

The Soils & The Seed

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Scriptural Text: Matthew 13:1-23, ESV

The Parable of the Sower

¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: *"A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."*

The Purpose of the Parables

¹⁰ Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" ¹¹ And he answered them, *"To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹² For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:*

*"“You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”*

¹⁵ *For this people's heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.'*

¹⁶ *But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷ For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

The Parable of the Sower Explained

¹⁸ *"Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

Our ears are funny parts, are they not? They come in all shapes and sizes. I am told one's ears are as unique to the individual as one's fingerprints. Each ear has its own character and identity. When I was a child I remembered hearing a goofy song about ears and you have probably heard it also,

Do your ears hang low
Do they wobble to and fro
Can you tie them in a know
Can you tie them I a bow
Can you throw them over your shoulder
Like a continental soldier
Do your ears hang low

In researching that song, I discovered there were other verses,

Do your ears hang high
Do they reach up to the sky
Do they wrinkle when they are wet
Do they straighten when they are dry
Can you wave them at your neighbor
With an element of flavor
Do your ears hang high.¹

In this study we will consider a story about ears. The story Jesus tells in our text is recorded by Mark and Luke as well. It is a powerful story. Of course, Jesus is teaching us about physical ears, but He is teaching us about spiritual ears, also. The question is: Do we have ears to hear?

I modified a verse to this goofy song to attend to our spiritual ears and questions we might ask about ourselves,

Do your ears listen well
To the truth God will tell
Do they focus on God's way
Are they eager to obey
Can you hear God's voice
As the very best choice
Do your ears listen well

That is the question we must ask ourselves. Do our ears listen well to the truth God will tell? The story of the sower and the soils is about how a person listens to God. The way we listen to God will determine whether our life is fruitful or unfruitful, whether our life is filled with joy or if our life is filled with wastefulness.

Jesus encourages us, through this parable, to take care to listen to God with a humble, obedient and receptive heart. That is the message: take care to listen to God with a humble, receptive and obedient heart. Any other way of listening to God will be absolutely worthless and it will be as though we had not heard Him whatsoever.

Jesus will tell us, in Matthew 11,

¹⁵ *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

And, He repeats it again in Verse 9 of our text, *"Let him who has ears to hear, let him hear."* He is not talking about our physical ears. He is talking about our spiritual ears, the ears of our heart, the organ with which we listen to God. When He says, "If you have a spiritual heart, then hear and listen." What does it mean to listen to God? Listening to God does not mean we merely comprehend God's message. That is a huge mistake. We come, we listen to a seminar or a sermon or a teaching, and we say, "I understand it and I was encouraged by it. I comprehend it." That is not what it means to listen to God's Word and to God's voice.

Listening to God does not mean we merely comprehend God's message, but it means we believe the truthfulness of His Word, we perceive the wisdom of His Word and we receive the joy of His Word through obedience. That is what it means to listen and to have ears to hear.

¹ Author unknown

All three parts of that definition are vital: we believe the truthfulness and we believe it to be absolutely true; we believe its wisdom and that it is the most skilful, wise and best way to life; and we submit our will, our flesh, our desire unto God and we say, “Yes, I am going to respond to You and I am going to obey.”

We do not listen to God with healthy, physical ears, but we listen to God with a healthy, humble heart. A functioning, physical ear is a great gift from God, but it is not an organ necessary to listen to God. A person can be completely deaf, and in fact some people who listen to God the best are people who are physically hard of hearing. It is the soul, the heart, a soul regenerate that has come alive to God that listens to God’s voice.

The term “hear” is going to be used by Jesus thirteen times in our text. He wants us to understand what He is talking about: hearing and listening. Clearly God is not interested in speaking to people who are unwilling to listen to Him. What a sad and horrible consequence that is to have in one’s life, that God would be unwilling to talk with us because we are unwilling to listen biblically.

Jesus was asked why He spoke in parables,

¹¹ And he answered them, *“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.”*

When He spoke of “them”, He was referring to those who do not have ears to hear, to those who have hardened hearts and to those who are living in rebellion against God. To know the secrets of the Kingdom, to know who God is and to know what God is all about is the greatest blessing anyone could possibly receive, yet God tells us He is not willing to give that to those who are unwilling to listen.

Our ability to listen to God is not natural. None of us are born with those three characteristics: believing His truthfulness, embracing His wisdom and committing our life to obedience. None of us are born in this way. We need to have the gift of spiritual hearing, a gift of God’s grace at work in our heart. Spiritual deafness is caused by natural unbelief and natural rebellion. If anyone ever listens to God’s voice, if we ever hear God speak, it will be because God has miraculously opened our ears and we need to bow down and worship and say, “Thank you, God, for changing my heart so I can hear.”

In our text, Jesus will say,

¹² *“For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”*

Does that seem unfair to you? Does it not seem the opposite of the value of our culture? In other words, to the rich will be given more, but to the poor what they have will be taken away. That is what Jesus is saying, “That is what I do. That is what God does. To the one who has much, I will give him more. To the one who has little, I will take away even the little he has.” Why is that? What does God mean? What exactly is given to the person who has so much abundance? What exactly is taken away from the person who has so little? The answer is God’s Word.

The one who has received so much truth from God because they have ears to hear, He will give them more. But, to the one who has received so little of God’s truth, and this is because they do not have ears to hear, even what little they have will be taken away. What a horrible judgment upon a life that is.

This is a reason this is a lifelong pursuit. It is possible to have, at one point, ears to hear and later to shut our ears off and we do not have a deposit of truth we can rest upon which we received earlier in life. The moment we begin to close our ears to God because of a hardness of heart, or a sin issue, that is the moment God begins to take away that which He had already given to us. That is why we must constantly live in a state of receiving what God has for us because we need Him. We never will be able to say, “I do not know if I need anymore.” No, we have the joy of the one who has much will receive more and more and more and their life will be fruitful as a result. Jesus says,

¹³ *“This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.”* ¹⁴ *Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:*

““You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.”¹⁵ For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.”

We are culpable when we do not see and we are responsible for not hearing and we have a willful lack of understanding. We will hear with our physical ears but we will never understand with the ears of our heart. We will see with our physical eyes but we will never be able to perceive with our spiritual insight. Why are we in a condition of spiritual blindness and spiritual deafness? God's judgment is set upon what the condition being pursued. If we want to be blind, God says, "Fine. I will see to it you will never see." That is His judgment and what a horrible judgment it is. This is what all of us deserve and that is why it is by amazing grace any of us would see and any of us would hear.

But, then Jesus says,

¹⁶ *“But blessed are your eyes, for they see...”*

Beloved, if any of you see God's glory in the face of Jesus through the Gospel, blessed are your eyes. This is an amazing, wonderful, eternal gift. Nothing else is like it.

There are three elements in this parable we want to consider: the seed, the sower, and the soils. Our particular focus will be on the soils.

First, the seed is God's Word that possesses the power to produce a fruitful life. Verses 1-3 of the text gives to us a bit of the context,

¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: *“A sower went out to sow.”*

This was a day during which Jesus experienced a great deal of rejection in His preaching. This was a day when many people were crowded around Him, but they did not want to listen to or receive what He had to say. These were curious people and many were not committed. Later, the Gospel will tell us they leave Jesus, but they are curious about His miracles, His new, strange sayings, and He is an interesting speaker; they are curious. And, He tells them many things in parables.

Recently I was talking to a man in our church and he had his daughter in his arms. I engaged her in a bit of conversation. I found out she is an incredibly smart little girl. I asked her what she thought about the message on church government, as I was being kind of silly with her. She looked at me and she said, "There are some times when I do not understand what you are saying." That is a smart girl! So I said, "Next week we will begin a series of preaching about the parables of Jesus. They will be awesome and I believe you will understand much of what Jesus says because they are stories." She looked at me and she asked, "What is a parable?" As I explained, a parable is a simple story with a super message.

This is a simple story that would have occurred in the 1st Century in Jesus' community every year. It is common story but it possesses a super message. As Jesus teaches there are some who listen to Him and their life is remarkably transformed. There are others who hear the exact same message and see the exact same thing, but their life is left the same. It is in the same spiritual state of deadness, disconnectedness from God, and disconnected from His purpose and joy.

How do we account for this? How do we account that the same message would have such powerfully different affects upon people? Jesus tells us through this story. Jesus anticipates the various ways the people who listen to Him preach will respond to the exact same message. He knows will listen to Him with different kinds of ears, so He introduces us to four different kinds of listeners.

It is important for us to note, these four different kinds of listeners attend the same church, they live in the same community, they are friends with one another, they agree about most of life with one another, they have the same political opinions and so much in life, they have so much in common. Yet, they have so much that differs between them and it is all because of the “way” they listen to Jesus,

³ ...“A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

Can you picture this in your mind as Jesus tells the story? Take special notice of the prepositions Jesus used as to where the seeds fell. Some fell “along” or “beside” the path and that is a life where the seed falls along it or beside it. Other seed fell “on” rocky soil and this is a life where the seed falls on top of the rocky soil. Other seed falls among thorns and this is a life where there is other stuff growing up and the seed falls among these other thorns. Then Jesus shares the seed that fell into the good soil.

What does this story mean? Thankfully, Jesus tells them and He begins with an explanation of the meaning of the seed: the seed is God's Word and we will see that in Luke's account. Jesus is communicating that God's Word possesses the power to produce a fruitful life, but there is something special about God's Word that is different from any other word we might possibly hear. He tells us to open our ears and listen,

¹⁸ “Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.”

What is the seed? The seed is the Word of the Kingdom. In Luke 8, Jesus says,

¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

If we have an apple seed, there is power in that apple seed to produce not just to produce apples but to produce an apple tree. That is remarkable. If we look at the seed and we do not know either by experience or science, it would be stunning and amazing to be told the tree and the apple comes from that seed. How in the world can that possibly take place? There is biological force and power at work within that seed to produce that. That is what Jesus calls the Word of God and the analogy He uses.

The Word of God looks like most other books. It has words on a page. When it is spoken it has words which are vocalized, yet there is something special because this Word has power within it. Jesus tells us the Word of God is powerful to produce spectacular life, just as an apple seed is powerful to produce amazing life. The Word of God is powerful to produce life inside of our soul. I like what the psalmist writes in Psalm 19,

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. ⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

When our heart is not joyful, we have to ask, “Am I receiving and hearing the Word of God?” because that is what the Word of God does. It gives joy to the heart. There is only one seed God gives to us which brings such life and that is the Word of God.

Do you remember when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus had gone without food for forty days and Satan was coaxing Him to turn stones into bread. Jesus said,

⁴ “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

The Word of God has the power to give life.

The Disciple Peter is listening to this story and I believe he is thinking about this story when he later writes his letters. In 1 Peter 1, Peter will say,

²³ ...since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God...

Jesus teaches us God gives His Word to produce life within our soul. What a gift God's Word is to us. Do you believe God's Word is really powerful enough to bring life where there is no life? Do you believe God's Word is powerful enough to bring victory to a sinful soul, a soul enslaved in all kinds of sin? Do you believe God's Word is powerful enough to bring salvation to friends of yours who are so lost that it seems hopeless? Do you believe God's Word is powerful enough to bring peace when your heart is so troubled that you toss and turn every night for weeks and months on end? Do you believe God's Word is powerful enough to restore a crumbling marriage? Do you believe that or have you given up hope? Do you believe God's Word is powerful enough to liberate you from the temptations and deceptions the Evil One throws against you and you really can live a life full of love and joy and peace? That is what Jesus is teaching. He is teaching the Word of God has power to change us, to bring living faith to doubting hearts.

The Apostle Paul will write, in 2 Timothy 3,

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed...

Think for a moment about that little phrase. When you listen to my voice, to what exactly are you listening? What you are listening to is my breath. God has given this musical organ inside of our throat. I cannot describe it medically but you can talk with one of our physicians in the church to get a more accurate and full, complete and detailed description. What happens? There is air our body pushes out from our lungs and that air flows over vocal chords and then it is shaped by our mouth, our tongue and our lips. When we speak, what we speak is our breath and what we hear is our breath shaped into sound.

When we read Scripture, we are reading God's breath shaped through human authors. God breathed this Word and His breath is life. That is how He created us. He took some dust and dirt and He shaped man in His own image. Then He breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul. The Word of God is God-breathed and all of scripture is God-breathed and it produces life.

The second aspect is The Sower: God faithfully passes His Word into human hearts. God is the Sower. We learn that in Matthew 13. It is a parable about a sower also and he is identified,

³⁷ (Jesus) answered, "*The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.*"

Who is it who sows God's Word into the human heart? It is the Son of Man, God's Spirit, God Himself. God loves to communicate to people and this is always a marvel. Do you enjoy communicating with people who do not want to hear what you have to say and who do not like you very much? Do you enjoy communicating with the kind of people who show their open disdain for you? No! We do not talk to those kinds of persons. They do not respect us. They do not esteem us. They do not like us. Yet, God sows His Word into hearts that show Him disdain, rejection and rebellion because He loves. Isn't it awesome that God is a God who sows His Word into our heart even while we are yet an enemy of His and we rebel against Him? God loves to communicate with us because He is love and He is a God of grace.

How does Jesus sow His seed into the soil of the human heart today? He does it in a number of ways, but He does it predominately through His disciples, His own people. Our primary responsibility is to be used by God as seed-sowers and that is for every context. This is true whether a person is working the nursery, working in the market place, relating in their family, or relating in college. God's primary means of bringing life to other people and sowing seeds is by using His own people who have already received the seed of His Word to sow it and be used as His instrument. He is sowing seed through us.

If we wish to see spiritual life in our family, we must through seed. If we wish to see spiritual life in our neighborhood, we must throw seed. If we wish to see spiritual life in our workplace which is so broken and seems so out of whack and dark, we must throw some seed. If we wish to see spiritual life in school or among the football team or volleyball team, we must throw some seed into that. That is how God brings about this life and how He brings about His presence; threw the seed which brings life into it.

This is for parents in particular about throwing seed into your family. I know this is a difficult thing and I have experienced it as a father. There are many obstacles that might keep us from throwing seed into our children's lives. But, that is our responsibility and that is what God gives to us to do. It is so clear that is what God calls us to do. We are to throw seed everyday. I know there are some who will raise up a hand and say, "But, I do not know how to lead family devotions and throw God's Word into it. When I attempt it, it does not turn out very well." That is an honest observation and an honest concern.

Imagine this picture. Imagine a 1st Century farmer who slings a bag of seed over his shoulder. At that time they did not have the combines and planters we have today. 1st Century farming was a guy with a bag slung over his shoulder. It was heavy and it was filled with seed. He walked that field and there were hard paths in that field he used just for walking. He would throw seed to the left and to the right. He had farmed for years and years and he was really good at it. It was almost like a symphony of music with melody and rhythm and beauty to it. The seed would fall in the right places and at the right way. It had order to it as he cast his seed perfectly.

He has a three-year old boy he needs to teach farming. His son says, "Daddy, I want to go out with you today. I want to learn." The farmer gets a little seed bag for his son and his son follows him. His son watches at first then he tries it. He grabs a handful of seed and throws it. It is a big clump and much of it falls at his feet. What happens with that seed? It will not produce the hundred fold like his father's does, but there is power in the seed. The little boy, who did not know what he was doing, watched his dad and then he tried. There is life-giving fruit.

Dads, and moms, too, I know it is difficult and there are many obstacles to throwing seed in your family. Find other godly men or women who you respect, who know how to throw seed. Talk with them and learn from them, but get on your bag and begin to throw seed. When that little boy turns four he will be better than when he was three. When he turns five he will be better than when he was four. He will eventually learn because he did it. That is the process, but there will be no life in our family unless we begin to throw seed and it is not too late.

My boys are twenty-four, twenty-two, and sixteen. I realize I still have opportunities to throw seed into their life and that is what I want to do. I do not have as much as when they were five, six, and seven, but I still have a lot of opportunity. It is never too late!

The third aspect is the soils: The way one listens to God's Word produces the outcome. The parable teaches us there are four ways to listen to God's Word.

First, we may hear God's Word with disapproving or deaf ears,

¹⁸ "Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path."

This is the soil the farmer has been walking upon as a footpath. No seed was directed there because it was so hard, but some did fall onto this path. God's grace does that still. But, birds come along and snatch it up because it is only on the surface and the birds are Satan's and his minions. These are real beings who work to rob men and women of the life of God in their soul by taking away God's Word and snatching it from their lives. Please know Satan is at work in your life and in mine and in this church. Wherever God's Word is open he will be at work.

For some of you he has grabbing up your seed before it can bring fruit into your life. You may have been in church a long time and you may have become hard packed. Every Sunday you come and some seed falls on the top and before you leave the door, a bird comes and snatches it away. You forget about it and it has no impact.

Why does Satan do that? He does that because he hates you. He is a murderer from the beginning. He knows if your heart becomes soft to God's Word, you will be changed, you will be blessed, and you will have joy throughout life. He does not that. He hates you and he hates God's glory. That is why he snatches it from your heart. Will you continue to let him? The soil is responsible for its own condition. The birds do not come along and snatch seed which has fallen into soft soil. They cannot. It is only on the hard soil where we are in resistance to God and we are in rebellion to Him and we want to live life the way we want. Satan is at powerful work.

With the second soil, we may hear God's Word with dabbling ears,

²⁰ *"As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy,* ²¹ *yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.*

This is the kind of soil with rock underneath it. It is only one-half to one inch deep. The seed falls in but it is a very shallow reception. As it begins to grow the roots begin to push down. They know from the dry season they must find soil deeper but it hits the rock layer. The sun comes out and scorches it. There is no root, no moisture, and it withers.

It is like a person who receives God's Word immediately with joy, yet there is no root, no commitment, no real faith. It endures for a while. For a little time everyone is rejoicing. There is a baptism. There are Bible studies. There is some progress, but when tribulation and persecution arrives on account of the Word there is doubt, "I can choose this path of following God and His Word and submitting to Him, but now I realize if I do that I will face troubles I would face if I did not obey God and which I was not facing when I was walking my own path."

Anytime we walk with God and the world is broken and dark, we are inviting a trouble from a world which is broken and dark. The baptism was awesome. The Bible studies were great, but suddenly there is tribulation and trouble and persecution because we are deciding to follow God in our life. There are people who are telling us they do not like us and they will not hang out with us anymore. There is cost to this.

If there is a shallowness in the commitment, that person gets scorched because their roots are not deep enough in order to draw life that will sustain them in the midst of that trouble and persecution. They wither and they die. What is the cause of this? It is because the soil is shallowly committed and it has not thought seriously of the cost of discipleship of following Jesus.

Third, we may hear God's Word with divided ears,

²² *"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful."*

In ancient Palestine, and even today, there are weeds that grow to be six feet tall. They are huge weeds which crowd out the sun, take all the moisture, and take all the nutrients in the soil. They choke the seed. This seed grows for a while, but there are weeds introduced into their environment which they allowed into their environment. What are these weeds? In Matthew's Gospel, we read these weeds are worries of this life and treasures of this life, the things of this world. Luke includes the pleasures of this life: lust of the flesh.

All of these things are elements which divide our attention between a love for this world and a love for God. Jesus said we cannot serve two masters and we must choose one or the other because eventually we will hate the one and love the other or love the one and hate the other.² We must choose. We cannot have healthy weeds growing along side and among healthy seeds. One of those two must die and it is a hard thing to make that decision. Proverbs 4 tells us,

²³ Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Notice Jesus uses the word "choked". The kind of death this seed experiences is not like the kind of death which seems to happen in the rocky soil, which is fairly quick because in a couple of days it withers and it is gone. This is slow, gradual, and almost imperceptible.

² Matthew 6:24

When the weeds begin to grow, they do not completely overpower the individual. They just grow along side and taking just some of the nutrients. But, gradually the weeds get bigger and as they do, these sins, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, boastful pride of life, take everything. Unless these weeds are killed they will grow and they begin to choke. It is a very slow choking, but it is a real choking. Proverbs 4 tells us to guard our heart from the weeds that spring up. Are there any weeds growing in your life you know need to be uprooted and thrown away but you do not want to throw them away because you like them? They do not seem to be that dangerous or that worrisome or that deadly. If you have ears to hear, then listen to what God's Spirit will say to you.

Finally, we may hear God's Word with delighted ears,

²³ *"As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

I like how Luke describes this,

^{8:15} But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

In Luke's description of Jesus' story, he presents three key elements. First, they hear the Word with a noble heart. Their heart has been changed by God and by His Gospel. There is no one who can listen to God's Word apart from being regenerate, apart from being born again, apart from having God's grace and work of salvation. Do we have a noble heart?

Secondly, they retain God's Word; they hold fast to it. They do not let go of their commitment.

Finally, they persevere in God's Word; they recognize it is a lifelong fight and they must win it. So, they pursue it.

True obedience cannot persevere merely through duty and obligation. It must pursue the delight and the person with the noble heart will say, "Yes, I want to hear what God has to say. I recognize God's Word is my great treasure. I delight in it day and night."

Fruitful living depends upon our joyful reception of God's Word into our soul. What kind of hearer are you? Are you a disapproving hearer? Are you a dabbling hearer? Are you a divided hearer? Are you a delighted hearer who rejoices in God's Word? There is only one kind of hearer who produces life and that is the hearer who delights in God's Word. Take care to listen to God with a humble, receptive and obedient heart. God loves you and He wants to bring life into your soul.

Do your ears listen well
To the truth God will tell
Do they focus on God's way
Are they eager to obey
Can you hear God's voice
As the very best choice
Do your ears listen well