

SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY 02.02.25

PREACHER: PS ANDY MAC

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

BECOMING CHRISTLIKE

*BEING, **THINKING** & DOING*

Conviction of a Disciple: As we journey in our growth into Christlikeness, we become more attentive to God's voice, cultivating hearts that are receptive to His Word and allowing His kingdom to take root and grow in us.

OVERVIEW

Jesus' parable of the sower offers us an invitation to examine the soil of our hearts. It asks us to reflect on how receptive we are to God's kingdom. Are we allowing hardness, shallowness, or distractions to choke out the life He wants to grow in us, or will we keep our hearts soft and pliable to the words and work of the Spirit?

ACTION

Step 1: Reflect: Which type of soil best describes your heart right now? What might be hardening, shallow, or distracting your faith?

Step 2: Commit: What is one practical way you can make space for God's Word to take deeper root in your life this week?

Step 3: Act: Take time this week to pray and ask God to break up the soil of your heart, removing anything that hinders growth in His kingdom.

THOUGHT

SCRIPTURE: MARK 4:1-20

Jesus often taught, not by giving a list of instructions, but by telling parables - stories that used simple, earthy, everyday images, but carried an eternal weight. These stories didn't inform; they invited.

The parable of the sower isn't a reflection on farming—it's an apocalyptic vision. Not "apocalyptic" in the Hollywood sense of world-ending destruction, but in the biblical sense - something that's been hidden but that's now being revealed. Jesus - through his life and teaching - is showing us what the kingdom of God is like, how it works, and, perhaps most importantly, how we receive it. And he invites us right at the beginning of the parable to "LISTEN" (v.3). Not just once, but a continual listening and engaging with what he has to say.

This is how parables work. They are designed not as a one-hit-wonder, but like a diamond that we turn over and over in our minds and hearts. As soon as we feel like we've "got it", something else just beneath the surface grabs our attention and invites us to turn it over once again.

The farmer in this parable sows his seed generously. Seed is thrown everywhere - on the path, in rocky places, among thorns, and into good soil. Some of it never takes root. Some of it starts to grow but withers under pressure. Some are choked by competing plants. But some land in good soil, sinking beneath the surface and growing deep roots, and eventually produce an abundant crop.

The first thing to notice? The problem isn't the seed. The problem is the soil. Jesus is asking us to reflect: What kind of soil are we?

Hardened soil—where the Word never takes root. Maybe we've heard it a thousand times, but it never penetrates. Maybe we've let cynicism or past hurts build a shell around our hearts, keeping the life of God at arm's length.

Rocky soil—where we receive the Word with excitement, but it never goes deep. It feels real in the moment, but when life gets difficult, faith fades because it never took root.

Thorny soil—where faith competes with all the other voices vying for our attention. Worries, the pursuit of wealth, distractions, and competing desires crowd out the gospel, leaving us restless and unfruitful.

And then there's good soil—where the seed takes root, grows deep, and bears fruit.

But here's the thing: soil doesn't just become good overnight. It has to be cultivated. The ground has to be broken up. Rocks need to be removed. Weeds have to be pulled.

We, like the Jewish people of Jesus' day, can often expect the kingdom of God to come in obvious, dramatic ways—through power, force, or instant transformation. But Jesus shows us something different. His kingdom doesn't arrive like an army taking a city. Instead, He sowed generously, knowing that not everyone would receive His message, but some would. He invited, rather than forced, people into the kingdom.

God's kingdom comes like a seed, and grows through slow, steady transformation in those who prepare their hearts to receive it.

So the question is: How is the soil of our hearts? Have we become hardened? Are we shallow? Are we distracted by everything the world has on offer? Or are we tending the ground, allowing the words of Jesus to take root and grow in us?

The kingdom is here and the message has been sown. How will we respond?

DISCUSSION

1. What are some common things in our culture that harden hearts, create shallowness, or choke out faith?
2. How does Jesus' method of sowing the kingdom contrast with our desire for quick, dramatic results?
3. How can we, as a community, cultivate good soil together, encouraging one another to remain receptive to God's Word?

PRAYER

Lord, prepare the soil of our hearts to receive your Word. Break up the hard places, deepen our roots, and remove the distractions that choke out faith. May your kingdom take root in us and bear fruit that lasts.

Amen.