Soil Testing: Pathway Ground

“I Don’t Understand; I Don’t Believe”

Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-27; Luke 8:4-18

Introduction:

1. Communication is a complicated process.
   1. The responsibilities of the sender are great. Acts 20:26, 27; 2 Timothy 4:1-5
   2. The responsibilities of the receiver are great. Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18
      1. Open mind.
      2. Open Bible. Acts 17:11
      3. Obey. James 1:22
2. Jesus used stories to communicate. Mark 4:33, 34
3. Notice the foundation story: the parable of the sower. Mark 4:13
   1. All the seed is good seed in this story. Mark 4:14; Luke 8:11
   2. Describe fields in Palestine.
      1. Often small.
      2. Sowing was broadcasting, sometimes on the backs of animals.
   3. Most seed will be “wasted”; most will not produce a good harvest.
      1. Wayside soil – nothing.
      2. Rocky soil – withers.
      3. Thorny soil – choked out.
      4. Only the good ground multiplies.
4. What kind of soil am I?
   1. Kinds.
      1. Pathway – packed down, unreceptive: “I don’t understand; I don’t believe”.
      2. Rocky – lack of depth, fast start, withers: “I’ll serve the Lord as long as there are no difficulties or discouragements”.
      3. Thorny – choked out by cares of life, deceitfulness of riches, desires for other things: “I’ll serve the Lord as long as it does not interfere with things that are more important”.
      4. Good ground – hears the word, noble and good heart, understands it, accepts it, bears fruit: “I’ll serve the Lord; I’m eager to learn more and better ways to be of service; I want to improve my effectiveness; I volunteer”.
   2. Which of the four am I?
      1. Yes.
      2. At times I am all four.
5. Not only am I all four, does this parable show a progression?
   1. Is it possible (likely) that in many areas and at many times I go from wayside to rocky to thorny to good ground?
   2. Can this parable help me to see where I am on a particular issue in my life?
   3. Could this be more of an encouragement than a discouragement?
      1. If I have progressed from pathway to rocky?
      2. If I have grown from rocky to thorny?
      3. If I have begun to see some fruit multiplying where once my life was choked with thorns?
   4. Could this also be a prescription of how I need to deal with some challenging issues in my life to see more progress?
      1. How can I break up hard ground?
      2. What can I do with the rocks in my life?
      3. How can I weed out thorns that are choking my fruitfulness?
6. I have a choice about what kind of ground I am. Mark 4:23-25; Luke 8:18
7. We begin with the pathway soil. Matthew 13:4, 19; Luke 8:5, 12
8. WHY DO SOME NOT RECEIVE THE WORD THAT IS PRESENTED?
   1. Rebellion: the addictive, hardening, numbing nature of sin. Hebrews 3:13
   2. Believing false teaching. Matthew 15:13, 14
   3. Not letting the seed get below the surface; it does not sink from the intellect, into the emotions, to the will, that produces a change.
      1. We can say the right words with the heart being far away. Matthew 15:8, 9
      2. Healing (change, growth, fruit) comes only when the seed gets deep and grows. Matthew 13:15, 16
   4. Passing all the seed on to others, not keeping any for myself. Luke 18:9-12
   5. Busyness – not taking the time for good seed to come into my life, not valuing God’s word. James 4:13-17

Conclusion:

1. All begin as hard, packed soil.
2. All that I understand, at one time I didn’t understand.
3. All that I believe, I once did not believe.
4. Next, we will discuss how to break up the hard ground.
5. Are you ready to be responsive to the work today? Acts 16:25-34