

This morning our study of Luke's gospel brings us to I think, one of the most profound and maybe even most practical texts in the NT – it's the parable of the sower, the seed, and the soils. And, I think of all the parables Jesus taught, this is the most familiar one, maybe the most foundational one; it certainly has been a very formative one for me, in turns of my understanding of salvation and gospel ministry. We call this the parable of the sower, it is really the parable of the soils, or we could even call it the parable of the human heart. This is basically an EKG read out on your heart. You are here, this is a parable about you, this is a parable about me. It is a parable about salvation, and what happens when people hear the gospel and why they respond the way they do.

One of the things you quickly discover as a Christian if you've ever shared the gospel much, is that most people are not as eager to hear your good news as you are to tell it. In fact, you will very soon discover that most people who hear the gospel what...they reject it, right. Most people reject it. And that can be a very discouraging thing especially to a new believer. I mean you get and you immediately want to start telling other people about Christ expecting them to respond the same way you do and they don't. And that's...that's disheartening. They just look at you with this blank stare, this glazed look in their eyes like you're from Jupiter, or they roll their eyes at you like you're some kind of a religious kook, or they say something patronizing like my best friend in college said to me, "Oh, I hear you found religion, I'm happy for you."

That's kind of hard to take; it's confusing, it's discouraging, it's disappointing, because it all seems so crystal clear to you, why not to them? You get it, why don't they get it? And, what happens is... you begin to think, "maybe it's me, maybe it's my presentation, maybe I'm doing something wrong, saying it the wrong way, maybe I'm not being clear enough, maybe this isn't my thing, maybe evangelism really isn't my gift, psheeww.....good, cause I didn't really want to do it anyway!" And pretty soon you get so discouraged that you just stop; you take it personally that people don't respond positively and you just stop sharing the gospel altogether. Well that is why this parable is here. Jesus tells this parable to His disciples to let them know right up front how the gospel is going to be received. This is what you can expect when you share the gospel. So when the response is not what you hoped it would be, just recognize that the issue is not with the sower, the issue is not with the seed, the issue is with the soil. So this is the parable of the soils. How various people respond to the gospel and why they respond that way.

Now you notice first of all the situation that led to this parable. In fact, there's a very logical sequence here and flow to this passage. Verse 4 sets the scene, or kind of describes the situation that was going on...then the actual parable comes in verses 5-8, then Jesus explains in verses 9-10 to the disciples, why He's now teaching in parables, and then in verses 11-15, He explains the meaning of the parable to them. So the meat of it, or the heart of it we could say are verses 11-15, the four heart-responses to the word of God.

But I want us to begin in verse 4 and work our way to that. In verse 4... "*When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable.*" So here's the situation: the situation is large crowds. That's what prompted the parable. We already know from vs.1 that Jesus is now going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God, right...we talked about that. He's on tour through Galilee, He's engaged now in this itinerate preaching ministry, he's going to all of these little cities and villages all over Galilee. And the twelve are with Him, the 12 disciples, plus a number of women, faithful, godly women who were contributing to their support out of their own private means. So in other words, the picture is this.... you have this close-knit band of followers, true believers, faithful to Christ, loyal to Christ, they've committed their lives to following Him and they're doing that. And they are now with Him everywhere He goes; *and* everywhere He goes, these large crowds of people come out to hear Him and to see what's going on. And so you have this massive, multitudes of people that are coming from all of these different cities and villages to see the show as it were; to find out what all the buzz was about.

And so Luke's point in verse 4 is that "as these massive crowds came out, Jesus spoke by way of a parable. So speaking in parables and this parable in particular, has to do with these crowds that were turning out. What Jesus is doing then is a couple different things. Number one, He's addressing the crowd in an indirect way and warning them to make sure they really hear and take heed to what they hear. Verse 8, that's why He was saying as He told the parable, He kept calling out, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*" But at the same time He's really directly, fundamentally, primarily addressing the disciples to warn them that this is what happens when you preach the gospel to a diverse crowd of people. And so it's really for them...and you have to think about the situation they were in. They had been following Jesus around, they were following Him around now all the time, they knew who He was, they were believing in Him, they had made the connection between what He said and what He did and who He must be. He's obviously the Messiah; they had committed to Him, He's our Savior, He's our Lord, they had embraced Him as such and now they've committed their lives to following Him and obeying Him and serving Him and yet.... day by day they watched as these crowds come out; they're curious; they're fascinated; they watch the big show; they eat the food He creates. They let Him heal their sick relatives, they listen to His teaching. They're in awe of the whole thing, but at the end of the day what do they do? They go home....unchanged, unconverted, unbelieving. "Fascinating, great sermon, Pastor..." and that's the end of it. "Thanks for the bread, good fish...where did you get that," and that's the end. They aren't responding in faith and trust to Christ like the disciples were. And when you're a true believer that's frustrating, that's exasperating. Why is that? Why don't these people get it? Can't they see who He is? Don't they understand He is the Messiah? Why aren't they believing in Him? Why aren't they committing their lives to follow Him. How can they see all of this and hear all of this and not be changed, not be converted, not be committed? So this parable is for them and it's for every believer who has ever experienced that frustration or asked that question, "why do so many people reject the gospel, why don't...why don't they get it? That is going to be a key thing for the disciples to understand even more important when *they* are the ones sowing the seed. So that's why Jesus tells this parable to them.

So here's the parable. Verses 5-8. Just pretty basic, really, I mean.... "*The sower went out to sow his seed.*" You can picture that, you don't even have to be too familiar with farming to visualize that in your own imagination-- a sower would have a bag of seed maybe over his shoulder, and in that bag, you know...would be the seed he would cast. Maybe it's wheat or some kind of barley, or some kind of other grain. But he would just have it over his shoulder. And he would walk out into the field and take hands full of the grain and just cast it; and sow it. He wouldn't be really particular....not necessarily trying to throw it in rows but just spread it out all over the area that he was farming. And as he sowed...well, the seed would fall on various places. And that's what's being described here. Some would fall beside the road and the idea here of the road is not like....you know....the highway out Emma street...out here...a big road...it would just be more of a little foot path that went down in between maybe these fields. They would have these places where at least traffic could cut through and maybe it was big enough for a...you know...an oxen to pull a cart or whatever but just a small path or trail. So there would be these in between the fields and that's how people got around. So it's not like he's deliberately throwing seed out on the street it's just that the road is right there in close proximity to the field and so some of it gets on the road or on the footpath. Others of it would uh....and by the way....that seed would be it says "trampled underfoot and the birds of the air would eat it up."

Other seed would fall on rocky soil. If you've ever farmed, you'd know that no matter what prop you plant one thing you can always count on coming up every year is... rocks. And so every year you go back through your field, you plow it and you take your rocks....and what do

you do with it? You toss them over to the perimeter of the field up against maybe adjacent to where the road would be. And so you have this road, this trail down through the middle and then you have these piles of rocks all around the perimeter so some of the seed would invariably fall on the rocky soil as well. Or, this could be a reference to...to a...bedrock that maybe was underneath the soil...you know....there maybe a light layer of topsoil but underneath you had this limestone or some kind of rock. So the seed would hit that and as soon as it grew up it would wither away because it had no moisture.

Other seed would fall among the thorns. And the thorns would grow up with it and choke it out. The picture here is that the field has now been plowed alright...it's been turned over but the weed seeds and maybe even some of the roots of the weeds are still in there. And so when the seed begins to germinate and grow up so do the weeds, and the weeds, being native to that soil and more vigorous would just take over.

And then, verse 8, other seed would fall into the good soil and grow up and produce a crop 100 times as great. And He said these things...as He said these things He would call out, "those who have ears, let him hear." Use 'em. Listen. So that is a pretty basic...you know...parable, I think we all get that it doesn't require a lot of explanation. We can all picture what's going on there.

But notice verse 9. "*His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant.*" Of course, we would to! They didn't understand it, I mean they understood the analogy, they were familiar with farming, they were familiar with sowers sowing seed. They saw this all the time, in fact as Jesus told the parable they were probably all watching someone in the field do it. But what spiritual truth was it mean to illustrate? That was their question. And that's when Jesus, in verse 10, makes this shocking revelation about revelation. He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables. So that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand. What in the world is that? He's saying to the disciples, "Look...to you, believers, to you faithful followers who are obedient to me, to you it has been granted to know." The word "know" there means, "to really know, to intimately personally, experientially know." Not just know the facts but know the reality of something, personally. "To you it has been granted, to have this intimate, experiential, personal, relational, actual knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." It's been granted to you, it's been given. The word "granted" means it's been bestowed upon you, it's been....it's been given to you this blessing...this gift. So He's saying "you have been given a privilege that not everyone has been given. " The word "mysteries"...."mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" is another key word here. It's just a word that describes truths that are hidden but now being revealed. The word is used all through the Old Testament to refer to visions and prophecies and so on...things that God makes known to His prophets. But they're hidden things...they're things that could not be known and could not be understood a part from God's revealing of them and God's unveiling of them. So what Jesus is saying here is "Look, to you, disciples who are faithful to me, who are believing in me, who are now following me and have committed yourselves to me; to you it has been granted to know and understand the deep things of God, the mysteries of the kingdom of God, hidden things. These things God has chosen to reveal to you, not everyone, but to you.

Then He says, but "to the rest it is in parables." In other words, He says, "Look, I am going to explain the spiritual significance of My word to those to whom it has been granted and to those to whom it has not been granted, it is going to remain a mystery. They will get parables. You will get the explanation of the parables. Why does He say that? Why does He do that? Well, He tells them....*So that* [that's a purpose statement]; so that "*seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.*" Wow. Now, that is a quote from Isaiah 6:9, the same thing God told the prophet Isaiah when Isaiah said....you know.... "I will go." God said "who will go for us" and Isaiah volunteered, "send me," and the Lord said, "I will send you. You're going to go. You're going to preach to these stubborn, rebellious people, who have hardened their hearts against Me, and I just want you to know that they will continue to listen but not hear, they will continue to look but not see. They will not get it." Now, why would Jesus teach a parable which is meant to elucidate truth in a way that conceals truth? Why would He do that? That's what He's saying. "I'm going to teach in parables so that two things happen. One, truth is revealed. Two, truth is concealed. Why would He do that? Well, this is a statement of divine judgment. Just like it was in Isaiah 6. This was a statement of God's judgment on persistent unbelief. And for Jesus' ministry, this was a turning point. We've seen a couple of parables up to this point but really this was a point in Jesus' ministry when He began to teach predominantly in parables and to the crowds, exclusively in parables. In fact it says in Mark 3, He taught them from this point on only in parables. And this is why...because the crowds that continued to come out to Him represented people that were not believing. The Jewish people as a whole had rejected Christ. And so this was an act of judgment, Christ saying, "That's it, I've given you opportunity after opportunity after opportunity and your rejection has been clear and now it will be fixed. So from then on He spoke in parables and for the remainder of His Galilean ministry He didn't speak in any other way but parables. So they would not understand.

Now that's a scary thing, I hope it is to you. That is a warning that each of us need to hear. I mean you better be careful how you listen. When you have an opportunity to hear...you better, what? You better hear. When you have an opportunity to respond to the truth you better, what? You better respond! You better not assume that if I have an opportunity today than I'll have an opportunity tomorrow. You don't know that. If God's word is being given, you better pay attention, you better take it seriously and incline your heart to obey what you hear, because it's always possible when a time may come when God will say, "that's it, your season of opportunity is over, you're not going to do what I say, so I'm going to conceal My truth from you from now on, you're not going to get anymore." You're not going to understand anymore. That's what Jesus was saying to this crowd...really saying to the disciples about this crowd.

So I think as we look through this, As we think about the ministry of sowing seed as we think about sharing the gospel with people, as we think about the way people respond when we do that. This is the first thing we need to understand. The capacity to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God is not a given; it is not automatic. It's not a natural thing. Not everyone who hears spiritual truth understands it. Understanding is something that must be granted to you. So don't take for granted what must be granted. If you understand, that is because God has graced you with the capacity to understand. Not because you're so brilliant or you're so much more special than somebody else. That was granted to you and it must be granted to any who would hear with understanding, and repentance and faith. That is a fundamental thing we have to come to terms with...all of us who sow seed or all of us who receive seed...this is a divine work. We depend on God to make this happen, so while you have opportunity to hear, when you have an opportunity to hear you make sure you really do!

Now here's the interpretation of the parable. Verse 11. Jesus explains it and I'm thankful that He does...it takes all the guess work out of it. Here's what He meant...."the parable is this: "*the seed is the word of God.*" Kind of all figured that, right?...the seed is the Word of God.. the gospel, the news of the kingdom, the Word of God. It's interesting He doesn't interpret what the sower is. It doesn't say anything about the sower. The sower is inconsequential. The sower could be anybody. Anybody can throw seed out of a bag. The sower is necessary, but it is not a highly technical skilled position. Anybody can do it....a child can do it. You reach your hand in it and you scatter it. Let the wind take it as it falls and it bounces all around. You don't need a PhD to cast seed. I think it's interesting that there is very little emphasis here put on the sower, because it's not about the sower; it's not about your style; it's not about your personality; it's not about your technique.. "ouu, nice back hand".... "nice suit, I like the way you dress when you throw that seed." It doesn't matter....it's not about your methodology. None of that matters. Just go out into the field and cast the seed. The seed is the thing – the seed is the powerful thing...it's

the word of God, and it will do its work, so just get it out of the bag...throw it. What happens after that is the main thing. Right?...it all depends on the soil.

So you have four soils here, four hearts. That's what the soils are, right? Verse 12 He says that...as the devil comes, he "takes away the word from their heart." Verse 15, you hear "the word in an honest and good heart." So the soils are different hearts...four different heart responses to the word of God. Alright let's look at them.

Number one...the hard heart...the Roadside soil. This is the apathetic response, indifference. Verse 12, now "those beside the road are those who have heard (by the way notice that...that's the same phrase in each time...they've all heard...that's a common denominator—they all hear...what happens after that?); so they have heard the Word, "then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart so that they will not believe and be saved." These people don't believe. These people aren't saved...obviously, right? They're hard. The seed never even penetrates the soil. It just lies there on the surface and so the devil then comes and snatches it away, so that there won't be any chance of them believing and be saved. Verse 5, it says the seed also gets trampled down, walked on because people pass along there. So the seed is literally crushed by the foot-traffic, the march of sin through the life of that individual. They're oblivious, they're indifferent, they don't care...so the seed never even has a chance to germinate. So obviously this is the hard-hearted, stiff-necked, rebellious, indifferent person who doesn't want anything at all to do with the gospel. This is the response of no response...total blank...indifference. And Jesus says, you're going to run into those people, they're out there that's just how it is. Expect it, get used to it. That soil is there and it's common, we've all confronted people like that. And unless their hearts are plowed deep...I mean really hard plowing takes place by repentance, by the work of the Holy Spirit...there's nothing...there's just nothing going to happen. They don't have any ability to receive the Word of God. You can give these people your best shot...I mean you do that some times. "Man that was the best gospel presentation I've ever given...this is gonna get 'em." And, nothing. It's like they're a zombie. Well they are a zombie, Eph.2:1, "*and you were dead in your trespasses and sins.*" Dead people don't respond. So when you see that blank stare, that glazed look, this is why, this is why. Their heart is like pavement, it's like granite. Now that doesn't mean these people can't be saved; God has a jack-hammer that can pulverize concrete, right? Some of you know...He can break through. But that's what has to happen...and it can happen. So when you encounter this, realize that that's what needs to happen and the only thing you can do is pray that it will happen. That God will grant repentance, that He will run His plow across that fallow ground and replace that heart of stone with a heart of flesh. This is the reason why so many people reject the gospel. It isn't you...it isn't the sower. It isn't the seed. Don't start saying, "well...that didn't work...let's try something else." Don't change your methodology, don't change your message. That's not the issue. The issue is their heart and only God can change that.

The second kind of soil we could call Rocky soil. This is the superficial kind of response. Verse 13, "And those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away." This looks good; this looks like good soil, but there's a rock bed underneath. So the seed germinates and it starts trying to grow...but the roots, nothing...and it can't penetrate because there is no moisture down there and so it just doesn't last. But these hear and they receive the Word with joy and there is an immediate response; emotional response...they take it in. The truth finds a place in their heart. They're reacting to that; they're excited about that...but that's kind of the end of it...it fizzles out. They believe for a while, that's the problem. I mean it's better than the first group...well not really. The first didn't believe at all. These people believed but for awhile. They don't keep believing they just believed for a while and there's emotional reaction and there's excitement and enthusiasm...Then, in the first time of temptation they fall away. This is the superficial response. There's emotional reaction to the gospel, but it's very temporary, it is very shallow. Now listen, this tells us something that is very important and we need to understand as sowers, okay. Joy is never the distinguishing feature of true conversion. Joy is not necessarily an indication of anything. You can have all kinds of joy, all kinds of emotion...tears of joy...that doesn't mean anything...that doesn't mean their confession is genuine. In fact, maybe a truer indication of genuine conversion would be the opposite emotion, not joy...but sorrow, mourning, weeping. "Blessed are those who mourn, and frankly, typically, it's the superficial person when they respond with that sort of emotion because they are viewing the gospel in a shallow superficial way. They are "hungering and thirsting" after something other than righteousness. They're hungering and thirsting after relationships or happiness, or success, or friendships, or whatever...belonging to a group. And so they respond with enthusiasm, excitement and joy but it's easily exposed through what? Trials. Temptation/trail – same word. Tests come. Pressure, tribulation, could be persecution. And so what you're dealing with in this soil is...this is the person who thinks "Okay, if I do this, if I commit my life to Christ, if I get saved right now then my life is going to get fixed.... my life is going to all get better, all my problems are going to go away. "I'm going to have a happy marriage, my kids are going to....you know...straighten up, and everything's going to get easier." It's all a response to what they perceive as a "felt need" kind of a thing...it's going to meet my immediate "felt need" and of course all the immediate "felt need" kind of preaching. And, of course, all that "felt need" kind of preaching you hear today feeds this mentality. And then when things don't get better on the temporal level and when you have trouble and pressure and tribulation and temptation and persecution...what happens to these people? Psheww, they're gone... they leave...they believe for a while and then they fall away. The word fall away is the word we get apostate. Apostatize, they leave, they abandon the faith, they fall away. Why? Because their assumption was that they were getting the end to all their problems. They didn't get the end to all their problems, they got the beginning to all their problems....a whole nother set of trials, tribulations and difficulties. They were going to get delivered from all their burdens, all the things that make them anxious, all the things that make them distressed. So they responded with joy until that didn't pan out. So this is one of the good thing about trials, this is why God gives us trials, that's what James says, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials [why] because [it's] the trying [the testing] of your faith" that proves it. That proves it's the real deal. Every time you go through a trial with joy you are proving that your faith is the real deal. That's why you should rejoice and endure them patiently. Let them have their perfect work in you. But, that's what trials do, it blasts away the false believer or they perfect the true believer. Now this group of people, I want you to understand...they aren't losing their salvation; okay...this isn't people that get saved and then lose their salvation. No, what's happening is the trials, the tests and the temptations of life simply expose the shallow, superficiality of their faith, and show that it never really was saving faith, it was merely an emotional response. They're not people that lost their salvation; they're people that never had it.

Third...there's this thorn infested, weedy soil. When a farmer would plow, it'd try to break up the ground a little bit and get some of those weeds out of there, but inevitably there would be roots or seeds and they would start to grow again. About the same time the seed would be germinating...the rains would come so everything just starts growing up together. In verse 14 talks about that, "*The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, "And as they go their way, they're choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to maturity.*" Here's a third different kind. These are the ones who still have in their heart impurities, sins, that aren't cleansed, that don't get removed. They want to take in the truth, they want to respond to Christ, they want to embrace the gospel, but they don't want to really get rid of all this other stuff either. So this is the worldly heart...the preoccupied heart. The reception of the word, the hearing...it looks good on the surface the ground looks right, it's not hard. It doesn't have rock underneath. It looks right, but the truth gets crowded out by the presence of sin, impurities that just run, mangle, root systems that just infest this heart they never got dealt with. Jesus said in the Matthew, the Matthew account, Matt.13, "The worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word." So it's worries, anxieties, or its riches, money, or its pleasures. Those are the weeds. Those are the sins. Those are vigorous growing, natural,

native plants, that man...when you turn the soil over all you did was give them another reason to grow like crazy again. That's what they do...the water hits it and pfhoo! They take over and they grow faster and they grow taller and they grow stronger because they're natural, they're native to that heart and the Word isn't. So they choke out the Word. The good seed can't survive in this double-minded man. It can't. Jesus put it this way, you cannot serve God and what? Mammon, or money or worldly or earthly things. That's what they try to do...you cannot do that. And notice, it's pleasures of *this* life, that choke out the Word...that's the key...it's *this* life. This person is consumed with this life...the temporal world, physical things, temporal things, sinful pleasures, sinful longings, desires, ambitions, maybe it's a career, maybe it's money, a home, a house, a car, prestige, whatever it is....things of this life that crowd out, choke out the true seed...the Word of God. This is the preoccupied worldly heart that's swept up in the deceitfulness of riches and the vanity of pleasures.

Paul warned about that in 1Tim.6 when he said, "Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and a snare, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction, for the love of money [he said] is the root of all sorts of evil and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith." If you never deal with that, if you never deal with the love of money in your heart...you're going to have a problem, you're going to have a problem staying true to the faith. 1 John 2[15] the apostle John says, this is a clear interpretation of what I think Jesus is meaning here. "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." You can't love the world and the Father. So again, you can't serve two masters. You cannot love God and the world. You cannot live for this life and the next. There has to be a commitment, a choice, an exclusive commitment to Christ. Take up your cross, deny yourself, follow Him. And again...these people don't lose their salvation, either. This isn't a people that got saved and then fell away. This is a people that never got saved. And time just proved that, time proved that their commitment to Christ was not genuine. They never truly repented. They turned toward Christ, but they never really turned away from sin...away from the world...away from the pleasures of this life. So, because they never turned their back on this life, and this world, that seed just continues to dominate and grow and pervade and eventually just chokes any influence of the gospel all together and there's nothing. So this soil, the seed never reaches maturity, never bears fruit because the heart was never truly cleansed from sin. The sin was lying there dormant but never removed, it was still there, so in time, it's just gonna grow back stronger than before and take over. You've seen that and so have I. So all those responses, the first three fall short of true salvation. They all hear, they all respond, but they all fall short of true saving faith. Only the last one is a true believer, and that's the good soil.

Verse 15, The seed in the good soil, these are the ones who hear and have heard the Word in an honest and good heart. Really those are two greek words for good...honest and good are really good and good. One is good, inherently good; the other is maybe aesthetically good. But He's just saying it's really good. It looks good and it is good. It's good internally, it's good externally. There's no duplicity, there's no hypocrisy here. It's truly good, sincerely good, all good. There's no deception, there's no rock bed underneath. There's no weeds that aren't being dealt with. This is a truly repentant, pure, prepared, soft, teachable heart. And, Jesus in Matt.13 talks about this heart as these are those "who understand the Word." They hear it with understanding because they have a teachable heart. It's been granted to them. Mark 4, talks about it: those who accept, they accept, they receive it, they "make room for it" in their heart. And Luke here adds that they "hold it fast", they cling to it, they don't turn loose.

So this is the really important one. In the good soil the heart is so well prepared that there is first of all, a true understanding, a right understanding...a capacity to understand the truth. That's essential. They have to hear it and understand it. Then, there is acceptance of it. They believe it, not only intellectually and mentally, but with faith and their will and their volition. They respond in obedience to it. And then they cling to it...they hold tightly to it, the idea of gripping here, clinging to. And then as a result of that there's fruit that's born out of that life...permanent, abiding fruit...because why? Because they persevere. You know this is the thing that sad and that's scary about these evangelistic kind of campaigns maybe you hear about them, or have been to some of them...where somebody shares the gospel and invites people to come forward and lots of people come forward and they lead them through a prayer, then they say if you prayed that prayer, raise your hand. And, everyone raises their hand and they say, "Now, you're saved and don't you ever doubt it." Well, you don't know that. You can't tell somebody that just because they walked down an aisle and prayed a prayer. "You're saved, don't you ever doubt it." How do you tell... fruit, perseverance. What you tell them is... "Come back in a year, five years, ten years and we'll see where you're at." That's what you tell them...because that's the only way to know. Is there fruit? Have you persevered? Perseverance means hupomene which means hupomene...to abide under, right? There's this load and you are sticking with it. You're persevering, you're carrying it. You're not bailing out at the first trial or difficulty that comes along. You endure, you endure to the end. That's what a faithful, true, believer does. Whatever trial, whatever pressure, whatever temptation, whatever difficulty, whatever hardship, whatever persecution...you endure the test, not because you live in your own strength, but precisely because you don't. You're living by the strength that the Spirit of God provides. In 1 Jn.2:19, John says, "They went out from us because they were not of us." That's right. People abandon the faith because they weren't really in the faith. Not that people lose salvation...its that so many people make a response for a profession of faith that's not genuine. And, time tells that. So the proof is perseverance. The proof is do you continue. Jesus said, "If you continue in My Word then are you truly disciples of mine." You can't lose your salvation, it's eternal life. But a true believer, this is good soil...will receive the Word, believe the Word and bear fruit as a result of the influence...the growth of that Word in his life. And here, Luke just says will bear fruit 100 fold. Thankfully, Matthew adds...30, 60, 100 fold. So we're not all bearing the same amount of fruit, but visibly bearing fruit. And what kind of fruit do we mean? Fruit of the Spirit? The evidence of the Spirit of God's work in our life? That ought to be there, so that's what He's talking about.

So what do we take home from this? What's the application? It's directed in two ways: One, to soils, that's all of us, right. Which one are you? Do you see yourself in here? You're in here. Which soil are you? Need to pray that you would be the good soil. And I think prayer is the only way to become that. You need to ask God to cleans your heart "create in you a clean heart O God". If you know that your heart is hard and you've been unresponsive in the past and you're walking on thin ice. You need to respond, you need to repent, you need to cry out for God's mercy. If you have sin in your life and you know there's this fight going on in your heart between commitment for Christ and being worldly and forgetting it...you need to pray that the Lord would deliver you from that. "Proned to wonder, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love," you better pray "God, take my heart and seal it." But it comes down to prayer, "Lord you're the one that changes hearts, changes mind...make it this responsive, obedient, pure heart.

And then the application to sowers...and that's really all of us too. All of us can sow seed. I think the point here to each of us would be...don't get too discouraged, don't take it personally when you're trying to share the gospel and not everybody responds the way you had hoped. Or, the reverse of that...don't get too excited when you start preaching or sharing the gospel and massive crowds start gathering. Just be faithful to cast the seed. Broadcast it. Don't be so particular about placing each individual seed in just the right location, just...just...scatter the seed. Let it out; let it land where it will. And God will do His work. The seed will produce life under the right conditions, and you don't control those conditions, God does.

Let's pray. Father we thank you for this reminder, it's really a challenge to each of us in both those directions...that we would be the right kind of soil. And be faithful sowers. So...do your work Father to each one hear. You know the conditions of our heart. Thank you for your

faithfulness to do the work that needs to be done. Thank you for your power and your Word...seed, how it grows and how it produces amazing fruit in our lives. We praise you for that. Thank you for your faithfulness too. Thank you for the privilege granted to us to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. Thank you for that. Thank you for our time of study today. We pray that the seed that's been planted would grow and bear fruit for your glory, in Christ's name, Amen.