Soil Testing: Pathway Ground

“How Can I Break Up the Hard Ground?”

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

Introduction:

1. We are studying the first and foundation of the parables. Mark 4:33, 34; 13
2. We begin with the pathway soil. Matthew 13:4, 19; Mark 8:5, 12
   1. It is hard.
   2. The seed has not gone beneath the surface.
   3. I don’t understand; I don’t believe.
3. Everyone starts this way. Acts 8:26-31
4. HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY HARD SOIL; HOW CAN I UNDERSTAND; HOW CAN I BELIEVE?
   1. Be open to more seed. Matthew 5:6; Romans 10:17
   2. Learn to appreciate and value brokenness; hard ground needs plowing.
      1. Hard, hurtful, disappointing things and events break up our lives and routines; they present the opportunity to re-evaluate, refocus. Psalm 51:17; Jeremiah 4:3; Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-5
      2. One of the great deceptions of our day: “I know God wants me to be happy.”
         1. “Happiness means absence of pain, thrilling pleasure, fun, entertainment.”
         2. “I know what is fun for me.”
         3. “Therefore, I will decide what God wants me to be and do.”
         4. “Because I know God wants me to be happy.”
      3. The truth is: God wants me to be faithful and fruitful.
      4. But fruit sowing, fruit growing, and fruit gathering is not altogether and always fun.
      5. It is profitable when the result is the fruit of the Spirit.
      6. This makes some hard scripture more easily understood. Ecclesiastes 7:2, 3
      7. This is a powerful, dangerous time.
         1. It is a time when some turn to the Lord.
         2. It is a time when some leave the Lord.
         3. What makes the difference?
         4. The way the soil (heart) responds to the plowing.
   3. Don’t try to put too much seed into one break in the ground; take time to think, meditate. Psalm 1:1, 2
   4. Don’t rush the process. Mark 4:26-28
      1. New ground was often “deadened” one spring to be cultivated the next spring.
      2. Many stumps had to be plowed around until they rotted.
      3. Old problems, hardness, obstacles do not disappear immediately.
   5. Ask for help in understanding. Acts 8:30, 31
   6. Be aware of and be honest about your doubts and lack of faith.
      1. Faith and doubt are usually mixed. Mark 9:23, 24
      2. Hard hearts aren’t hopeless. Mark 16:14

Conclusion

1. You can understand and believe. Mark 4:21-23
2. God’s word can make a difference in your life. Acts 8:26-39