

SONSCREEN: Fun in the Sun
Message for North East United Methodist Church
June 24, 2018
Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Mark 4: 1-10; 13-20

Once again Jesus began teaching by the lakeshore. A very large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat in the boat while all the people remained on the shore. He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:

“Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn’t have deep roots, it died. Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain. Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!” Then he said, “Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”

Later, when Jesus was alone with the twelve disciples and with the others who were gathered around, they asked him what the parables meant.

Then Jesus said to them, “If you can’t understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables? The farmer plants seed by taking God’s word to others. The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away. The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don’t have deep roots, they don’t last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God’s word. The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God’s word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”

PRAYER

Top Ten Signs You’re In A Dry-Bones Church

10. The praise team quits and no one notices for three months.
9. The baptismal bowl is now being used for chips and dip in the fellowship hall.
8. The pew Bibles donated a year ago still have the cellophane on them.
7. The pastor takes a month-long sabbatical and is told upon his return that his sermons over the last month have been better than ever.

6. The custodian passes away while cleaning the sanctuary and no one realizes it for three weeks.
5. The pastor has been using the same scripture passage for two months.
4. The altar table was moved six inches to the left, and twenty-five people volunteer to serve on a task force to investigate.
3. The altar rail has not been cleaned since the custodian passed away.
2. The nursery is being used for long-term storage.
1. Jesus Christ visited and was told he was sitting in someone's seat.

Top Ten Ways To Tell If A Church Is Spirit-Filled

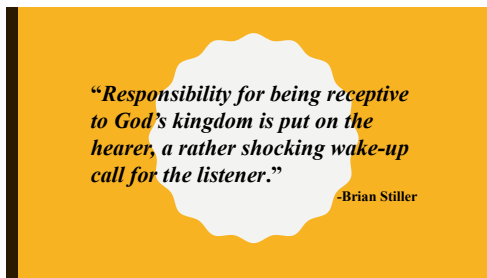
10. You have to assign numbers to people who want to share their testimony in worship.
9. As the pastor closes the sermon, the chant of "We want more! We want more!" erupts.
8. The ushers have to empty the collection baskets halfway through the service because they are too full.
7. The praise team begins to sing and can't stop.
6. Members begin buying new Bibles because they wore the others out.
5. There is an influx of people asking, "Is there something I can do?"
4. New classes and small groups have to be formed because so many people want to teach and learn.
3. People offer their seats to newcomers.
2. New altar rails have to be installed to handle the crowds.
1. The congregation douses the pastor with a cooler of water at the end of the service.

What is The Difference Between
A Dry-Bones Church & A Spirit-Filled Church?

What is the Difference Between
A Dry-Bones Christian & A Spirit-Filled Life?

The answer lies in Jesus' Parable of the Sower...

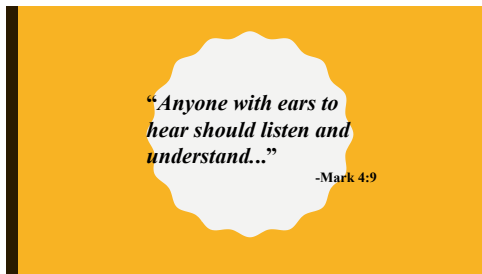
In writing about Jesus' parable...



What is the Difference Between A Dry-Bones Church & A Spirit-Filled Church? The Difference Between Being A Dry-Bones Christian or A Spirit-Filled Christian?

The Difference is You! The Difference is how you respond to His Word.

Jesus said...



We must battle, work, choose to allow God to till the soil of our hearts, to plant His Word deep within, to water it and allow it to grow and produce a crop “*a hundred-fold.*”

Unlike when we go outside in the summer, when we go to the beach, or plan to be out in the sun, in this case, we must do everything we can to make sure we are NOT wearing SONSCREEN...

We must make sure we are not allowing things of this world, allowing baggage from our past, allowing attitudes and habits that have developed, allowing worries and stress, allowing anything whatsoever to BLOCK God from tilling up our hearts and filling the ground with His Word and Spirit.





Paths surrounding small tracts of land/walked on quite a bit - hardened by past experiences/anger/guilt or hardened by tradition/upbringing/"it's just the way I am" or addictions/habits/personality traits – example "prejudice"

Charles Spurgeon puts it this way...

"...the soil of your heart is so hard beaten by continual traffic, that there is no hope of the seed finding a living root-hold. Satan is constantly passing over your heart with his company of blasphemies, lusts, lies, and vanities. The chariots of pride roll along it, and the feet of greedy mammon tread it until it is hard as adamant...No, the road of your heart is such a crowded thoroughfare, that there is no room for the wheat to spring up. If it did begin to germinate, some rough foot would crush the green blade ere it could come to perfection...The word has not time to quicken in his soul: it lies there an instant, but it never strikes root, or takes the slightest effect.

Why do men come to hear if the word never enters their hearts? That has often puzzled us. Some hearers would not be absent on the Sunday on any account; they are delighted to come up with us to worship, but yet the tear never trickles down their cheek, their soul never mounts up to heaven on the wings of praise, nor do they truly join in our confessions of sin. They do not think of the wrath to come, nor of the future state of their souls. Their heart is as iron; the minister might as well speak to a heap of stones as preach to them."

But we must never forget who these birds in Jesus' parable represent...



We have an enemy who is about his work, doing everything he can to keep us from hearing the Word of God, to keep us from taking it in and allowing it to germinate in our hearts...

Joyce Meyer writes, *“Why does the devil try to make us tense, get us tied up in knots, upset, disturbed, worried, disquieted, and distracted? He wants to keep us from focusing our attention on the good things God has given us. He wants to keep us from enjoying our relationship with the Lord and the abundant life Jesus died to provide for us.”*

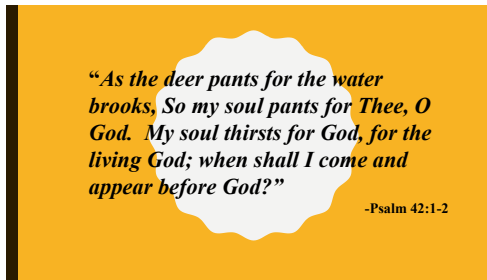


Jesus talks about the farmer scattering seed and some of the seed falls on rocky ground where the seed germinates in thin layer of soil...the soil is too hard for roots to penetrate; therefore, the plants spring up quickly but then wilt beneath the hot sun because the roots could not go deep.

There are times we would rather choose comfort and security than sacrifice...times we look for a quick fix to our problems. We would say, if we were asked, that Jesus is the answer, but when problems continue to arise we drop Him and look elsewhere for answers...we lose enthusiasm...our roots are not deep enough.

When we begin to go through problems, that is the time we need to drink deeply...read, study, pray, worship, learn, grow, and drive our roots creating a deeper and more intimate relationship with the SON!

Like the psalmist we must desire the *“living water”*...we must seek after it...drink in God deeply...



Does your heart *pant* for God?

As I ask myself that question, I struggle with the answer...Many times I would have to say my heart does not *pant* for God...and this is because of the next type of soil Jesus talks about in His parable...the thorns that have grown up around me and are choking me...it is the thorns that tear into my heart and so often take my focus and passion off of God...



Jesus speaks of soil that is unable to provide nutrients for growth...there is too much competition with surrounding weeds.

Isn't this what many of us deal with on a daily basis? We allow the worries of life block out Word of God...we allow the worries of life to shift our focus from God over to money, materialism, the future...

*“Give all your worries
and cares to God, for he
cares about you.”*

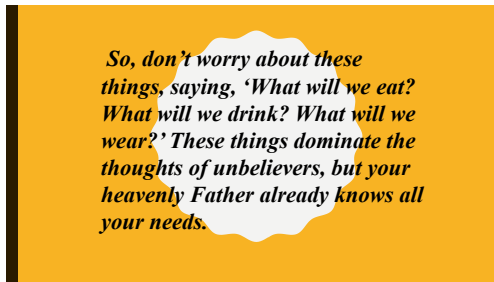
-1 Peter 5:7

This is where I struggle. I struggle with the thorns...I often catch myself worrying and anxious, stressed out over things that are happening around me...I even experience moments of hopelessness...there is no way out of this problem...what can I do? How often I attempt to solve the problems I'm dealing with on my own instead of going to God. Jesus told us, Matthew 6:26-33...

*“Look at the birds. They don't
plant or harvest or store food
in barns, for your heavenly
Father feeds them. And aren't
you far more valuable to him
than they are? Can all your
worries add a single moment
to your life?”*

*And why worry about your
clothing? Look at the lilies of
the field and how they grow.
They don't work or make their
clothing, yet Solomon in all his
glory was not dressed as
beautifully as they are.*

*And if God cares so
wonderfully for wildflowers
that are here today and thrown
into the fire tomorrow, he will
certainly care for you. Why do
you have so little faith?*



When I catch myself focusing more on the thorns around me than my relationship with God, I have to remember to fight my inclination to focus on my problems...to spend time in prayer...trust in His promises...allow Him to guide me and take care of me...recognizing that I am not alone, the enemy is real, and the enemy and the world has no power over me when I am walking with my Heavenly Father...I thank God that He gave me my wife, Debbie...it is often she who reminds me of these things.

You and I must do everything we can to keep the soil of our hearts tilled and ready to receive His Word and His Spirit that they may germinate in our hearts...that we might be ready when the birds attack, when the drought comes, when the thorns grow up around us.

The more we till the soil of our hearts today...the more we allow God's Word, His promises to penetrate our hearts today...the more prepared we will be to handle the thorns when they appear for we will have deep roots and deep faith.





Receive God's Word by faith...trust God...turn to Bible each day, allowing seed to be planted and to grow, fighting to keep out the birds, heat, drought, and thorns of life.

"Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers."

-Psalm 1:1-3

And the fruit we will bear... Jesus said,

"And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

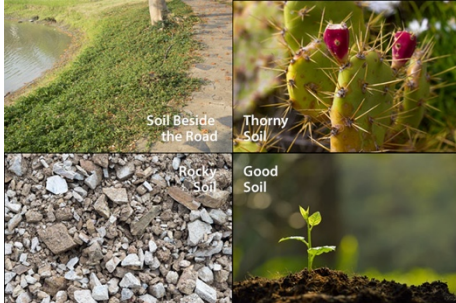
-Mark 4:20

People will see our lives...they will see our fruit...our deep roots...our unwavering faith...They will see that the Word of God, the seed of Christ, has germinated in our lives...and what they see in us will draw them to their heavenly Father...producing a harvest of eternal consequences.

What is the Difference Between A Dry-Bones Church & A Spirit-Filled Church? The Difference Between Being A Dry-Bones Christian or A Spirit-Filled Christian?

The Difference is You! How You Respond To His Word...

Which Soil Are You?



Will we be the good soil? Will you feed the seed?

- Get into His Word/*Start with Gospel of John*
- Join a Bible Study/Small Group
- Write Scripture on Post-It Notes & Put on Mirror/Learn His Promises
- Trust Him During Difficult Times & Worries of Life
- Pray
- Give
- Get more involved in Worship & in your Church, helping in ministry & mission
- Surround yourself with Christian Friends, talk and pray together
- Do whatever it takes!

God has thrown out a seed of life to us through His Son, Jesus Christ...

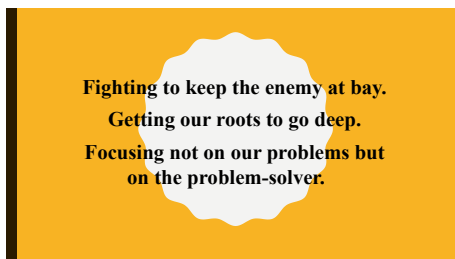


If we allow our hearts to receive it...if we work to have the soil of our heart softened by God's grace...saturated by the "*living water*"...the thorns overcome with God's strength...the seed will grow. It will take time. Things will not change overnight, but over time...along this great journey...will "*produce a crop a hundredfold*" resulting in forgiveness/love/adoption/peace/help in times of trouble/salvation/eternal life/strength. Will we receive it?

What is the Difference Between A Dry-Bones Church & A Spirit-Filled Church? The Difference Between Being A Dry-Bones Christian or A Spirit-Filled Christian?

The Difference Is You! The Difference is How We Respond to His Word.

The Difference is letting God in to till the soil of your heart! The Difference is...



We must get rid of any...



...we are wearing...allowing nothing to block God from having full access to the soil of our hearts...

Will You Listen? Will You Trust? Will You Believe? Will You Hear?

God is ready to plant His Word, His Spirit in your heart. Don't allow anything to get in the way of a bountiful crop!