

## MATTHEW 13 – PART C

In our last study, we were looking at the parable of the soils. I think that we can all identify with the four kinds of soil. Obviously, there are people who are very unresponsive. They are represented by the first soil, the wayside or the pathway where people walked. The enemy comes and just snatches the word out of their hearts. V19 says,

**Mt 13:19 (NKJV) 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.**

Some people are simply going to be unresponsive to the message of salvation, and even though they do not recognize it, the enemy is greatly at work in their life. Some people are just totally insensitive to the Word of God. They simply cannot and will not hear what God has to say. Mentally, emotionally, and spiritually they just refuse to hear what God has to say. Sin in their life has so blinded them that the truth is just unable to penetrate their life. There is no repentance, no sorrow over their sin, no remorse, not even regrets. Even when the Holy Spirit is working on their behalf, they refuse to listen to His conviction. They simply have very hard hearts. Many Christians fall into this struggle – that of not listening to the Holy Spirit when He is trying to reach them..

The second kind of soil is the rocky soil and the individual hears the Word and initially they seem excited about it. They like the idea of eternal life and heaven and forgiveness, but they do not have much root, and when pressures come they fall away. I think that we could best characterize these people as **those who never really counted the cost of what it meant to become a Christian.** They just wanted the benefits without any of the cost, sacrifice, and effort associated with salvation. In reality, there never was any real contrition, no real repentance, and no real spiritual brokenness in their life. They just liked what they heard, and so they jumped on the Christian band wagon – and unfortunately someone told them that because they just prayed the sinner’s prayer, that now they are saved. However, their salvation never lasted and never could because it really was not a genuine experience of salvation, but just a superficial one. From my perspective as a pastor, I think that this sort of thing can easily happen when the gospel message is not clearly articulated. This idea of just saying a prayer or of joining a church is not really a true presentation of the gospel at all, and it can easily deceive someone relative to the true meaning of salvation. V21 describes this individual’s problem when it says,

**Mt 13:21 (NKJV) 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.**

The word for “**stumbles**” means that the individual is offended and upset when trouble arises. The Greek Interlinear actually translates it as “**he falls away**”. The Greek word is “*skandalizo*” from where we get our English word “scandal” and it simply means to get tripped up, i.e., to stumble. It implies that the individual is offended by what is happening, and so they fall away. John MacArthur made an excellent point in his commentary when he said that persecution exposes a false believer, but strengthens a true believer. He said this about this kind of individual,

*“If your confession of Christ does not come from a deep inner conviction of your sin, does not come from a deep sense of lostness, does not include a tremendous desire for the Lord to cleanse and purify*

*and lead you, if your confession of Christ does not involve a great hunger for self-denial and self-sacrifice and a willingness to suffer for His sake, then you have no root and it's only a matter of time. And something will come along and you will burn up and die, because you are not willing, as Jesus said, to take up the cross and follow Him.”*

The third kind of soil is that which bears thorns and thistles. V22 gives the result of this when it says,

**Mt 13:22 (NKJV) 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.**

Jesus calls it “**the cares of this world**” – they “**choke**” out the Word from a person’s heart. People have so many personal interests and goals that in and of themselves are not necessarily bad, but when taken all together they just choke out the Word, choke out their time for the Word of God, and choke out their desire for the Word. I am not sure that I can validate what I am about to say, but it seems that this third type of individual described here is very prevalent in our Christian culture. Kent Hughes calls them “Christians without Christian minds”, or Christians who do not think with a Christian mindset and perspective. These people may come to church and worship and pray as Christians, but they simply do not think like Christians. We could call them “Christian atheists” – people who say they believe in God, but live as if He does not exist. We might call these kinds of people “cultural Christians”. They are the people who go to church some, help someone in need, donate canned foods to food drives, and pray at their Thanksgiving meal – but they do not actually know God personally. They do some good things, but rarely if ever “God things”.

Of all the peoples on the earth, Americans probably have the most distractions possible. People and their children are involved in so many activities, and the ensuing result is that they give priority to those things that are not necessarily bad in and of themselves, but they simply eliminate what should be the godly priorities in their life. Now, unless we forget the point of all of this, **these are the spiritual characteristics and qualities that will prevail during the church age**. The vast, vast majority of men will not be receptive to the gospel – even during the Tribulation. At the outside best, only about 10% of the world’s population is actually Christian. That means that 90% of the world’s populations are not believers.

Now, the fourth kind of soil is that which bears fruit – good fruit. **Spiritual fruit is always the genuine evidence of salvation**. **The individual who has no spiritual fruit in their life is not a true believer**, no matter what church they may have joined. They are a superficial believer, and in relation to [John 15](#) are only artificially attached to the Vine. I have known so many artificially attached professing Christians who are no longer anywhere to be found. They did not like this, and they did not like that, and the preacher preached too long, and the music was boring, and there were too many hypocrites in the church, and all they wanted was your money. However, the purpose of this last type of soil is really very encouraging because what Jesus is saying is that there is good soil out there. There are people who when they hear the gospel will respond, and their lives will begin to bear spiritual fruit. Spiritual fruit is something that God produces in a Christian’s life. Spiritual fruit is when God takes a person’s life and implants His spiritual life within them, and they bear spiritual fruit in their life. People who never really manifest godliness and righteousness in their life, they are not really true believers. They may claim to be, but in the end I fear that they will be found lacking in genuine faith and salvation.

So, what is the main lesson in this parable relative to the church age? Christ is telling us that when **we preach the gospel that there will always be a variety of responses, the majority of which will not be real or lasting**. There will be opposition all along the way. The mystery of the kingdom is that even though the kingdom of God is here, it is not here with irresistible power. It is not like a stone grinding something to powder. There is coming a day during the Millennium when all men will do as Christ says and He will purge the earth of wickedness and evil, but for the time being, His offer can easily be rejected. God's kingdom is working among men, but God will not compel men to bow before it. God will not drive men and women into His kingdom. When we bring the message of salvation, we can plead, but not demand. We can implore men to open their hearts, but that is all. Men can and will spurn the offer of salvation, and there is not much that we can do to prevent that from happening.

The next parable is that of the Wheat and the Tares in [Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](#).

**Mt 13:24 (NKJV) Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup> but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. <sup>26</sup> But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. <sup>27</sup> So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' <sup>28</sup> He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' <sup>29</sup> But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."**

**Mt 13:36 (NKJV) Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." <sup>37</sup> He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. <sup>39</sup> The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. <sup>40</sup> Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, <sup>42</sup> and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"**

This parable, like the parable of the soils, is interpreted by Christ for His disciples. One of the most important facts that comes out of this parable is that there will be a side-by-side development of that which is good with that which is evil. The good seed will be sown and the false seed will be sown. Then secondly, there will be a judgment at the end of the age in which the saved and the lost will be separated. Those that are saved will go into God's kingdom, and those that are lost will go into eternal judgment.

Obviously, this parable is talking about the "kingdom of heaven" and the conditions that exist during the church age, but after having studied it in more detail, I believe that some of the things that I previously stated need clarification. What we stated was that the mystery form of the kingdom is composed of both saved and unsaved alike – which it is. It should be obvious that there is the true church and the false

church, true believers and false believers existing together within any local church. Also, we said that there are wheat and tares, and that there are good fish and bad fish in the church – which I believe there are, and that they are not always distinguishable from each other – which they are not. It would be utterly foolish on our part to think that the church as we know it is composed of only believers. There are many churches, denominations, and cults which claim to be true believers, but in reality they are not. However, this particular parable is talking specifically about the “**world**” – not the church, and I want to make that clarification. I.e., Jesus says that “**the field is the world**” and that **He has planted us in the world**. He does not say that the “**field**” is the church. We could say it this way that the church is planted in the world. I think that is an important clarification. He says that the wheat and the tares will exist side by side until the end of the age at which time there will be a separation. V30 says,

**Mt 13:30 (NKJV) Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."**

We know that within the church that we are to expose false teachers, expose false doctrine, and expose superficial believers who may undermine the integrity of the church. We are to exercise church discipline when warranted. So, if this passage was referring to the church specifically, then it seems to indicate that we would not be able to exercise the kind of discernment and discipline within the church that is clearly spoken of in other portions of Scripture because it says “**Let both grow together...**” Jesus simply says “**The field is the world**” – not the church.

Now, it should be noted at the very beginning of this parable that what is clearly apparent is that the essential character of that which is evil cannot always be readily discerned by just a mere outward observation. The wheat and the tares (or darnel) were not that distinguishable from each other. I.e., the lost may very often appear to be saved. We know that the enemy disguises himself as an angel of light, and so the seeds that he sows will do the same. Then we might add that the modern church has made this condition within the church very possible by simply not clarifying what the true gospel and salvation really are. We have created a spiritual environment where we casually equate salvation with things like church membership, baptism, the sinner’s prayer, or a one-time profession of faith. Entire denominations are built on these kinds of illusions, and so very often it is difficult to distinguish the lost from the saved within the church.

However, even though this parable is clearly about the kingdom of heaven, we do not want to equate it with the church proper. Why? It is because in v38, Jesus clearly says that the field is the “**world**”, and not the church. We know that as believers that we are in the world, but not of the world. We know that, but the clear implication here is that Jesus sows good seed **in the world**, and that the enemy comes along and sows bad seed alongside the good seed. If we think about this, it should be apparent that that is exactly what has happened. We have so many false denominations and cults that unfortunately are too often considered to be a part of the true church – which they are not. The list is really endless, and they all speak about God, about heaven, and about how to get into heaven. When I listen to some of the absolutely absurd doctrines that are being taught on television, all I can say is “*God, help us!*” So, we do not want to interpret this parable in such a way that the field is the church. Jesus says that “**the field is the world**”, and we need to leave it that way.

In v38, it says that the good seed that Christ sows in the world is us, the “**sons of the kingdom**”. We are the good seed and the tares are the “**sons of the wicked one**”.

**Mt 13:38 (NKJV) The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.**

I.e., God sows His children throughout the world. We have the message, we proclaim His message, we are His ambassadors, we preach the gospel, and we teach the truth – **AND WE ARE TO DO IT IN BOTH THE WORLD AND IN THE CHURCH**. As God’s children, we are His instruments in the world and in the church. When we do this in the world, the enemy comes along and sows his false seeds deceptively in the same field. So, the picture here is **not** one of the world in the church (which is a very prevalent condition in the church of Laodicea), but of the church in the world – and I want us to appreciate that distinction. What we learn from this parable is that the entire church age will be characterized by a false sowing vs. a true sowing. We sow the truth and the enemy sows a lie. Wherever we preach and proclaim the message of the gospel, there will always be a sowing of a false message to try and counteract the true message of salvation. Jesus specifically tells us by whom the false sowing is done in v39,

**Mt 13:39 (NKJV) The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.**

Now, Jesus makes a very important statement in v28-30 when He says,

**Mt 13:28 (NKJV) He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' <sup>29</sup> But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."**

I think that the point of this is very clear. **This is not the age of judgment, but the age of grace**. God’s judgment will come, and it will come at the end of the age and in His timing – and it will be His judgment, but until the rapture of the church, we live in the age of grace and we are to offer grace. It does not mean that we cannot speak about judgment, for we must. However, we as the church are not to become God’s executioners. Unfortunately this has happened throughout history whenever the church became a strong political power. We have the Holy Wars and the Inquisitions and the Crusades – all in the name of Christ, and in each of those periods, the organized church was a strong political element in the world and began to literally slaughter thousands of people that did not agree with church doctrine. They called them “apostates” and literally massacred people “in the name of Jesus” who disagreed with church doctrine and beliefs. They killed people like William Tyndale, John Hus, and John Bunyan. As far as the world is concerned, it is not the responsibility of the church to legislate and to persecute and to bring to pass their own view of Christianity by force.

I think that John MacArthur put this in perspective when he commented on these verses saying that at one time we all were the tares. In essence, our message is actually to the tares – right? We as believers have a very strong two-fold ministry – one to the church and one to the tares, to the world. Even when

Christ Himself was being nailed to a cross, He asked that His Father forgive them because they simply did not know what they were doing.

One of the practical applications that we need to glean from this is that we simply cannot impose our spiritual principles on the world. It would be nice if they all lived as we thought they should, but that is not going to happen. Non-Christians will always live as non-Christians, and we as the church should not expect it to be any different. **Our job is to simply call men to Christ, to preach the message and make it as clear and as simple as we possibly can, and then trust the Holy Spirit to use that message as He so chooses.** We are to love and to care for those who are outside of God's kingdom. We are to pray for the lost, pray for God's work in their lives. The message here is simple – **we are the sowers, not the reapers**. We sow the good seed in the world, and in the end the angels will come in judgment and make God's necessary separations. [2 Thessalonians 1:7-10](#) speaks to this specific judgment when it says,

**2Th 1:7 (NKJV) and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, <sup>8</sup> in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup> when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.**

[Matthew 13:40-42](#) describes this same thing,

**Mt 13:40 (NKJV) Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, <sup>42</sup> and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**

What these verses are describing is that judgment at the Second Coming that will separate and remove all of the lost for judgment. **Only the saved will enter into the Millennium**. Those in the Millennium will include the church, or the bride of Christ, that comes back with Christ. It will include all of Israel who were alive at the actual Second Coming and saw Christ and believed. It will include all of the Old Testament saints who will be resurrected to enter into the millennial kingdom. It will include all of those believers who were saved, but martyred during the Tribulation, and it will include all of those who were saved during the Tribulation, but not martyred. So, everyone entering into the Millennium will be people who are saved. There will be no lost people entering into the Millennium. Later in the Millennium, there will be people born to natural parents who do not get saved. They have to come to Christ in the same way that you and I do – by faith.