

LIVING IN THE ORCHARD (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23)

3.31.19

INTRODUCTION

Closing out our series on the “fruit of the Spirit.” We’re going to look at one final aspect of the orchard, something we’ve not talked about before: the soil.

TEXT

Then [Jesus] 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. Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear. . . . Listen then 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 their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 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. 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. 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” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23.

APPLICATION

As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit in our lives, meaning that we have that “good soil” in us. Christians are the ones who have heard the word and understood it. But notice that the expectation of seed planted in good soil is the production of a crop, in fact, a great crop! Jesus said as much: *“This is to My Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples” — Jesus Christ, John 15:8.* Even before that, John the Baptist had told his audiences: *“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” — John the Baptist, Matthew 3:8.*

So, it is absolutely valid to look at the soil that God has planted in us by means of His Holy Spirit. What can we expect, what can we know, from the Holy Spirit dwelling in us — the “soil” in which the “fruit of the Spirit” grows?

DIVINE: *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever — the Spirit of truth” — Jesus Christ, John 14:16-17a.* The Greek word for “another” means another that is just like the first, as opposed to another that is different entirely. So, Jesus is saying that this other advocate who is coming will be just like Him. It is like having another Christ standing right beside us in every moment of every day.

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? — Paul, I Corinthians 6:19a.

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are His

child, God has made you also an heir — Paul, Galatians 4:6-7. In other words, it is the Spirit who enables us to speak to God in this way. We are the beloved children of a divine God.

GUARANTEE: *Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come — Paul, II Corinthians 1:21-22.*

When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of His glory — Paul, Ephesians 1:13b-14.

[G]od saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life — Paul, Titus 3:5-7.

RESOURCES: *I pray that out of [the Father's] glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being — Paul, Ephesians 3:16.*

BACKUP: *[T]he Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God — Paul, Romans 8:26-27.*

POWER: *“[Y]ou will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” — Jesus Christ, Acts 1:8a.*

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power — Paul, II Timothy 1:7.

A second century Christian author named Tertullian wrote: “The Lord challenges us . . . to confess Him. He wants those who belong to Him to be brave and fearless. He Himself shows how weakness of the flesh is overcome by courage of the Spirit. This is the testimony of the apostles and in particular of the representative, administering Spirit. A Christian is fearless.”

“Empowering His children with the strength of the Holy Spirit is something the Father wants to do. It's not something we have to talk Him into. He genuinely wants to see us walk in His strength” — Francis Chan, *Forgotten God*, page 48.

WORDS: *“On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:18-20 (also Mark 13:9b-11, Luke 12:11-12).*

TEACHING AND GUIDANCE: *“[T]he Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” — Jesus Christ, John 14:26.*

“[W]hen He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth” — Jesus Christ, John 16:13a.

What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us

by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit — I Corinthians 2:12-14.

CHARACTER: *[T]he kingdom of God is a matter of . . . righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit — Paul, Romans 14:17.*

[M]ay you overflow with hope (confidence) by the power of the Holy Spirit — Paul, Romans 15:13b.

[T]he fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law — Paul, Galatians 5:22-23.

THE OPPOSITE: When we turn away from the direction of God, the Bible says that we *grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption — Paul, Ephesians 4:30*. That grief is found in the fact that our relationship with God is not in that moment what it should be — either reflected in our personal relationship with Him or in our relationships within the church that do not honor Him. When there is disunity or bickering, when our church family life is characterized by attitudes that are unloving or disrespectful, and whether we allow those wounds to simply continue or fade into the background, we are becoming a body that “grieves” the Holy Spirit because we are becoming a family that is not honoring to God and to what He intends a body of believers to be. How cool would it be if we were more concerned with an offense against the Holy Spirit than of an offense against ourselves.

THE DIFFICULTY: It is human nature to want things to be easy — the easier the better. But that is not God’s way. Oftentimes going God’s way means difficulty. But how did Paul respond to the difficulties that resulted from his following the call of God through his surrender to Jesus Christ? *Whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ — Paul, Philippians 3:7-10a*. How can he say that? His *citizenship is in heaven — Paul, Philippians 3:20a*. And because his citizenship is in heaven, Paul could *fix [his] eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal — Paul, II Corinthians 4:18*. These verses all remind us that being filled with the soil that is the Holy Spirit in our lives is for God’s glory, God’s outcome. The Holy Spirit is meant to lead us to holiness — the holiness that pleases God because it reflects Him and His view of the world, and not ours.

That means that we will be challenged regarding how we respond to God’s call, and how we react to God’s point of view, to God’s continuing effort to make us in the incredible image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Sometimes those challenges seem supremely difficult, or uncomfortable, or whatever. But what was it the angel Gabriel said to Mary when she was learning the incredible news, he brought her? *“All things are possible with God — Gabriel, Luke 1*. I could maybe express that the best by using an analogy: lima beans and chocolate. God’s going after our loves.

He wants our love — for Himself alone. But if I pursue His call in my own strength? What a mess! But with Him, the strength I find in His “soil?” ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. So, for instance:

- Praying for our leaders: democrats as well as republicans (souls vs. political opponents)
- Who of our church family has left or separated themselves from us for negative reasons?

We are not called to respond in kind; we are called to respond in Christ.

It is in the difficulties that we most often see God because, in the difficulties, we realize the reality of “I can’t” and get out of the way for God to do all that needs doing.

CONCLUSION

Everything that God does is for His glory and His purpose. That is why He made us; that is why He has called us. As Paul said: *[W]e are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do — Paul, Ephesians 2:10.* Because of that, as he wrote to Timothy: *[God] has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace — Paul, II Timothy 1:9.* And we have been giving everything we need, starting with the life found in our divine soil, to grow into the instruments of His will that He desires us to be. As Paul told the church in Philippi: *[I]t is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose — Paul, Philippians 2:13.*

The fullest measure of the blessings of God, and therefore the joy of the Lord, are found in surrender to God, to obedience to God, to becoming slaves to the greatest, most loving Master ever. We’ve been given the perfect soil to live that life. So, whose purpose are we living for? Let’s let God grow us to His perfect purpose. Let’s pray!