

Hearing & Listening – The Parable Series

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MAIN VERSES

[Matthew 7](#) • [Matthew 11](#) • [Matthew 13](#) • [1 Corinthians 3](#) • [Ephesians 2](#) • [Galatians 5](#) • [Isaiah 35](#)

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home.

A Lesson in Listening

All right, so a Polish man came to the U.S. and married a nice American girl. And although his English was far from perfect, they got along pretty well because that's what makes a marriage work. And one day he rushed into the lawyer's office and he was ecstatic and he told the lawyer, he said, listen, I need to arrange for a divorce. I need to end my marriage right now. And the lawyer said, getting a divorce is not just something you just do. I mean, you got married, you have covenants, like you came into this covenant marriage. Do you have any grounds? Yeah, I have acre and a half with a nice house on it. No, I mean, do you have a foundation for the case? This is just concrete. I don't think you understand. Do you have a garage? No, we have carport, but I'd love to have one one day. Okay. Is there any infidelity in your marriage? No, no, no. I have high fidelity stereo with a very nice DVD player. Okay. Does your wife beat you up? No, I get up before her every morning. Okay. Why do you want a divorce? Because she's trying to kill me. Do you have any proof? Yes, I have proof. She went to the store and she's going to poison me. She brought a bottle back and put it in the bathroom. Okay. How do you know it's poison? It says Polish remover. Isn't that horrible? It's just a bad joke, right? Just a bad joke. I would not be able to do that if my wife was here.

Okay. The message today is on the difference between hearing and listening. And although this was not the best analogy to introduce this point, I couldn't help myself. Does this ever happen to us sometimes where we hear stuff, we hear what someone's saying, but we don't understand, we're not listening to what they're saying? Anybody? Anybody? Just a few people. That's funny.

Men, does this ever happen with your kids? Kids come running in. And you're doing whatever. Maybe I know it never happens with your spouse, right guys? Have you ever been watching TV or now in 2017 on your cell phone doing something? Or maybe you're working on something or I dare say reading the newspapers. My dad was always doing that. And your wife comes in and she is using an enormous amount of energy through this thing of spoken language to try to communicate with you. And you hear them. You hear them, but you're kind of focused on what you're doing. And when that happens, you even acknowledge them, right? You even do that whole thing like, mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm, right? And then what happens? No, no, usually the sound stops. It happens. The pitch changes and the vibrations in the air cease. And you've realized she has just asked me a question. Oh, shoot. What? And I can go, what, what, what, what? But the gig's up at that point. And so what do we do? We typically go, yeah, that sounds great, babe. Please work, please work, please work, please work, please work, right? So we hear them, but we're not always listening.

Miscommunication and Conflict

It's fascinating because miscommunication causes a lot of conflict, right? I would dare say that's one of the biggest grounds for conflict that we have. Any married couples in here? A couple? So raise your hand if you have never gotten in a fight over miscommunication. Hannah Johnson, already. Okay. Well, really? Did they raise their hand? How long have you guys been married? Four months? Okay. Miscommunication happens. And a lot of it comes because we hear our spouse, we hear our friends, we hear our kids, but we're not always listening. Right?

And so today we're going to be reading some of the stories that Yeshua told us. They're called parables. It's fascinating because the stories that Yeshua tells are not straightforward. They have many details, and instead of just telling us the point, Yeshua wants us to put energy into listening, energy into understanding what he's saying.

The Matthew 13 Teaching

And so we're going to dive into Matthew chapter 13, and if you have your scriptures today, go ahead and turn to [Matthew 13](#), because this is where we're going to be jumping in and swimming around for probably the next few weeks, but especially today. And it's fascinating because Yeshua talks about what it means to hear him and to understand what he's saying, but then he also gives a warning, and this is something we don't notice sometimes. He gives a warning about what happens if you're not listening, right? And it's a pretty big warning if we simply stop at just hearing him like we do our spouse or our kids.

And we've all grown up, and while you turn there, we've all grown up learning about Jesus. Whether you're in a religious home and you went to church every single week, you learned about Jesus or Yeshua. And maybe you grew up in a secular home and you still heard about Yeshua and Jesus, but it was probably in a secular sense with language or something like that. But everybody is familiar with the basic person of Jesus, or who Yeshua or Jesus is in our nation, which I guess isn't a bad thing. But the issue comes in when we become so familiar with Jesus or Yeshua and his stories that we end up minimizing them as just simply, yeah, I'm familiar with that, so I don't need to really study it, or because I've heard it so many times, I don't really need to look at it as something that's actually going to make a change and an impact in my life. Anybody know what I'm talking about? You just get so familiar with some things in the Bible.

I didn't think of the story with David and Goliath nearly as profound until I met Pete. If you've met Pete you've heard him talk about David quite a bit. He's a big fan of David and has a wealth of knowledge about David. But I've heard David and Goliath and the kid gets out there and he throws a rock and it hits him and bam, cuts his head off and now he's king—basically not king, but triumphant back to Jerusalem and we know the story but are we listening to try to understand it?

The Bible Understanding Movement

And I see so many people that come into this whole Bible understanding movement, if you will. And they're reading the Torah for the first time in their lives, and they're reading the prophets for the first time in their lives, and they've never seen the benefits and the blessings of keeping the Sabbath of God and the feast days that exalt our King. And I see these people come into the movement so excited about the things that they never read when they were growing up in church, but they completely forget about the New Testament. Why? Why? And I can picture four people who have said this. When I ask them, hey, why don't you read the Gospels a little bit more, read the letters of Paul a little bit more. You really want to get something to chew on, read Revelation, give that a shot. And these four different people over the last 14 years, I picture their faces in my mind right now. They've looked at me and they said, yeah, I learned all that in church though. And I'm not in church anymore and now I'm learning all the stuff that I didn't learn in church. And I look at them and I ask, are you sure you actually read the Bible in church? And you're not just coming out and getting excited about something you didn't know about and you're forgetting to even read the stuff that you never even read before?

I saw someone on Facebook the other day—if you've never heard of it, it's where you can go online and fight about stupid stuff. And I saw someone post something, and they were a believer, or they claimed to be a believer in Yeshua. And what they posted bothered me because it kind of proved the theory that I had in my mind that if we don't listen to the words of Yeshua, then we will forget the words of Yeshua and the understanding and the weight of what he came to proclaim. And they said, let's see, I have a quote on here. They said that their foundation of their faith, okay, the foundation of their faith was in the Torah, right? And not in Yeshua. And I poked at it a little bit and they basically said that the foundation, the groundwork, everything they stand on is the Torah. And then Yeshua is somehow built up on top of it. So Yeshua is not as important as the Torah. And it bothered me because there are some small issues with that. And it's not that big of a deal. The biggest issue I think with that is just what the Bible actually says.

The Foundation of Our Faith

Yeah, so [1 Corinthians 3](#), Paul speaks, and he has this amazing verse. And he's speaking to Corinth, and he says in chapter 3, By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder. So we get this foundation. And someone else is building on it. Sorry about the teachers and the pastors coming in. But each one should build with care, for no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. That's the foundation of our faith.

I have a good friend of mine, a very good friend of mine, and he gave me some advice and he said something that was so profound.

The Bible as a Tool, Not the Goal

He was looking at me and he said, the pursuit of our faith and our faithfulness and when we wake up every day is not to reach the goal of the Bible. And I looked at him and I said, what do you mean? He says, the pursuit of our faith is to God. The Bible simply helps facilitate that. But the Bible is not the goal. That's not where we stop. That's the tool that we use to support our relationship with God. The thing that we stand on is the doorway to a relationship and covenant with God, and that is who Yeshua is. That is who Jesus Christ is. That is what Paul is saying. Same thing in Ephesians chapter 2. If we want another verse. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers or foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. I'm sure we're familiar with that verse. If we keep reading, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief

cornerstone. Everybody say, chief cornerstone. Cornerstone. "...in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

Jesus Christ as the Cornerstone

The chief cornerstone, the thing that everything else is squared off of and built on top of, the thing that sets the precedent for everything else, is our king. And our faithfulness is our allegiance to our king. That doesn't minimize Torah. Torah is amazing. It's the reign of God's law on earth. That's not what we build our faith upon. We use that as a tool. We are obedient to this. We're faithful to it. The thing that we stand on is our allegiance to our King, Yeshua Messiah, who died for us, died with us, according to [Ephesians 2:1](#), and raised us to life so that we can sit in heavenly places, [Ephesians 2:6](#). That's our faith. That's our foundation. That's our foundation here.

Why is it that we've never seen [1 Corinthians 3:10-11](#) before, where it blatantly uses the phrase "foundation is Yeshua Messiah"? Is it because sometimes we're not listening? We're not understanding. We're not reading the scriptures to understand. And you sure even says this—it says when you stop, you don't want to hear, you're not going to hear. And when we stop listening to Yeshua, we lose them. And if you don't believe me, look around at the people every day who walk away from the faith because they simply stopped listening.

And when you take away the cornerstone, the foundation is no longer level, nothing lines up, the walls are no longer squared, and the roof no longer fits. And when you take away the cornerstone, the whole house gets flimsy, and the first time the wind blows, the whole house falls down because the foundation is not solid. Yeshua actually talks about this in [Matthew 7](#).

Opening Our Hearts to Listen

And so, how important is it that we attempt to open our hearts and listen and not simply be distracted when we read over the Gospels, when we read the account of Yeshua speaking to the multitudes and to his disciples? These things are 2,000 years old. This is not just some book that we should become casual with. This is like a time machine. You get to look back 2,000 years, and someone wrote this as an account of the words that came out of the mouth of our king. That's very important, and we forget to look at the Bible that way sometimes.

So it's fascinating because I'm going to ask a question, and it's a question that might demonstrate whether we've been listening or not. And it might call you out today, and it's okay.

I've been there with you. So anytime we read when Yeshua was speaking about parables, we always get called out, and there are pricks and convictions and so on and so forth in our hearts. And it's important—I want to preface this—it's important to understand that we need to be wearing the lenses, like we were talking about in the Jonah series, the lenses that the Bible gives us when we read it.

The Lenses We Wear

And when we put on our own lenses, sometimes the Bible isn't really read the way it's supposed to be. A perfect case in point: Have any of you guys ever been interested in a specific topic in the Bible, put those lenses on, and saw that one thing throughout the rest of the Bible and nothing else? Anybody? So back in the day, I'm not going to tell you how long ago, I was all about some aliens. We've all been there, right? No one, just me. Just a couple of us, right? So I had my alien lenses on. And I swear, everywhere I look in the middle of Leviticus, aliens, right? Go up into Hebrews, aliens, right? Gospel of Matthew, aliens. Revelation, oh! And that's all you see. Can anyone relate, at least? If you're really, really, really into the lost tribes of Israel, man, everywhere—it's everywhere.

But when I have these lenses on, sometimes I admit I miss the things that the lenses don't pick up. About six years ago, Jenny and I bought a house, and I was very anxious to have my own house and no longer rent because I could build the man cave. And the man cave—I think I'm going to lose it soon because I have kids now, a child. But regardless, I built a man cave with a little recliner in there. Guys, anybody? And you got the TV flat screen—a Panasonic plasma or something like that. And on this TV, you could hit a 3D button on the remote, and guess what it does? Makes everything 3D. But you have to buy these gimmick glasses in order to view it on the TV.

And so I went to eBay and bought these little glasses and put them on. It was really, really, really, really cool. Hit the button and these electronic 3D glasses make everything 3D. And it was a great little gimmick. For about the first 30 seconds of the movie, it's awesome. And then you don't even notice it anymore.

What if I tried to take my 3D glasses that I bought for my TV to the movie theater when a 3D movie is playing, and I refused to wear the glasses that the movie theater told me to wear to experience the movie the way that it was meant to be viewed? Is the movie going to be what it's supposed to be to me if I wear my own lenses? No, they're not meant to work there. So I want to challenge you guys: if we can try to recognize when we're wearing our custom lenses—yes,

it's fun to wear them sometimes—but then recognize that and take them off and use the lenses that scripture tells us to use, where we're not adding a context that's not there or adding a scripture that's not there, and we're not taking away stuff that is there.

The Kingdom of God

And so we're going to read some stories that Yeshua told in [Matthew 13](#). Yeah, if we can take those glasses off, that'd be great. The question that I have for you, and this is a question that I've had to ask myself, and at times, I guess I'm not listening, is: if you had to summarize, everybody, the one thing that Yeshua was about by the way he spoke, the way he did healings and the things he did through his actions, when he preached in parables—what was it that he was about? If you had to define it in just one sentence and tell me, what did Yeshua come to do? What would you say? What was his big thing that he was most passionate about?

Reconciliation? Love? He's perfect. He's great. He did do these things. I'm looking for the thing that all of these—love, mercy, grace, reconciliation—orbit around. He was courageous. It's orbiting around this one topic. The kingdom. Who said kingdom? The kingdom. He was all about proclaiming this kingdom, in which love and reconciliation and bravery and boldness and grace and mercy all orbit around it.

And when we read the parables, if we don't have the kingdom glasses on, we're going to miss a lot of the things that he's trying to say. You guys realize that in the New Testament, Yeshua begins a conversation, a statement, a sermon, or a parable about the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven around 125, 129 times? Sorry, it's mentioned 129 times. In the Gospels alone, I believe it's about 103 times in the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John. It was a big deal. He mentions and starts 20 different conversations about the kingdom of God before we even get to Matthew chapter 13. This kingdom that is coming. This kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God.

You guys know what it means when you say kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God? It's a big deal. Kingdom of heaven is the kingdom in which God reigns. Kingdom of God, same thing. The place where God is king. It's the kingdom where God is king, and his reign is overtaking, and his rule and the peace of his comfort and his kingdom overtake everything. And Yeshua's talking about this kingdom that's going to come. And it's a kingdom where God rules and you're going to recognize him on the throne because there's going to be peace. There's going to be reconciliation. It's going to be a new creation. It's going to be a place without violence. It's going to be a place of love. It's going to be a place of mercy. It's going to be a place where all of the

brokenness that we see in our lives and in the world will be mended. It will be reconciled together. There will be healing that takes place here. This new creation is coming to crash into the world that this unseen darkness has overtaken and made corrupt through its influence on us. It's going to crash into this place and it's going to change everything. And Yeshua's talking about this great kingdom that's coming, and then he looks and he says, guess what?

The Kingdom Established

It's within you. It's within you. It's here. It's here. It's starting here, and it's starting through me and through you, and we're going to walk this kingdom out. Remember we were speaking about in Hebrews how walking out the kingdom that is unseen because we're establishing his kingdom on earth. And the promises of God all through the Old Testament are going to be fulfilled in this. And yeah, it's kind of a big deal when Yeshua speaks about this, and that's why he's so passionate about it.

And you're invited to join him in this kingdom where your sins are no longer in your face. They're forgiven. They're cleansed of you. There's no charge against you. You're justified. You're sanctified. You're a new creation. Walking out life in this world. And it's fascinating because the Apostle Paul and Yeshua speak about the old creation and they give it many names. They talk about this present evil age. They talk about the old man. They talk about the flesh. All of these things describe this world that we currently live in in contrast to the world that God has planted on this earth and established, his kingdoms.

The Sermon on the Mount

So the whole Sermon on the Mount is about when Yeshua is contrasting. Well, you've heard it said here, and this is how you've observed the Torah in this manner, in this scope. But I say the Torah in God's kingdom is proclaimed this way. I say that you don't hate your enemy. That's what this world does. You love your enemy. I say that you forgive your enemy. And you know what else? Pray for your enemy. Ask God to bless them. So that they will have the reconciled peace of God in their life just like you do. Because that is what the world of God's reign looks like. And that is how we participate in it. And that's what the good news is. And that's what the gospel, the proclamation of this kingdom is.

Setting the Lens for Matthew 13

And so now [Matthew 13](#), we finally got there. I just wanted to get the lens ready. We're going to jump into these parables. But let's go ahead and make sure we have the right lenses on. How many of you guys know that there are two chapters that precede Matthew chapter 13? They are Matthew chapter 11 and Matthew chapter 12. That's a horrible joke. Anyway, and what's fascinating in these two chapters, if you go ahead and mark those down, are these two chapters filled with Yeshua speaking about the kingdom of God with people, and it's a recording of how different people respond to his proclamation of God's kingdom being released and crashing into this world.

The Resistance of the Pharisees and Sadducees

And so you have the Pharisees on one side and the Sadducees, and they hear about this magnificent kingdom that's going to ruin everything. The Sadducees were perfectly fine with the way the kingdom was on earth right then and there. And this new kingdom would threaten the authority that they have established in politics and the temple. And the Pharisees, such a small sect of Judaism in the first century, had kind of a monopoly of standards. And they didn't like it at all. How did they want to respond to Yeshua when he was proclaiming this magnificent kingdom? They wanted to kill him, right?

John the Baptist's Question

At the beginning of chapter 11, Yeshua is responding to John the Baptist. Remember, John the Baptist got put in prison. And you're going to remember this verse right here. It's in chapter 11, verse 1. It says, When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, so Matthew's already tagging it as the Messiah, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, Are you the one who is to come or are we to wait for another? And Jesus answered them. You guys familiar with this story? You've heard this before, right? This is a great story because Yeshua is fixing to reinforce what his purpose and what his vocation and what he came to do to John.

What Jesus Accomplishes

He says, And so we always read that, and he's healing the sick and he's healing folk. He's got these powers. And so obviously, yeah, that should be, that's the Messiah. Well, Yeshua is actually quoting scripture when he reads this. He's pulling from several different chapters of Isaiah, but in my opinion, mainly [Isaiah 35](#). And so scripture talks about reading the scriptures in the communities, and that's what I would like to do right now, actually. So [Isaiah 35](#) is fascinating because that's what Yeshua was actually quoting. And I have it up here. If you can

kind of read that, it's just a few verses. And here's [Isaiah 35](#). And [Isaiah 35](#) is speaking about the very new creation that God promised to bring about on the world.

The World to Come

And God's speaking about this paradise, when Judaism, they call it the world to come, this place where God's restoration and restored kingdom and restored world will crash into this one and overtake it. And this is what [Isaiah 35](#) is speaking about. It speaks that the wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the desert will rejoice and blossom like the crocus. It will blossom profusely and rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of God, the majesty of our God. Encourage the exhausted. Strengthen the feeble. Say to those with anxious heart, take courage, fear not. Your God will come with vengeance. The recompense of God will come, but he will save you. Then the eyes of the blind will be opened. The ears of the deaf will be unstopped. The lame will leap like deer. The tongue of the mute will shout with joy. For the waters will break forth in the wilderness and the streams in the Arabah. Verse 1. But it will be for him who walks that way, and the fools will not wander on it. No lion will be there. There will not be any vicious beast that is here to attack you. These will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there, and the ransom of the Lord will return. This is a world where the deserts will no longer exist because they're going to be flourishing with springs and fountains and grass. And all of the heartache and the brokenness in the world, it says God is going to make amends for it. There will be reconciliation and healing by God's grace and mercy. Peace. And then he continues speaking about this. There will be no vicious animals here. It's going to be a place of peace and mercy where you will find gladness and joy and sorrow will flee away from you.

The Redemption of the Ransomed

But look at verse 10. There's something interesting in verse 10. And the ransomed of the Lord will return. So this is speaking about in the first century they would have read this as the exiles, even though Judeans had some control of their land, even though they were in the land, they still viewed themselves in exile because they didn't have control over their own lives and they were still far from God because they were still being ruled over and so on and so forth. And so what this is saying is that in this new world, in this world to come, everyone who finds themselves exiled from God by sin or transgression—they have been taken captive away from God's presence forever—they will be redeemed. God will ransom them from their exile. That exile will end, and they will be restored to him. Of course we know that this is demonstrated in

the exile of Judah, the exile of Israel, ultimately the exile of mankind from the presence of God in the garden.

This is how Yeshua responds to John when John asks him: Are you the one? Are you the Messiah? Are you the guy or are we to look for another? And Yeshua refers back to [Isaiah 35](#). Yes, John, look. Can't you see? I am the one who is coming to proclaim healing, restoration, a place where brokenness will no longer exist, a place of restoration, a place where all relationships will be reconciled, a place where the exile will end and all will be restored back to the presence of God. Yes, John, this is what I have come to do. This is a world that reflects the reign and kingdom of God, right?

A Bold Proclamation

And so now we're going to jump in. This is kind of our lenses, right? We're going to jump in to [Matthew 13](#). You ready? Was that neat? Have you guys ever read [Isaiah 35](#) before in reference to [Matthew 11](#)? It's just kind of neat. It kind of gives a context. Yeshua was being very bold when he said that. And the Pharisees and the Sadducees, no. Who does this guy think he is? We're doing what we need to do, and God's going to come through us through our obedience, through our faithfulness. No, no, it's not. Yeshua is coming to proclaim the kingdom of God and the restoration of all things because Israel failed in their vocation to be a light in the nations.

A representative of Israel is going to die and be raised to life to fulfill that role. And there will be a redefined Israel that moves on from that point forward that God will use to be that light under the world, to be that salt on the earth. This new covenant God will unleash upon the world is going to change everything. This is what Yeshua was saying. And so in Matthew chapter 13, it says, So here is Yeshua in a boat, and it's kind of a cool thing. The writer didn't have to say that. Of course it happened; there were so many people that Yeshua got in a boat and used the water as like an amphitheater, if you will. I don't know, that's kind of cool. And he says, Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold. Let everyone who has ears listen.

So here we have this guy who has powers and does miracles and teaches the kingdom of God, this new creation where God's heavenly reign and rule is going to crash into this world and change everything and overtake every dominion and power on the world. And here he is.

He's talking about a farmer and some birds. Yay. Okay. Do you think some people were a little disappointed in the crowd? No. It was a mixed crowd. There were people who didn't like them. There were people who loved them, and there were the in-betweens. And then there were those

people who, when he told a parable, they were the ones who went, "Ah, did you hear that? I get what he's saying. Wow, that's profound, right?"

What's the difference? And when Yeshua says this phrase, you can tell at the end, he says, "Let him who has ears, let them hear." What does that mean? It means essentially that the candy is not being held by the baby. It's not something that's just easy that you can just grab and pick up and eat. It's something that you have to work for a little bit. It's something that you have to dig in just a little bit. You have to put some effort into understanding it. And he does this on purpose because if you're lazy or you just don't care, you won't get it.

Let Him Who Has Ears

Verse 10: "Then the disciples came and said to him, 'Why do you speak to them in parables? Just tell them like it is.' This is why I speak to them in parables. Because seeing they do not see, hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled."

And then he quotes Isaiah. He says, "You will indeed hear, but never understand. You will indeed see, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown hardened. And with their ears, they can barely hear, and with their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart. And if they understand with their heart, if they hear, if they're listening, they will turn, and I will heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and hear what you hear, but did not hear it."

Yeshua's parables are not these simple teaching tools, life lessons that you just be like, "Oh yeah, sowing the seed, yeah." They're actually a scary double-edged sword because on one hand, what he's saying—and he's quoting Isaiah to prove the point—he's saying that the people whose hearts are open to him and open to the kingdom, they will receive more. They will receive more knowledge of the kingdom of God. But the ones who have hardened hearts, the ones who have selfish intentions, their own selfish religious agendas, these parables—what Yeshua says—will reinforce the hardness of their hearts. That's kind of scary.

If You're Not Listening, You Will Be Made More Deaf

So if you're not listening, you will be made more deaf. You will not be made to hear at all. If you have a hardness of heart towards the words in the first place, it's going to reinforce it.

And when we choose not to listen to someone else, when we choose not to listen to our spouse or our kids, I mean, we can be honest, and this happens to all of us because we're very selfish individuals as part of the human condition. The reason why we're not hearing or listening to our spouses or our kids or our friends or Yeshua is because that would require us to focus on someone other than ourselves, right? It's true. I'm sitting there on my phone or feeding Ben, and Jenny's just going away, just pouring this energy of communication towards me, and I don't care because I'm being selfish. I'm wanting to focus on something else. Sometimes we do it without noticing it, but Yeshua gives us a warning about this. He says, "That's not how you act. You don't casually choose the desires of your own hearts and what you want to focus on over what I say is in the kingdom."

And if you do, that's your choice, right? But it's not going to get you any closer. In fact, it's going to push you farther away. Starting to feel it a little bit.

It's Easy to Follow Torah

It's easy to follow a life where Torah is your foundation. I'll say it. It's real easy to not mow the lawn on Saturday. Everyone at PETA follows kosher laws. I mean, come on, they're keeping clean. It's easy simply to follow commandments. To live a life following Yeshua as your foundation will mess you up in the greatest, most painful way because when Yeshua speaks, he calls out the things in our life that don't belong in the kingdom. And they're usually the things of our flesh that we put up as a priority. And when Yeshua speaks, it kind of rubs us the wrong way sometimes.

Well, I do listen. Yeah. Parable of the sowing the seed. I know all about that. And then we actually read it, and we actually listen, and it's like, "Ooh, I'm not the last one." This is what the kingdom does, and this is how Yeshua teaches.

Yeshua expects many would not listen to him—just read the scriptures. He expected many to walk away. And he doesn't force the issue on whether or not you're so excited to see God's kingdom come to earth and be a part of it, or you're blinded by your own selfish agendas. It doesn't matter. It's your choice. And he knows this.

Every Single One of Us Fits in One of Those Examples

And when he tells this parable about the sower and the seed, it's fascinating because every single one of us fits in one of those examples. Whether we try to deny it or not, every single one of us fits in one of those examples.

And so we're going to go to verse 18 in Matthew chapter 13. And this is where Yeshua explains the parable. Are we ready? Okay, auditing is never fun. Are we sure?

So Matthew chapter 13, verse 18: "Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, the proclamation of God's kingdom crashing into this one place, how powerful it is, how magnificent it is, and what it's going to do, what its purpose is, and does not understand it, I dare say is not listening, the evil one come and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart."

So if you're not listening, the evil one snatches it away. And this is what is sown along the path. And as for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately rejoices it with joy.

The Rocky Ground: Shallow Believers

So this is someone who's like, "Yay, I love Yeshua. I follow Yeshua. I follow him. Yeah, I'm a Christian. I'm a messianic. Yes, I follow the king. I follow him."

In verse 21: "Yet he has no root in himself but endures for a while. And when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away."

I dare say this is someone who is shallow. This is someone who claims to be a follower, but they're really not. They really refuse to be invested in what the message of the kingdom is. This may be someone who calls themselves a follower of Yeshua, but their actions and their attitude and their focus say something completely different. They're shallow.

An example of this is someone who probably cares more about their own selfish agenda in life than the Gospels. And whenever something comes against that and threatens what their agenda is in life, it could be something as simple as physical tribulation where people are threatening to kill you. It could be something as simple as taking something away, demanding that something be removed from your life because it doesn't belong in the kingdom. It's a different focus.

And when you have priority greater than the kingdom, this is the result of it. When things get hard and you give up the kingdom in replacement for the flesh. This could be someone who's constantly looking for an offense, calling people names, not forgiving, not being humble. It could be someone who thinks the world revolves around them, and if anything threatens that.

Among the Thorns: Choking the Word

Verse 22: "As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word but cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches which choke the seed, choke the word, and it proves unfruitful."

So this is soil that claims to be following the Messiah and pursuing the kingdom of God, except they have other things growing in it. And these other things have sprouted, and they are zapping the nutrients and the water away from the seed, and they're choking it out.

This could be selfishness. This could be hatred towards others. This could be pride. This could be unforgiveness. He specifically defines it as riches of the world. It could be whatever—it's when you put more energy into something else that literally you have no focus for the kingdom anymore. When you focus on something else other than the kingdom of God, you create a new foundation, and the kingdom of God is no longer the foundation of your faith; it's something else.

And when this happens, it is only a matter of time before the wind will blow and the house will fall, and you will find yourself wondering how you got to this place where you feel like you have no need for this person of Yeshua to manifest outwardly within your own life. And you're wondering why you spent all this time studying and all this time suffering in the faith when right now you're at this place where it doesn't matter anymore. I'm done.

What other things are growing in your life that are choking the progress of the seed that is planted, the word of the kingdom? You cannot expect a new creation to birth within your life when we keep our own selfish agendas within it. This is what Yeshua is saying.

And does it hurt sometimes? It's never fun to audit yourself. You have to dig it up and toss it out.

The Good Soil

Verse 23: "And for what was sown on good soil. This is what everyone's like, yeah, that's me. This is the one who hears the word and understands it because he listens."

He listens and bears fruit and yields—in one case a hundredfold, another 60, another 30. This is a person who hears the proclamation of the kingdom and listens, and because he listened and put it into action, he yields a huge harvest. What is your life producing? That's what Yeshua is asking in the parable, right? What are your priorities? What are your goals in life? That will tell you.

The apostle Paul calls it something else, right? This one thing—this one sign that you're good soil—it produces what? A harvest, fruit. And Paul in [Galatians 5](#) calls it the fruit of the Spirit. You guys know what it is, the fruit of the what? The fruit of the Spirit, right? In [Galatians 5:22](#), he lists them out. He says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." And this is how Paul puts together what Yeshua is saying here.

What Soil Are You?

And so there's a simple way to tell what soil you are when reading this verse. And that's what Yeshua's parable is causing us to think about—his intention, what he spoke 2,000 years ago. It was for you, the audience, to ask this one question: what soil am I? Because he's saying that you're one of these examples. Which one are you? And when we read this verse, the way to tell is: have we produced?

And I say that as humbly as I can because I'm reading over these same verses and it's causing me to audit my own life. Have I really produced in all of these areas? Have I held back? Have I decreased in some of these areas?

Have You Produced Fruit?

January 1st of this year—you guys remember it? Remember that day? Anybody make one of those New Year's resolutions? "I'm going to go to the gym" or "I'm going to live a better life this year"? Have you produced more fruit in these areas since January 1st? Love towards others, joy in God, patience, kindness towards others—especially when they don't deserve it. Have you increased? Are you about the same, or has it backslid a little bit?

Faithfulness to walk after Yeshua—allegiance, if you will. When I look at that word faithfulness now, I think of allegiance to the king. Your allegiance. Has it increased, stayed the same, or has it decreased? Gentleness in all aspects. Self-control in your life. Has it increased or decreased?

And so Yeshua really gets in our face with this parable. It's always easy to read Yeshua's parables without really listening. We just read over them. What are you growing in your lives? When you hear Yeshua's message of God's new creation, of God's kingdom, what are you hearing? Do you hear background noise? Just like when your spouse or your kids come in and you're focused on something else. You respond, "Uh-huh, uh-huh, yeah, he's talking, it's good. I'm listening." Or are you listening?

You may realize instantly what type of soul you are today. Thank God. Thank God he provides a way for us to develop and change the soul we are, right? Thank God he gives us that opportunity to change what type of soil we are.

Till the Soil

In the event that we are challenged and convicted that maybe we do got to till this sucker out, make the soil better. Not so thorns and weeds can grow up, but so that his seed can produce a change in our life that would manifest and impact the world for his kingdom. That's what it's all about. That's why we're called emissaries of the king, emissaries of Christ.

So are we willing to pray that God would give us ears to hear, to listen? Are we willing to pray that? Ears to take hold of God's message of reconciliation, of God's kingdom, and his charge to walk out this newness of life that he has birthed through this world through Yeshua.

Guys, the world that we live in is a world of decay. It's a world of unforgiveness. It's a world of death. Do you guys know what I'm talking about? Look outside. Are we willing to pray that God would instill in us the manifestation of his kingdom? And not only pray, not only listen, but accept that and act it out.

And that's my charge to you: are we willing to act like a new creation, or are we just going to continue to proclaim it and allow the weeds and the thorns to choke, or just allow the plant to fall over because it's never really rooted to begin with?

Closing

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