of Christ to you but the end-goal is whether with activities or not the main purpose why we attend church is CHRIST AND CHRIST ALONE.

And let me add to this, when the Word of God challenges them that they need to give up things or relationships to follow Christ, they quickly fall away or when the preacher is not entertaining anymore **or not telling them what they want to hear they fall away...**

Look at what Timothy says :

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

In short, these are the

People who were only interested in the physical benefits but not the spiritual benefits.

People who are interested only in the gifts but not the Giver.

People who love the fellowship but not the Father

3. DISTRACTED

7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.

What are they distracted about? They are distracted about money –

- Either the lack of it (that's why they are worried)
- or the greed for it (that's why we are deceived by it.)

but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful

DISTRACTED BY *worries of this life* (Again it's because they lack money or they are afraid they might lose money)

But what did Jesus say?

Matthew 6: 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

DISTRACTED BY *deceitfulness of wealth*

It's because they believe that by having lots of it, that's the secret of having a full life.

That's a deception. The secret of having a full life is following Jesus.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

This is why Jesus Christ says :

Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Illustration : Businesswoman who attends church but her business started to fail and went back to her occult ways

4. **DEVOTED**

8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

These are the people who listen to God's Word because they want to know more about God.

These are the people whose focus is on God rather than the gifts or the blessings of God.

These are the people whose loves God and trusts in God with all of their being and do not worry about money too much or wants money more and more.

What does God do through these people who are devoted no matter what?

where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

What is this crop or fruit?

Etymology : carpos

Let's look at the context again.

18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom

What is being sown is the kingdom! So if you plant an apple seed, you expect an apple tree that will yield an apple.

So to a person who is devoted to God, God will use Him to multiply and expand His kingdom!!!

Note : You might say, "Pastor, I'm not a preacher" or I only know one person. If you do, save that one person and you don't know how God will use that one person whom you brought to Christ to save other people. But without that person being brought to Christ, how can that person tell other people about Christ????

Illustration : Conversion of Charles Spurgeon, prince of preachers and used by God to save thousands but he was saved through a snowstorm in a small church not through a preacher but a substitute because the preacher wasn't there but by a poor man or a shoemaker who took his place

Spurgeon recounted, he was going to a place of worship which is a usual big church and he wasn't saved yet, he goes to church but then a snowstorm forced to go to a very small church and the preacher wasn't able to arrive, so this shoemaker was looking at

Isaiah 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

He just preached on this but then as Spurgeon told the story.

"Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. He then said, 'Young man, you look very miserable.' Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit before. However, it was a good blow struck. He continued: 'And you will always be miserable — miserable in life and miserable in death — if you do not obey my text. But if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.'

"Then he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist can, 'Young man, look to Jesus Christ.' There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that moment and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the Precious Blood of Christ."

This poor ordinary man was used by Christ in order to save Charles Spurgeon. And you know how God used Charles Spurgeon, to preach to thousands of people.

CONCLUSION :

Earlier I showed you that the sower is the preacher who preaches the message of Christ and the seed is the Word of God and the soil is your heart. For the seed to bear fruit, **it needs to be planted on good soil.**

As our Lord Jesus preached to the crowd, so He is asking you today and with love He asks you, "Did you really listen to His Word today? Was it planted in your heart?" Only you can answer that.

. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear."

S.G.D.