

THE HEART THAT DESERVES THE [KINGDOM OF GOD](#)

Matthew 13:1-23

Key Verse: 13:8

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

In chapter 13 Jesus teaches his disciples with parables. A parable is different from an allegory. An allegory has inclusive meaning in itself. But a parable is a simple and short story with one clear point. The synoptic gospels include 30 of these parables, which Jesus drew from nature and human life. In chapter 13 Jesus tells six parables to explain how we can obtain the kingdom of God. The words the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom, are repeated 12 times in this chapter (11,19,24,31,33,38, 41,43,44,45,47,52). We must know that Matthew's Gospel focuses on Jesus kingship and his kingdom. From the beginning to the end, Jesus' heart's desire was to teach the secret of the kingdom of God. This passage tells us how we can be qualified to enter the kingdom of God.

First, the attitude of hearing the word (1-9; 18-23). Until now Jesus was allowed to preach in the synagogues. But now Jesus could not preach in the synagogues because large crowds of people began to gather around him, so Jesus preached by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him, clinging to him, until he could not deliver the word. So he got into a boat. And all the people stood on the shore. Then Jesus told them many things in parables (1,2).

Look at verses 3-9. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear. Jesus teaches that people respond in four different ways to the message of the kingdom.

A path. The first kind of response is the people who are like a path. Look at verse 4. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. There are many people whose minds have become like a path, and the word has no chance to get in. There are several things which make people's minds like a path.

Common sense can make a man's mind like a path. One university professor taught English history. But he was interested in [reading](#) magazines of all kinds and watched many movies about history. He had never been to England even though he taught English history at a university. He knew many things, but he was filled up with common sense. He did not steadily research English history. So he could not publish any books as school textbooks, and his income was very low until he retired. He thought he knew everything. But in fact, he could not write even one textbook.

There was a high-minded church pastor. After reading [the Bible](#) ten times, he thought he was the best Bible scholar. But his church did not grow, while a junior pastor's church grew and grew until its membership was over 5,000. The junior pastor's church grew simply because he humbled himself and prayerfully studied the Bible for 25 years. Then the senior pastor, whose heart was like a path due to his proud mind, began to undercut the junior pastor, saying he was gathering people to his church through magic arts. People whose minds are like a path are generally men and women of common sense.

The Pharisees read the word of God diligently. But they did not hear the word from their hearts, only from their heads. They were a path-like people. They did not study the Bible to renovate their head knowledge. They did not study the Bible from their hearts for spiritual satisfaction. So their minds were arrogant and their hearts were as hard as asphalt on a highway. To them, the knowledge of the Bible was no more than common sense. God chose them as Bible teachers. But the Pharisees' heart soil became like a path because they studied the Bible superficially, in order to increase their common sense of the Bible. Because of their poor attitude toward Bible study they could not understand the secret of the kingdom of God. Rather they became the prey of the devil (19).

Pride also makes a man's mind like a path. One night a servant of God appealed to a young man who was enslaved by lustful desires to beware of the temptations of women and money if he wanted to be a great servant of God. The conversation continued for three hours. Finally the young man said, Are you telling this to me? His shepherd's counseling was based on God's word. But his proud mind rejected it.

Lustful desire also makes a man's mind like a path. One young man studied the Bible for four years. Yet he could not accept even one word because he did not pay attention to the word of God but to girls only. As a result, he did not finish his school studies, nor did he understand the word concerning the kingdom of God. Fatalistic people are a path-like people, too. One young man's mother divorced his father, simply because of his father's low intellectual level. Then this only son was fatally wounded. He ate only raw meat of all kinds. Whenever we saw him, he was walking around with bare feet. He did not talk. But he met Jesus and was very much healed by the love of Jesus. He could even marry. Still, a path-like element of fatalism remained in his heart. He was very fatalistic about having a child. So he never slept with his wife and died.

Rocky ground. The second kind of response is the people whose minds are like rocky ground. Look at verses 5 and 6. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. These are very low-level kinds of people. So they are amply emotional. They quickly become enthusiastic about what they heard, but they soon become double-minded when they are emotionally upset. Emotional people cannot take root in the word, for the life of faith demands intellect, will, heart and spirit in addition to emotion. There was a young man who had been loved and cared for by his shepherd. But he became emotional when

he was encouraged to work hard and be independent. Then the young man turned against his shepherd. He began to watch his shepherd carefully to see if he would make a mistake. One Sunday his shepherd made a literal mistake while emphasizing to work hard for the glory of God. The young man forgot all his shepherd's love and care. He began to criticize his shepherd saying, He is a liar, not a shepherd, and left the church. Emotional people are unpredictable. They are like chaff blown by the wind. As long as one lives with emotional feelings he will not inherit the kingdom of God. At the time of adversity, emotional people turn out to be enemies of God, like Judas Iscariot. Emotional people cannot see the kingdom of God.

Thorny ground. The third kind of response is people whose minds are like thorny ground. Look at verse 7. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Those who are like thorny soil have unusually rich soil; they are able to do great things. They can produce unusually abundant fruit, high income and many achievements. But they worry too much day and night, until they have no time left to let the word grow in the soil of their hearts. The more they worry, the more thorns and thistles grow in their hearts. Because of thorns and thistles in their hearts, they cannot see the kingdom of God. For many months we have seen the dogs and cats barking and hissing. They are top leaders of this nation and very wealthy men. But they worry not to be eaten by their opponents. They are eating in the thorny ground. They are working in the thorny ground. They are sleeping in the thorny ground. They are top leaders of this country. But their misery has been beyond measure. Many are afraid that one or two of them will hang themselves, because of their misery. There is true happiness for them in the kingdom of God. But they cannot see the kingdom of God because of their thorny ground.

Good soil. The fourth kind of response is the people whose minds are like good soil. Look at verse 8. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Those who have hearts of good soil can understand the secret of the kingdom of God. Here the good soil is the same as a good heart. The word of Jesus reads so beautifully and is so sweet to hear. But it is the hardest spiritual struggle to keep one's heart as good soil. The good-soil kind of heart is not given. The good-soil kind of heart is possible for anyone who struggles to keep his heart as good soil.

Good plants are generally weak to ever-increasing weeds and the rapidly growing thornbush. Therefore anybody who wants to be good soil must not be overpowered by weeds and thornbushes. It is easy to make our hearts wicked and dishonest. But it is not easy to keep our hearts pure and genuine. We sometimes wonder why God gave us two eyes, two ears and two hands, but only one heart. How nice it would be if God gave us two hearts, so that we could keep one heart clean and with the other do some things our sinful desire directs. But God gave us one heart so that we can love God only and we can each be faithful to only one wife.

In the parable of the sower, we learn of God in three ways.

First, God wants us to hear the word humbly and understand the secret of the kingdom of God. This is the reason why the parable of the sower

was written. It is amazing that Jesus did not pound before the thronging crowd of people. But he spoke to them a parable of the sower with a gentle voice. It was a majestic and awesome voice which was gentle and quiet. But the response of the people was indeed great. Second, God wants us to be fruitful. God made men to bear much fruit which is pleasing to God and can be a blessing to others (Jn 15:16). God wants us to bear much fruit. We cannot bear fruit when we don't know the secrets of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, those who know the secrets of the kingdom of God can bear fruit at least 30 times, 60 times or 100 times. Those who do not bear much fruit may have many excuses. But their main problem is that they know a lot about the word, but they do not know the secrets of the kingdom of God. They are also lazy men who do not deserve to eat (2 Th 3:10).

Third, we also learn God's shepherd heart. The main point of the Bible is the kingdom of God. Jesus said in Mark 1:15, The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news! Our God is like a shepherd who leaves 99 sheep in the open country and goes after the one lost sheep until he finds it (Lk 15:4). Our God wants to bring each of us back to his glorious kingdom, missing no one. This is the reason God sent his one and only Son to this world that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16).

Second, Jesus spoke in parables (10-17). Jesus chose his twelve disciples as servants of God's word for the future. Jesus wanted them to grasp the secret of the kingdom of God and proclaim the kingdom of God to the whole world. But at that time his disciples did not grasp the concept of the kingdom of God. Look at verse 10. The disciples came to him and asked, Why do you speak to the people in parables? This question must have come out of their deep discouragement. Probably they thought, What's the use of telling so many parables to those who make evanescent responses? Why are you wasting your time?

What was Jesus' response to them? Look at verse 11. He replied, The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Jesus was speaking the parable to ordinary people. But in reality, Jesus was telling it to his disciples. This verse explains that the disciples are greatly privileged to know the secret of the kingdom of God, and to proclaim the kingdom of God to the lost world.

Look at verse 12. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. The secret of the kingdom of God is everything to all human beings. Therefore, the proclamation of the kingdom of God is absolutely necessary. But the disciples were not clear about their mission, mainly because they were burdened by a sense of mission. Jesus warned them so that they would not be shaky because of worldly situations, but be faithful to their mission of proclaiming the kingdom of God. As a student who studies hard is capable of acquiring deeper knowledge and is given higher honors, so one who seeks God's kingdom earnestly and proclaims it diligently is given more reward and recognition by God Almighty.

Let's think about the meaning of Isaiah's prophecy. Jesus quoted Isaiah's prophecy. Look at verses 13-15. This is why I speak to them

in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.

This prophecy concerns God's shepherd heart toward rebellious people. This prophecy also explains the principle of God's history. Isaiah said in his prophecy that the people were too rebellious to understand God's message. The people had no interest at all in hearing God's message. They were only interested in things of the world. But God encouraged Isaiah not to despair. As a result, Isaiah put his faith in God Almighty. Then he realized that the purpose of God would be fulfilled in the end, and that God never fails. Jesus said this to his disciples so that they might not be discouraged because of rebellious people, but proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God to the end. Jesus said this to his disciples so that they might understand that God's world salvation purpose will be fulfilled in the midst of rebellious people.

We give our hearts to God's work. However, sometimes the results seem to be nothing but disappointment. But God accepts all our labor as prayers and fulfills his ultimate purpose, weaving together success and failure, good and evil in the plan of world salvation. Here we learn that we must rejoice even when our work seems to be nothing but failure. Here we learn that in doing God's work our faith in God Almighty is most important (Jn 6:29). At that time, the disciples were discouraged by worldly situations and the poor prospect of their income. But Jesus encouraged them by saying, You have the privilege of seeing the work of the Messiah with your own eyes, which many prophets and righteous men of the past wanted to see but did not see (16,17). Surely we are most blessed because through the word of God we can see Jesus face to face and we can see the kingdom of God.

Third, Jesus explains the parable (18-23). Jesus sensed that his disciples did not understand the point of the parable. So he told the story again and explained it so they could grasp the happiness of the kingdom of God and bear much fruit 30 times, 60 times, even 100 times.

In the parable of the sower we learn four kinds of people. The first three kinds are humanistic people. The last kind is a three-dimensional person. He knows God and people and the world. The first three kinds of people seem to be smart and to be achieving something. But they are struggling for nothing to the extreme measure. One professor at UIC made his wife very sorry because of his physics study. But at the age of 52 he got throat cancer and his future became very dark. Now he wants to please his wife. But his springtime has gone and summertime has gone and autumntime has gone and in his wintertime he wants to please his wife, but they each feel they are now too cold to please each other. He thought his idea to become a physicist was the best way of life. But now the best he can do is to heal his cancer and live even a few days more. He is a man like a path. People of the world think in their common sense that if they make success they can be happy. But it is not true. People of many countries want to come to America to live

happily, as in paradise. They come to America by any means. But they find that America is also part of the real world, and that many big people are blinking their eyes calculating how to make use of newly-arrived immigrants. Suddenly they feel that America is not paradise but a thornbush, and they regret that they tried hard to come to a big thornbush with big people.

Jesus repeated the parable in this passage. We understood it in our modern way. Now let's listen again as Jesus explains the parable of the sower. I will read verses 18-23. Listen to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

May God give you a good heart and much fruit and the kingdom of God. May God bless America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and make America a blessing to all peoples of all nations.