

Communion Service.

Bible reading: Matthew Chapter 13: v. 1-23.

Title: The Parable of the Soils.

On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. <sup>2</sup> And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

<sup>3</sup> Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. <sup>7</sup> And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

<sup>10</sup> And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

<sup>11</sup> He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. <sup>12</sup> For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. <sup>13</sup> Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. <sup>14</sup> And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,

And seeing you will see and not perceive;

<sup>15</sup> For the hearts of this people have grown dull.

*Their ears are hard of hearing,*

And their eyes they have closed,

Lest they should see with *their eyes* and hear with *their ears*,

Lest they should understand with *their hearts* and turn,

So that I should heal them.'

<sup>16</sup> But blessed *are* your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;<sup>17</sup> for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous *men* desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*.

<sup>18</sup> "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. <sup>20</sup> But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. <sup>22</sup> Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

### **Introduction**

We have now arrived at the third teaching block in Matthew's Gospel.

You will notice that the whole of Chapter thirteen contains parables.

So the first question we need to ask is "what is a parable?"

If you went to Sunday School as a child, you would probably have been taught that a parable is an "**earthly story with a heavenly meaning.**"

Although this is not wrong and ideal for a child's mind to understand, it might be good to look a little deeper into the meaning and reason that Jesus taught parables here in chapter 13.

**Firstly we need to place Chapter 13 within the context of Matthew's teaching.**

Up until Chapter 11 the teaching of Jesus has mainly been focused upon his disciples.

Now Jesus moves into a **different phase of His teaching.**

Jesus teaches the multitudes from this point.

**The context for chapter 13 is to understand the material in chapter 11-12.**

The teachings in these two chapters form a bridge into the teaching of the parables in chapter 13. Chapter 11-12 teach us what happens when **God's created world and His kingdom clash or collide with the human world and its kingdom.**

**As God's kingdom is being fulfilled it will be challenged by people who oppose this rule.**

When Jesus teaches and preaches in Galilee we discover developing opposition from the **religious leaders**, and also a developing **uncertainty among the people.**

However there is a **clear understanding** within Jesus's disciples.

We notice that Jesus began to rebuke the cities in which most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. **(Matt. 11: v. 20)**

Jesus was a little frustrated with the unbelief of the people but found comfort in knowing that God hides things from proud people, but reveals spiritual truth to those who are humble.

**(Matt. 11: v.2 5-26 in the N.K.J.)**

<sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. <sup>26</sup> Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

Jesus upset the religious people by healing somebody on the Sabbath Day and also revealed the unpardonable sin in **Chapter 12; v. 31-32.**

The Scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign to prove that he was God's Son, but Jesus refused to give them one.

**Jesus pointed instead to the sign of Jonah the Old Testament Prophet.**

So chapters 11 and 12, which are the lead up to chapter 13, were a hard hitting teaching session for Jesus to give.

**Jesus now hides some of His hard hitting teaching within the context of stories, which are called parables.**

This teaching session was **designed to make people stop and think.**

It is clear that these stories were not designed to entertain people. They were there to challenge people's thinking.

This deep level of teaching by Jesus could only be understood by people whose hearts were opened by God to the message.

Our first parable is normally called the parable of the Sower, but I will call it today, **the parable of the "Soils".**

The reason is that the **true focus is all about the kind of soil which influenced the growth of the seed.**

**The seed is God's word, and in this context it is the Gospel Message of God's Kingdom.**

In the case of this parable, Matthew explains the meaning by recording Jesus's explanation.

So we can see clearly that this parable is simple to understand and apply for us today.

Today for the sake of time, as it is communion and we have already had a new open prayer time, I am going to **focus upon the four soils, and apply the truth of this to life in Japan in 2019.**

### **1. The wayside soil - v. 4, & v. 19.**

Firstly we need to understand what the wayside was in these days.

The Wayside was the very hard ground that separated people's small fields where they grew their vegetables.

**It was like a very hard pathway.**

In fact it was so hard that it would be impossible under normal circumstances for any seed to grow on this ground.

It would be like sowing seeds on a concrete pavement outside O.C.C.

In the parable we are told that as the sower went out to sow his seed that some of it fell on this hard ground.

We are then given an explanation of what happened to this seed.

Jesus explains in v.19 that when anybody **hears the word of the Kingdom of God** and doesn't understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart.

We know that there is **nothing wrong with the seed**, but we do know that there is something seriously wrong with the ground.

**The ground is much too hard for the seed to grow.**

We know from the context of the parable that the **soil represents a person's heart and life.**

So we see that when we present the Gospel to people here in Japan, there are going to be people with hard hearts towards the **Bible message of Salvation only through Jesus Christ.**

In fact even the wonderful truth that we present **will immediately be taken away by Satan.**

**The truth of God's word will not bear fruit in their lives.**

There are some brilliant scientists, every educated engineers, and I.T. specialists, excellent painters and electrical and mechanical designers whose minds have been developed to produce in their eyes, wonderful things.

However they are determined to block out the truth of the Gospel Message that Jesus brings.

**Why is this?**

**Mark explains why in Mark 7: v.18-23. in N.L.T.**

<sup>18</sup> "Don't you understand either?" he asked. "Can't you see that the food you put into your body cannot defile you? <sup>19</sup> Food doesn't go into your heart, but only passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer." (By saying this, he declared that every kind of food is acceptable in God's eyes.) <sup>20</sup> And then he added, "It is what comes from inside that defiles you. <sup>21</sup> For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup> adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. <sup>23</sup> All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you."

So in Japan and everywhere else in the world there are wonderfully gifted people, who are capable of doing some wonderful things, **but they have a big problem.**

The problem is that their **hearts are defiled.**

**These wonderful people have rejected the offer of a new heart from Jesus.**

They have allowed the devil to destroy the opportunity of a new heart by **listening to the voice of Satan, rather than the voice of Jesus, through the Bible.**

**Is there any hope for these people?**

While their hearts are hard, there is no hope, but we can still pray for them.

**Maybe God might change their hearts?**

Maybe their circumstances might change?

**While these people are alive, there is hope, but after their death, there is NO HOPE.**

The teaching by Jesus about Lazarus and the Rich Man point this out clearly.

**Luke 16: v. 19 - 31 in N.L.T.**

<sup>19</sup> Jesus said, "There was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed in purple and fine linen and who lived each day in luxury. <sup>20</sup> At his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus who was covered with sores. <sup>21</sup> As Lazarus lay there longing for scraps from the rich man's table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores.

<sup>22</sup> "Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to sit beside Abraham at the heavenly banquet. The rich man also died and was buried, <sup>23</sup> and he went to the place of the dead. There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side.

<sup>24</sup> "The rich man shouted, 'Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames.'

<sup>25</sup> "But Abraham said to him, 'Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish. <sup>26</sup> And besides, there is a great chasm separating us. No one can cross over to you from here, and no one can cross over to us from there.'

<sup>27</sup> "Then the rich man said, 'Please, Father Abraham, at least send him to my father's home. <sup>28</sup> For I have five brothers, and I want him to warn them so they don't end up in this place of torment.'

<sup>29</sup> "But Abraham said, 'Moses and the prophets have warned them. Your brothers can read what they wrote.'

<sup>30</sup> “The rich man replied, ‘No, Father Abraham! But if someone is sent to them from the dead, then they will repent of their sins and turn to God.’

<sup>31</sup> “But Abraham said, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they won’t be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”

## **2. The Stony Soil - v. 5, 20-21.**

This type of soil was common in Israel.

I know from my own personal experience that it takes a long time to remove stones from the ground before you sow seeds that will grow.

In England if you had a small piece of land and you wanted to grow vegetables, then you would need to hire a special machine in order to break up the ground and take out all of the stones.

I once borrowed one of these machines and uncovered a large amount of stones before Wendy was able to plant some wonderful bushes in our garden in the U.K.

However in Israel at this time the type of soil that Jesus was talking about here, involved a thin layer of good soil, but it was not very deep. Under this thin layer of soil was a very rocky ground.

It would have been impossible for the plant to sink down its roots into the soil, because it would hit rock.

When the sun came out the plant had no roots to draw upon for its nourishment, therefore it withered away and died.

**Jesus explains the meaning of this parable in v. 20-21.**

A person can receive the Gospel message of God’s Kingdom with great JOY, but their faith is not deeply rooted and when **tribulation or persecution comes, they fall away and do not continue with their faith in Jesus.**

It is always sad when you meet somebody who has professed faith in Jesus and is very excited about their new Christian life, only to discover that a few years later they are no longer attending Church or walking with Jesus.

**There are many complex reasons why this may happen.**

**However I do believe, that for today, some people have been listening to and embracing a different Gospel from the Gospel that Jesus presented to us in the Bible.**

What is often called the **“Prosperity Gospel”** has led many people to embrace a different Gospel from the Gospel that Jesus teaches.

This movement came to prominence in the 1950’s in the U.S.A.

Today there are many well-known people who proclaim a prosperity gospel.

**Basically they teach a believers ability to overcome poverty and/or illness through devotion to God and positive thinking or confession.**

The top stars of this movement are very rich and many have their own private jets.

Sadly they manipulate people to send money to their organisations in the hope that they too will get rich and healthy.

**These people are very successful in poor countries.**

When people believe in this false gospel and then get sick or do not get rich, they often fall away and then they are **harder to reach with the true Gospel.**

**The people who fall away are not rooted in the Bible. They are not disciplined according to God’s Word.**

They have their own ideas, and are not really interested in Jesus Christ and His teaching.

**Q. How can we help these people?**

We can pray for them and clearly present the true Gospel.

It is never easy to help somebody who has believed in a different Gospel, **but if they are willing to embrace the true Gospel, then Jesus can truly help them.**

There is still hope for these people.

## **3. The Thorny Soil. - v.7, v. 22.**

Jesus tells us that the thorny soil is very dangerous.

It seems to be good soil, but there are **many distractions and diversions that take people away from following Jesus.**

Jesus tells us that there are two enemies involved in this soil.

**These are the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches.**

**James 4: v. 4. in N.L.T.**

<sup>4</sup>You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.

We can't be in love with Jesus, and at the same time, be in love with the things of this world.

**James describes it as committing adultery if we start to love the world more than we love Jesus.**

If we have a divided heart where half of our heart wants to follow Jesus and the other half wants to follow the ways of the world, then eventually the world's ways win.

Satan will eventually destroy your love for Jesus by offering you more and more things of this world.

**Luke 12: v. 16-21.**

<sup>16</sup>Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. <sup>17</sup>And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' <sup>18</sup>So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry." ' <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

<sup>21</sup>"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

**Is there hope for people who once professed faith in Jesus and followed Jesus but are now no longer doing this?**

Yes there is hope for these people, but they will need to **REPENT and come back to Jesus.**

**These people must come back to Jesus and give Him 100% of their hearts.**

#### **4. The Good Soil. v.8-9, v.23.**

Jesus teaches us that the good Soil produces lots of harvest.

in v. 23 we are told that this person is represented by the person who **hears the word and understands it.** This person also produces fruit in their lives.

**This fruit is described in the New Testament as the fruit of the Holy Spirit.**

This fruit is produced by God's Holy Spirit working in the life of a person who is open to the teaching of Jesus and the complete Bible.

**It is not a human fruit; it is a spiritual fruit.**

**Galatians 5: v. 22 in N.K.J.**

<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

**Matthew 3: v.8-10,**

<sup>8</sup>Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, <sup>9</sup>and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. <sup>10</sup>And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

**Matthew 7: v.15-20**

<sup>15</sup>"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup>You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup>Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup>A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup>Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

**Matthew 12: v.33-37.**

<sup>33</sup> "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit. <sup>34</sup> Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. <sup>35</sup> A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. <sup>36</sup> But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. <sup>37</sup> For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

**By way of a conclusion and a challenge, we need to answer the following question.**

**Q. How is your heart today, towards Jesus and His word, and towards the teaching of God from the whole Bible?**

**In other words, what type of soil in the parable represents your heart today?**

I can't answer that question for you, but I can tell you that Jesus, God's Son, died on a cross 2,000 years ago that you might have a **New Heart, A Clean Heart, and a Heart that is surrendered to His will.**

**Will you come to Jesus today and surrender your heart?**