

“TASTING OUR HEARTS”, Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

I remember when I was a kid my parents in the back yard of the house where we were living, they had a garden and they planted full of vegetables. After everyday day my dad would put the water among the plants and checked if the plants were growing well without bugs. He would also move all the rocks from the soil allowing all the plants to grow perfectly and he knew the right time to take them out.

Personally, I was not interested on any of that because of my age; my interest was when mom called me to enjoy the delicious dishes that she had prepare for us (That was my interest). I did remember that in the garden, I saw plants of spinach, chards, carrots, onion, cilantro, potatoes, and much more.

Years ago, when I was pastoring in Ringwood, in one of my pastoral visitations one of the members invited me to go outside with him and collect asparagus for dinner. And he **taught** me how to cut them in angle so the rest of the plant would continue to grow well. Here at First Church, some of the families when I was doing visitations, I noticed that they have a garden too in their back yard and few of those families when the vegetables grew, they brought to me every Sunday a big bag full of those delicious vegetables. One time a couple from the church gave me a bag of potatoes that they had grown in their garden. Well, now I am hungry but is not a lunch time yet.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus bring us a particular message that in some way or another in the middle of this pandemic and facing phase four; will help us to understand our work and our position as Christians in the context in which we live today. The parable of the sower was one of the most significant parables from Jesus to the people. The word Parable is a story or figure placed alongside a teaching to help us understand its meaning. The parable is not an illustration, but it is a story that arouses our interest to see the truth behind it.

But before to go to that point, let me invite you to listen carefully the Word of God.

The Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

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

INTRODUCTION:

In this parable of the Sower, JESUS teaches us how the seed of the word when planted in the heart of man has different effects on the people. The most relevant concept in this story, is how the four types of lands or hearts, respond to God’s message in four different ways. Each land symbolizes the heart of the individuals in whom the word was spread.

In this story, we also see that Jesus preached to many people and they heard the message of salvation but some of them open their hearts to that message and others not.

Therefore, it is similar to today, when the word of salvation is also preach or teach in the middle of this pandemic or in the middle of the crisis that we all are living in; people still listening to the message but some take it and some others reject the message. However, in each person there is a different reaction to receive the message of salvation and The Lord Jesus gives an interpretation, explaining the four different types of listeners or soils (hearts) where the word was plant and refers to those who hear it.

Let us review one by one the type of hearts that Jesus our Lord was referring to in those times that also apply today for us.

1. The first type or listeners or soil are the hearers next to the road. (The Hard Heart)

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.

First of all, this explains to us that, like throwing a seed on the roadway or on our driveway, this type of person has a tough heart; this person resists the Word of God and makes it easy for the enemy to come and steal that message. Let me give you this illustration, is like when we see thousands of times how the birds come down to eat the seeds that are on the surface of the pavement, in that way the evil one grabs the word that was spread in them. The soil becomes hard when too many feet step on it; same happens with our hearts when we allow that other false doctrines influence our daily lives.

2. The second type are those listeners or land of the stony ground. (Shallow Heart)

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.

This type of person who describes the scriptures is shallow-hearted and this heart is like thin soil on a rock. Since there is no depth, whatever is planted cannot last because it has no roots. This represents the “emotional listener” who joyfully accepts God’s Word but does not really understand the price that must be paid to become a genuine Christian. There may be great enthusiasm for several days or weeks, but when persecution and problems begin, that joy disappears.

Also, the message of God cannot take root in this type of hearts, for the lack of a life of prayer, reading of the word and devotion to God. In consequence of this, then they fall. In another words these kind of hearts are temporary believers, that as soon as situations come, they leave the church and are not willing to fight for the faith that was given to them (Jn 6:66).

3. The third type of listeners or land are those in thorny ground. (The Crowded Heart)

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.

In this example, the crowded heart has not been surrendering totally to God. This heart pictures the person who receives the message but not truly repent and remove the weeds out of his or her heart. This kind of person is the one that has too many different kind of seeds growing in the same soil. And because of that, there is not room in their hearts for the good seed to grow.

For this reason, we must also have to detect the thorns in our lives and cut them, because they decline the life of the believer, causing us to stay away from God and stay away of doing God’s will.

4. The last type of listeners is those on good ground. (The Fruitful Heart)

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. ”

This type of hearts the Bible describes in Luke 8:15, as those of “*good and righteous heart*”. And not only that, it also says that they are those that “*retain the word and bear fruit with perseverance*”. Therefore, the requirements for the word to bear fruit in this type of believers were, a humble heart and an open mind to understand the message of salvation.

This kind of heart pictures the true believer, because fruit – a changed life – is the evidence of true salvation.

Keep in mind that the other three hearts produce no fruit, but this fruitful heart is the one who bear fruit 100% every day, at any moment, under any circumstance. Each of the three fruitless hearts is influenced by a different enemy that not let us be a genuine follower of Jesus our Lord. The world and its pleasures; the flesh and the devil are the three main enemies of our lives that not let us produce fruit in our lives.

CONCLUSION:

Each message of the Lord Jesus has a teaching to meditate and put it into practice today in the middle of this phase four:

Along the Way: It teaches us that each human being is responsible for listening and receiving the Word. But because individual’s insensitivity, they don’t let God’s Word receive into their hearts; that sensitivity keeps them away from God and take them to a place to ignore completely to God and God’s Word.

In the Rocky: It teaches us how important it is to congregate, to take root and learn more about God’s Word. But Jesus also encourages us to pray and have a life of devotion to God. Practicing spiritual disciplines and worshiping God at anyplace.

In Thorns: It leaves us as a teaching to be attentive to those anxieties and desires that can become thorns in our lives. For this reason, we must detect them and cut them off, asking God for help in prayer, so that we can separate those cares and desires that want to stand our spiritual life (Heb 2:18).

On good ground: It teaches us to persevere in prayer and to continue on the path that Christ laid out for our lives.

Questions for Reflection:

What type of heart are you? Are you the one who is insensitive? Or Indifferent? Or weak? Or passionate?

When reading the above explanation, the summary of the Parable of the Sower would be the following:

- **The Sower:** Who spreads the word.
- **The Seed:** The Word of God.
- **The Land:** The heart of man.
- **Those of Along the Way:** Hard-hearted (Insensitive)
- **In the Rocky:** Shallow heart (Indifferent)
- **Between Thorns:** The Crowded Heart (Weak)
- **On good ground:** The wholehearted (Passionate)