

## Week of May 9, 2021

### Matthew 13:1-23

<sup>1</sup>That day Jesus went out of the house and sat down beside the lake. <sup>2</sup>Such large crowds gathered around him that he climbed into a boat and sat down. The whole crowd was standing on the shore. <sup>3</sup>He said many things to them in parables: "A farmer went out to scatter seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering seed, some fell on the path, and birds came and ate it. <sup>5</sup>Other seed fell on rocky ground where the soil was shallow. They sprouted immediately because the soil wasn't deep. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, it scorched the plants, and they dried up because they had no roots. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorny plants grew and choked them. <sup>8</sup>Other seed fell on good soil and bore fruit, in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one. <sup>9</sup>Everyone who has ears should pay attention."

<sup>10</sup>Jesus' disciples came and said to him, "Why do you use parables when you speak to the crowds?" <sup>11</sup>Jesus replied, "Because they haven't received the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but you have. <sup>12</sup>For those who have will receive more and they will have more than enough. But as for those who don't have, even the little they have will be taken away from them. <sup>13</sup>This is why I speak to the crowds in parables: although they see, they don't really see; and although they hear, they don't really hear or understand. <sup>14</sup>What Isaiah prophesied has become completely true for them: 'You will hear, to be sure, but never understand; and you will certainly see but never recognize what you are seeing. <sup>15</sup>For this people's senses have become calloused, and they've become hard of hearing, and they've shut their eyes so that they won't see with their eyes or hear with their ears or understand with their minds, and change their hearts and lives that I may heal them.'

<sup>16</sup>Happy are your eyes because they see. Happy are your ears because they hear. <sup>17</sup>I assure you that many prophets and righteous people wanted to see what you see and hear what you hear, but they didn't. <sup>18</sup>Consider then the parable of the farmer. <sup>19</sup>Whenever people hear the word about the kingdom and don't understand it, the evil one comes and carries off what was planted in their hearts. This is the seed that was sown on the path. <sup>20</sup>As for the seed that was spread on rocky ground, this refers to people who hear the word and immediately receive it joyfully. <sup>21</sup>Because they have no roots, they last for only a little while. When they experience distress or abuse because of the word, they immediately fall away. <sup>22</sup>As for the seed that was spread among thorny plants, this refers to those who hear the word, but the worries of this life and the false appeal of wealth choke the word, and it bears no fruit. <sup>23</sup>As for what was planted on good soil, this refers to those who hear and understand, and bear fruit and produce—in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one."

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### Seeds

Modern farming is an absolute wonder. The fanciest tractors today come with advanced gps and all sorts of other gadgets that allow the farmer to know exactly where each seed is planted in their fields. They can be driven remotely with all its work being monitored by the farmer with their iPad, and much, much more. Visiting a farm where all this technology is utilized feels very futuristic and surreal, and can make the type of farming Jesus speaks of in his parable seem laughable. Whereas today each seed is planted in precisely the right spot to allow for the best yield, Palestinian farmers spread their seed far and wide, throwing them seemingly wildly, hoping some of them would take root and produce. In reality it wasn't as random as we might think, but that's not really the important thing because the point of the parable isn't Palestinian farming techniques but what the seeds, and the places the seeds landed, represent. Jesus tells us precisely what is what - the seed is God's word and the various landing zones are the people who hear the word.

The description Jesus gives for each makes sense in his context - of course there would be some who heard what Jesus was doing and rejected it, some who'd get into it for a little while but not do anything to grow, who got too overwhelmed by life, et cetera, as they lived in a pre-resurrection reality. But the world, just like farming, has moved forward in dramatic and incredible ways. Like in farming, where we can now determine how to precisely get the best yield out of our seeds with technology and improved technique, we can also improve the yield of our

faith. The first big development is the resurrection - the truth of God's word was made real for all to see and hear. Trusting in the resurrection gives our faith the roots it needs for the biggest yield possible. But there's more. Because of technology, what was once hidden knowledge is now available for everyone. Once scripture was only accessible in the church read by the priest, but now everyone has a bible in their homes and nearly everyone has access to one on their phones. And then there's biblical history and archaeology, scriptural interpretation and theology - it's all accessible if you just look for it. We have incredible tools available to us to ensure the word has a chance to grow in us and produce fruit. There can be trouble in finding good sources that aren't heavily influenced by partisanship or ideology, but that has always been problematic. The solution, though, is simple - God's word flourishes in love. If what we see/hear is not rooted in love, then it isn't from God because God is love. May we be good soil, where the seed of the Kingdom can root and grow in and through us.

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*Great God, you gently prepare your people to hear and accept the truth of your kingdom. In love you sent Jesus to show us the fullness of your promises, and in his death and resurrection you fulfilled them with finality. May we hear and heed your commands, allowing our lives to be fruitful gardens of love and justice. In Christ's name, Amen.*