

FARMERS FOR THE LORD

Day Four: THE GOOD GROUND

THE HEARERS ON PENTECOST - "WHAT MUST WE DO?"

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH - "WHAT DO TH HINDER ME?"

Acts 2, 8

This lesson will study the example of those who heard and obeyed the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost. It will also notice the example of the Ethiopian eunuch who also heard and obeyed the Gospel. This will help us to see what the Lord meant when he talked about "good soil" and how it represented an honest heart.

Introduction:

1. The Parable of the Sower teaches us about the kinds of hearts that men may possess.
2. These types of hearts are illustrated by four different types of soil onto which seeds fell.
3. The success or failure of the planted seed was dependent upon the kind of soil in which it was planted.
4. By learning about these soils, we can learn the kind of heart (mind) that is needed to bear fruit for the Lord.
5. The first type of soil was the **wayside ground**.
6. The second type of soil was the **stony ground**.
7. The third type of soil is the **thorny ground**.
8. The fourth type of soil is the **good ground**.

I. The Description of the Soil

(Matthew 13:8)

- A. "Behold, a sower went forth to sow."
 1. In the days before farm machinery, seeds were sown by hand.
 2. Sometimes, this would involve making a hole in the ground and planting one seed at a time.
 3. However, Jesus describes a man who is scattering seeds by the handful upon a field that has been prepared by being broken up.
 4. In this means of spreading seeds, many would land upon the prepared soil; but, some would fall outside of the field...
 - a. Some on the wayside soil
 - b. Some on stony ground
 - c. Some among the thorns
- B. Jesus spoke of seeds that fell upon the ground that was good.
 1. This refers to the soil that was prepared to receive seed.
 2. It was not packed down like the wayside soil, but tilled to allow the seeds to germinate and grow strong, deep roots.
 3. All rocks had been removed to give the seed access to deep soil and water.
 4. All thorns had been cleared so the seeds could have adequate space and sunlight.

- C. Because the ground was good, the plants “sprang up.”
 - 1. Luke 8:8 uses this phrase, but it comes from a Greek word that means, “To swell up; thus, to germinate, sprout, shoot forth, or spring up.”
 - 2. Mark 4:8 uses this phrase, but it comes from a different Greek word that means, “To go up, rise up, or ascend.”
 - 3. Thus, not only did the seeds sprout and send forth plants, but also the plants grew up and reached maturity.
- D. After springing up, Mark records that the plants ‘increased’ – meaning they continued to grow.
- E. Finally, they produced fruit.
 - 1. This means that they were healthy plants.
 - 2. This means that they were mature plants.
 - 3. This means that they were productive plants.
- F. Different plants produced different amounts of fruit, but they all were productive.

II. The Explanation of the Heart (Matthew 13:23)

- A. “Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.”
 - 1. Jesus wanted those who heard to understand His teaching.
 - 2. Thus, He explained the meaning of the parable.
- B. This description of soil is meant to illustrate the heart of man.
- C. The good soil represented a heart that heard and understood the Word of God.
 - 1. This means that he listened closely to the message.
 - 2. It means that he considered carefully what was taught.
 - 3. It means that he put the ideas together in his mind and found them to be true.
- D. The good soil represented a heart that heard and received the Word (Mark 4:20).
 - 1. To receive means, “To accept, to admit, to delight in.”
 - 2. It means that he did not reject the message but accepted it as truth.
- E. The good soil represented a heart that heard and kept the Word (Luke 8:15).
 - 1. The Greek word for ‘keep’ means, “To hold down, to hold fast; to take possession of; to retain.”
 - 2. It means that after hearing and accepting the Word as truth, he continued to hold onto it as a possession.
 - 3. Obeying the Gospel means continuing to live according to the teaching of the Scriptures!
- F. Luke tells us why the word was heard, understood, received, and kept by those represented by the good soil.
- G. They had honest and good hearts.
 - 1. The word for ‘honest’ actually means, “Beautiful or praiseworthy.”
 - 2. In the Bible, it is often used to refer to something that is beautiful because of moral purity.
 - 3. Thus, an honest heart is one that is true, noble, and honorable.
 - 4. This is a person who would listen without prejudice and judge the facts without bias.
 - 5. The word for ‘good’ means, “Pleasant, upright, honorable, excellent, agreeable, or joyful.”
 - 6. In order for a heart to be good, it must first be honest.
- H. Those with this kind of heart will produce fruit for the Lord.
 - 1. This fruit is growth in Christian character in our own lives (Gal. 5:22-23; Phil. 4:17; Col. 1:5-6; Heb. 12:11).
 - 2. This fruit is converts to the faith (John 15:1-8).

3. This fruit is unto everlasting life (John 4:36; Rom. 6:21-22; 7:4; Jam. 5:7).
 - I. However, as Luke emphasizes, this fruit is brought forth with patience.
 1. One does not plant a seed and reap a harvest the next day.
 2. It takes time and effort for a seed to grow into a plant that produces fruit.
 3. It takes time and work for a person to grow into a mature Christian who bears fruit for the Lord.
 - J. Some will bear more fruit than others, but what matters is that we each do all that we can with what we have.
- III. The Illustration of the Hearers on Pentecost (Acts 2:36-47)
- A. As Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, he informed his hearers that they had crucified the Son of God.
 - B. He also showed that Jesus had been raised from the dead and was now at the right hand of God on the throne of David as Lord and Christ.
 - C. Upon hearing this, some asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”
 1. Obviously, they had heard the message that Peter preached.
 2. They also understood the message – considering it closely.
 3. They received the message as the truth.
 - D. In answer to their question, Peter commanded them to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”
 - E. Furthermore, he encouraged them, “Save yourselves from this perverse (untoward) generation.”
 - F. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.”
 1. Not only did they hear, understand, and receive the Word, but also they kept it.
 2. This is seen in their willingness to obey what was commanded.
 - G. This demonstrates that they had honest and good hearts.
 - H. One who has an honest and good heart will gladly receive the Word of God – and be obedient to it!
 - I. As a result, these began to bear fruit for the Lord.
 1. By being baptized, they were added by the Lord to the church.
 2. They continued steadfastly in the truth they had heard.
 3. They sold possession to help others who were in need.
 4. They continued in daily fellowship and praise of God.
 5. Soon, they began to teach and to convert others to the faith.
 - J. Beginning on this day in Jerusalem, the Gospel would spread into all the world!
- IV. The Illustration of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)
- A. The nobleman from Ethiopia demonstrated that his heart was “good soil” by several actions.
 - B. First, he had travelled all the way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem in order to worship God.
 - C. Next, as he was riding in his chariot on his way back home, he was reading (out loud) from the book of Isaiah – studying the Word of God.
 - D. Also, when Philip asked if he understood what he was reading, he invited Philip into his chariot to teach him.
 - E. Finally, when Philip preached the Gospel of Jesus to him, the Ethiopian understood, received, and obeyed the Word.
 1. He desired to be baptized immediately.
 2. He confessed his faith in Jesus as the Son of God.
 3. He stopped the chariot and was baptized for the forgiveness of his sins.

4. He went on his way rejoicing!

Conclusion:

1. An honest and good heart will be willing to hear and to obey the Word of God.
 - a. This requires believing the truth about Jesus.
 - b. This requires repenting of one's sins.
 - c. This requires confessing one's faith.
 - d. This requires being baptized for remission of sins.
2. An honest and good heart will keep the Word of God – following it faithfully every day.
3. An honest and good heart will bear fruit for the Lord.
 - a. In his or her own life
 - b. In the lives of others
4. An honest and good heart will reap a harvest of eternal salvation.