Soil Testing: Thorny Ground

“I’ll Serve the Lord as Long as It Does Not Interfere

With Things That Are More Important”

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

Introduction:

1. After months of working overtime as a financial analyst for a large corporation, I returned home one night at 12:30. As I crawled into bed, my wife awoke. “You’ve got to alphabetize,” she commented.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Wife comes before work,” she said (Reader’s Digest, December 1991, page 32).

1. We continue to see a progression.
   1. Pathway soil.
      1. Hard, unreceptive.
      2. Don’t understand, don’t believe.
      3. Must be broken for the seed to have an entrance.
   2. Rocky ground.
      1. Lack of depth.
      2. Quick growth.
      3. Quick withering when left as is.
      4. Proper rock handling can develop depth and provide stability.
   3. Thorny ground.
      1. Ground that will nourish desirable crops will also develop undesirable thorns.
      2. To continue the farming process, there must be wisdom and work.
         1. Wisdom to know the difference between good plants and thorns.
         2. The work to pull out the thorns.
2. WHAT ARE THE THORNS?
   1. What are not thorns—the word. Mark 4:18, 19
   2. The thorns.
      1. Cares of this world, worries of this life.
         1. The idea of caring is not necessarily bad. 2 Corinthians 11:28
      2. Deceitfulness of riches, wealth.
         1. Wealth, riches are not necessarily bad. Romans 11:33
         2. It is when external possessions choke out fullness of spiritual blessings.
         3. Material belongings can deceive.
            1. Riches make you superior.
            2. Riches make you secure.
            3. Riches make you happy.
            4. Riches make you inferior.
            5. Riches make you insecure.
            6. Riches make you unhappy.
         4. Material things can capture our thoughts, feelings, and focus.
            1. Trying to sell a housewife on a home freezer, a salesman pointed out, “You can save enough on your food bill to pay for the freezer.”

“Yes, I know,” the woman agreed, but you see we’re paying for our car on the bus fare we save. Then, we’re paying for our washing machine on the laundromat bills we save, and we’re paying for our house on the rent we’re saving. We just can’t afford to save any more right now.”

* + - * 1. One of the most tragic accidents that has ever happened came about in the mid-Atlantic, April 14, 1912. The Titanic, one of the largest vessels of that time, hit an iceberg and sank within a few hours.

One woman, who was allotted space on one of the rescue boats, asked permission to return to her stateroom. She was given three minutes to do this, so she hurried. In that stateroom money and jewels were scattered all over the floor, but she did not take these. Rather, she snatched three oranges she knew to be there, and hurried back to the boat.

It seems almost incredible that she preferred oranges to diamonds. But, you see, death had boarded the Titanic, and with one blast of his awful breath, transformed all values - precious things became worthless and worthless things became precious.

* + - 1. Actually possessions do not talk; they give us an occasion to talk to ourselves. 1 Timothy 6:17-19
      2. The ideal attitude toward externals. 1 Timothy 6:6-10; Philippians 4:11-13
    1. Desires for other things.
    2. These other things choke out the place of God’s will in one’s life.

1. HOW CAN I WEED MY CROP?
   1. Don’t get root bound or fruit crazy.
      1. Roots are important.
         1. Some are so fruit conscious that they get plastic fruit to look better—but it has no substance or nutrition.
         2. Roots, foundation principles are important. Hebrews 5:12, 13
         3. Fruit should follow roots. 2 Peter 1:5-11
      2. But becoming root-bound will not bring maturity. Hebrews 5:14-6:3
         1. A plant becomes root bound if it is allowed to grow in the same pot for numerous years. In nature, a plant’s root system naturally extends three times the length that it does into the sky. As plants grow fresh foliage above soil they are simultaneously extending and thickening their root systems. If left to grow in the same space for an extended amount of time, *a plant will literally suffocate itself like a boa constrictor*.

There is not a distinctive period of time in which one can conclusively determine that a plant will become root bound. Depending on the plant’s species and size of its container, it may take over fifteen years before symptoms of severely constrained roots appear. A root bound plant will eventually suffocate itself regardless of how often one may water or fertilize. *Unexplainable foliage decay is typically the first noticeable sign of this condition* It is important to diagnose a root bound plant right away and take appropriate action to preserve the life and vitality of the plant.

* + - 1. Read more at Suite101: [**Recognizing a Root Bound (Pot Bound) Plant: Signs, Symptoms, Treatment and Prevention | Suite101.com**](http://suite101.com/article/recognizing-a-root-bound-pot-bound-plant-a127389#ixzz209viZOj5) [**http://suite101.com/article/recognizing-a-root-bound-pot-bound-plant-a127389#ixzz209viZOj5**](http://suite101.com/article/recognizing-a-root-bound-pot-bound-plant-a127389#ixzz209viZOj5)
  1. Develop wisdom to distinguish thorns from good plants that will bear fruit. James 1:5; Psalm 51:6
  2. Be willing to take radical action, when necessary, to eliminate thorns. Matthew 5:29, 30

Conclusion

1. What is choking your relationship with God and others? Matthew 6:33
2. Are you willing to pull up the thorns?