

GOING DEEPER

The Parables: The Sower and the Seed

Hear the Word. Trust the King. Bear Fruit.

Matthew 13:1-23 | Sermon preached September 13, 2026

A personal or small-group study guide for returning to the sermon, examining the biblical text, and responding to Christ the King with repentance, faith, endurance, and fruit.

Main Idea

THE HEART OF THE MESSAGE

The Parable of the Sower is ultimately a revelation of Christ and His kingdom. The King sends forth His Word, and that Word exposes the condition of the heart. Many hear, but only those whom God enables to truly hear and understand receive the Word in a way that produces lasting fruit.

The question is not simply, Have I heard the gospel? but:

Has the Word brought me into glad submission to Christ the King, producing repentance, endurance, worship, and fruit?

Sermon Overview

Jesus begins Matthew 13 by teaching in parables. Although four different soils appear in the story, the sermon emphasized that Jesus ultimately shows us two kinds of hearers: those who hear but do not understand, and those who hear and understand.

The same seed is scattered. The circumstances surrounding it do not create the condition of the soil; they reveal what is already present. Jesus is showing us something about His kingdom.

His kingdom is not primarily a geographical realm. It is His sovereign rule, reign, and work. Jesus is King, creation belongs to Him, and the gospel announces that the King has come and calls sinners to repent.

The seed is the Word of the kingdom - the gospel. The hardened path rejects it. Rocky and thorny soil may show an initial response, but that growth does not endure when discipleship is costly or worldly cares compete for allegiance. Good soil hears and understands; the Word takes root and produces fruit.

That fruit includes repentance, the fruit of the Spirit, humility, obedience, increasing conformity to Christ, disciple-making, worship, and perseverance. Good soil is not identified by the absence of suffering. It experiences heat, dryness, and hardship, yet the Word continues to bear fruit.

KEY DISTINCTION

The life of the believer increasingly bears evidence that Christ is King.

1**The King and His Kingdom**

Read Matthew 4:17; Matthew 13:10-17; John 18:36

Jesus repeatedly preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. His hearers naturally understood kingdoms in terms of political power and territory, but Christ's kingdom is unlike the kingdoms of this world. His kingdom is His sovereign activity - His rule, His reign, and His work.

Discuss

1. When you hear the word kingdom, what do you naturally picture?
2. How does understanding the kingdom as God's rule and reign change the way you read Jesus' teaching?
3. Why would sinful people naturally resist the announcement that Christ is King?
4. What areas of life are we tempted to treat as though they belong to us rather than to Christ?
5. What does it practically mean to confess that Jesus is King rather than simply saying that Jesus is part of our lives?

Go Deeper

Read Psalm 24:1. If the earth and everything in it belongs to the Lord, what parts of your life fall under His authority? Consider your time, family, relationships, money, work, entertainment, desires, plans, suffering, and future. Where is it hardest for you to gladly acknowledge Christ's rule?

2**Why Jesus Spoke in Parables**

Read Matthew 13:10-17; Isaiah 6:9-10

A parable is an earthly story communicating a deeper spiritual truth. But Jesus' parables do more than make difficult ideas easier. They also reveal a distinction between those who merely hear and those whom God enables to hear and understand.

Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. - Matthew 13:16

Discuss

1. According to Matthew 13:10-17, why do some people hear Jesus' words without understanding them?
2. What is the difference between being exposed to biblical truth and spiritually understanding it?
3. Why should genuine spiritual understanding produce humility rather than pride?
4. Have you ever known a biblical truth intellectually for years before the Lord caused you to understand its significance more deeply?
5. How should recognizing our dependence upon God affect the way we listen to His Word?

PRAY BEFORE YOU READ OR LISTEN

Lord, give me ears to hear. Let me not merely encounter Your Word. Cause me to understand, believe, obey, and bear fruit.

3

The Sower and the Seed

Read Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23

The sower broadcasts seed across the field, and the same seed reaches every kind of soil. Jesus explains that the seed is the Word of the kingdom.

The gospel announces forgiveness and salvation through Christ, but it is larger than a message about receiving personal benefits. It declares:

- God is holy and sovereign.
- Creation belongs to Him.
- Humanity has rebelled against its King.
- Christ has come, and sin will be judged.
- Forgiveness is found in Christ; sinners are justified by faith.
- The King calls His creation to repent and believe.

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. - Matthew 4:17

Discuss

1. Why must the gospel begin with who God is rather than with mankind?
2. What connection does the sermon make between God's holiness and our need for repentance?
3. Why is repentance necessary if Christ is truly King?
4. How can we unintentionally reduce the gospel to 'Jesus will make my life better'?
5. How is the gospel different when we understand it as the announcement of the reign of Christ?
6. What does it mean to be justified by faith rather than attempting to justify ourselves?

GOSPEL RESPONSE

The proper response to the King's Word is not negotiation, self-improvement, or mere admiration. It is repentance, faith, and glad submission to Christ.

4

What the Soils Reveal

Read Matthew 13:18-23

The circumstances surrounding the seed do not create the condition of the soil; they reveal it.

The Hardened Path

The Word is heard but never understood. The evil one snatches it away. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18. Why does the gospel appear foolish to those who are perishing?

The Rocky Soil

The Word is initially received with joy, but there is no root. When following Christ brings tribulation or persecution, the response disappears.

ASK

Do I want Christ Himself, or only a version of Christianity that costs me very little?

The Thorny Soil

The Word is heard, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke it.

- What competes most strongly for my attention?
- What desires most easily crowd out the things of God?
- What earthly comfort would be especially difficult to surrender in obedience to Christ?

The Good Soil

The good soil hears and understands. The Word takes root and bears fruit. The Christian life is not merely adding Jesus to an already-established life. Christ does not become one priority among many. He is King.

Discuss

1. What similarities exist between the rocky and thorny soils?
2. Why is an emotional or initial response to the gospel not necessarily evidence of saving faith?
3. What does persecution reveal about the rocky soil?
4. What do worldly cares and riches reveal about the thorny soil?
5. Why is lasting fruit important in Jesus' explanation of the good soil?
6. What is the danger of trying to add Christ to a life we still intend to rule ourselves?

5

Fruit That Fits the Kingdom

Read Galatians 5:22-23; Micah 6:8; Psalm 51:17

Good soil produces fruit because the Word has truly been received. Biblical fruit includes:

- love, joy, and peace
- faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control
- repentance and obedience
- disciple-making
- patience, kindness, and goodness
- justice, mercy, and humility
- conformity to Christ
- worship and perseverance

Fruit will appear in different measures and grow at different rates, but living faith does not remain permanently fruitless.

Discuss

1. Which fruit of the Spirit has the Lord noticeably grown in you?
2. Where do you still see a need for growth?
3. How does Psalm 51:17 connect repentance and humility with spiritual fruit?
4. What would becoming increasingly conformed to Christ look like in your relationships this week?
5. How does bearing fruit bring glory to the King rather than glory to ourselves?

6

Fruit in Hard Ground

Read James 1:2-4; John 15:1-8

One of the sermon's most important observations is that good soil is not soil that never experiences difficulty. The good seed still faces heat, dry conditions, limited rain, and hardship. Yet it continues to produce fruit. Suffering itself does not prove that something is wrong; trials often reveal what is already present.

Discuss

1. Why are we tempted to interpret hardship as evidence that God is not at work?
2. What is the difference between merely surviving a trial and bearing spiritual fruit through it?
3. What might repentance look like in the middle of suffering?
4. How can trials reveal whether Christ truly rules our hearts?
5. What evidence of God's sustaining grace have you seen during a difficult season?
6. How does dependence upon the Holy Spirit allow believers to endure rather than fall away?

Personal Examination

Jesus ends the parable with the command, 'He who has ears, let him hear.' Take time to examine yourself prayerfully.

- Am I merely hearing God's Word, or am I receiving it with understanding and faith?
- Is there an area where I want Christ's blessings without Christ's authority?
- What worldly concern is most likely to choke my attention to God's Word?
- What happens to my faith when obedience becomes costly?
- Is repentance an ongoing reality in my life?
- Can I see increasing evidence of Christ's character?
- Am I living coram Deo - before the face of God?
- Am I participating in the work of the kingdom by proclaiming the gospel and making disciples?

KEEP YOUR EYES ON CHRIST

The goal is not morbid introspection or confidence in our own fruit. Look to Christ. The King saves His people, works in His people, and produces fruit through His Word and Spirit.

Closing Reflection

What does my life reveal about the gospel seed?

The evidence of good soil is not a trouble-free life. It is a life in which the Word of God continues to produce repentance, faith, endurance, obedience, worship, and growing conformity to Christ - even through hardship.

A LIFE UNDER THE KING

Let us spend our lives hearing His Word, trusting our King, bearing fruit, worshiping Him, and proclaiming His gospel for as long as we have breath.