

# The Dirty Secret

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[ 0 : 00 ] Jesus. Tonight we will cover Mark's account of one of Jesus' best known parables.

! Many people call it the parable of the sower, but it's more appropriately called the parable! of the soils. Let's dig into those soils and read Mark chapter 4, verses 1 through 20.

Here are Mark 4, 1 through 20. It says, And he said,

Here's the main idea for tonight's passage. Jesus explains various responses to the gospel. Jesus explains various responses to the gospel.

At this point in Mark's gospel, Jesus is popular with the crowds. However, he's popular with the crowds primarily because the crowds want Jesus to work miracles for them.

[ 3 : 22 ] The people want to be healed of physical diseases or they want to have demons removed. When Jesus stops working miracles, the crowds disappear. Although nothing is wrong with wanting to be healed and nothing is wrong with asking Jesus for healing, Jesus' emphasis is on the spiritual well-being of people.

Jesus wants people to follow him for his message rather than his miracles. Meanwhile, Israel's religious elite wants Jesus dead. Those religious leaders say Jesus is being possessed by demons. Even some of Jesus' own family members have their doubts about Jesus. We saw last time that Jesus' half-brothers thought Jesus was crazy at that time.

Jesus' power was unmistakably divine. His teaching was authoritative. His miracles were wondrously supernatural. His life was sinless.

His popularity was unprecedented. Yet at the end of his ministry, his band of followers only numbered about 500. That was likely in Galilee and then maybe another 120 in Jerusalem.

[ 4 : 32 ] So why were there so few that were following him? An unnamed follower of Christ asked him that very question in Luke chapter 13, verse 23.

He said, Lord, will those who are saved be few? Jesus had already answered that question in the Sermon on the Mount. In the Sermon on the Mount, he said, Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction.

And those who enter it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life. And those who find it are few. Those verses were Matthew 7, verses 13 and 14.

Clearly, Jesus emphasized the narrow exclusivity of his gospel. But even so, those who truly believed in him must have wondered why the majority of their fellow countrymen rejected the Messiah, even after many had initially responded to him with enthusiasm and fascination.

Those true few followers of Jesus almost certainly would have been getting discouraged by this point. Many of them had given up everything to follow Jesus.

[ 5 : 44 ] And by human standards, things were looking pretty bleak. The true believers were fortunate that cell phones and video conferencing had yet to be invented because they didn't have to report back to their family very often.

Can you imagine how they would have answered questions from family members back home about how things are going? They might have had to say something like, Following Jesus is harder than I expected. Jesus' own half-brothers think he's crazy.

And the scribes and Pharisees are plotting to kill him. But other than that, everything is going just fine. As we go through tonight's verses, imagine yourself in that original group of followers.

Jesus knows that his followers are confused and disheartened. Through his teaching, he takes the opportunity to explain to those followers why so few people have believed his message.

Using the parable of the soils, featuring typical types of dirt, Jesus unveils the mystery. So in other words, Jesus tells his followers the dirty secret.

[ 6 : 47 ] So we'll look at that dirty secret as we go along tonight. This parable was drawn directly from the agricultural world of that first century. In Mark 4, 1-9, Jesus simply described the reality of different types of soil.

He then articulated the purpose behind his parables in 10-13, but only to his followers. In verses 14-20, Jesus explained to those followers that the point of this parable was to illustrate the basic reason for people's responses to the gospel.

We'll break tonight's passage into three sections, starting with verses 1-9. And in Mark 4, 1-9, we see the story. So the story is your first blank.

Listen to Mark 4, 1-9 again. Again, he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and set it on the sea.

And the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. And he was teaching them many things in parables. And in his teaching he said to them, Listen, behold, a sower went out to sow.

[ 8 : 04 ] And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil. And immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil.

And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.

And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold. And he said, He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Here at the beginning of Mark 4, we've reached a turning point in Mark's gospel. For the first three chapters, Mark has given us relatively few details about what Jesus said.

Mark instead has focused on Jesus' works. When we have heard from Jesus, he's mainly been responding to questions or accusations from others. In chapter 4, Mark's focus changes from documenting Jesus' works to documenting Jesus' words.

[ 9 : 18 ] We know from the other gospels that until this point, Jesus has spoken plainly when he taught the people. For example, Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7 before the events that we are studying today.

In our last study, we saw the settled rejection of Jesus by Israel's religious elite. That rejection symbolized the rejection of Jesus by the nation of Israel as a whole.

From this point on, parables would be Jesus' primary means of teaching the multitudes. The purpose of parables was to clarify truth to believers and hide it from unbelievers.

In that sense, parables were both a blessing and a judgment. The term parable comes from two Greek words. One means alongside of, and another means to lay in place.

So the idea is that of making a comparison by placing something alongside something else for the sake of illustration or explanation. As analogies or extended short stories, parables use familiar practices or objects to explain previously unknown or complex spiritual truths.

[ 10 : 32 ] Parables represented a common form of rabbinic teaching with the term appearing some 45 times in the Septuagint. That's the Greek version of the Old Testament. Matthew's parallel account tells us that the rejection we studied last time and the teaching that we studied tonight happened on the same day.

You can see that if you look at Matthew 12, verse 50 to Matthew 13, verse 1. The scene described in Mark 4, 1 is familiar.

A large crowd is gathered around Jesus, but we know that the crowd is more interested in what Jesus might do rather than in what Jesus might say. Jesus probably taught from the boat for at least two reasons.

First, it gave him some separation from the large crowd. Second, the water and the geographic features surrounding the sea, which we know really is a lake, naturally would have amplified Jesus' voice.

The entire crowd would have been able to hear what Jesus said, even though Jesus had no microphone. People in our times have recreated that same natural amplification on the Sea of Galilee.

[ 11 : 43 ] Jesus would have known about that area's natural amplification properties because, of course, he created the world and everything in it. Verse 2 of Mark 4 is where we learn that Jesus taught the crowd in parables.

The parable itself comes in verses 3 through 8. Before Jesus tells the parable, he gives a one-word command at the beginning of verse 3. He simply says, listen.

He's signaling to the crowd that what he is about to say is important. We'll skip explaining the meaning of verses 3 through 8 because Jesus provides us with the explanation of those verses in verses 14 through 20.

So that we can better understand Jesus' explanation when we get to it, let's familiarize ourselves with what farming would have been like when Jesus told this parable.

The common way of planting was to go out and scatter the seed and then plow. The term plow has little relation to what we think of as plowing today. In ancient Israel, a plow was little more than a pointed stick used to break up the soil a little so that some seed would sink in.

[12:53] The sower held the seed in an apron with one hand or perhaps in a bag over his shoulder. The sower then broadcasted the seed with the opposite hand. Because of these primitive agricultural methods, an average harvest in ancient Palestine was probably no more than seven or eight times the amount of seed sown, and a good harvest probably was about ten times the amount of seed sown.

The same type of seed goes to four different types of soils in this parable. The seed is the same, but the results are vastly different.

The different types of soil that Jesus described were typical for Israel. Jesus mentions the soil along the pathway, the rocky soil, the thorny soil, and the good soil.

So let's talk about the characteristics of each of these soil types. The first type of soil was the soil along the path, and that's a reference to the narrow paths that crisscrossed the Galilean landscape. These paths separated fields and provided both farmers and travelers access through the countryside. Jesus and his disciples had earlier walked along such a path when the Pharisees confronted them for picking grain on the Sabbath.

[14:09] You probably remember that from Mark chapter 2, verses 23 through 28. These paths were dry and unprotected from the hot, arid climate, and that made them very hard, almost like pavement, because of the repeated foot traffic.

Because seed that fell beside the road lay exposed alongside the dusty path, the birds quickly claimed and ate it. The birds followed the sower, flying behind and waiting until the sower had moved on to another part of the field.

Then the birds would swoop down and eat the easily accessible seed. Experience had taught the sower to expect the birds to get a third, if not half, of his precious seed.

It was just a fact of life. It was something he had to live with. The only option he had was to sow plentifully. Whatever seed the birds missed would be trampled underfoot by travelers as the travelers walked alongside the path.

The second kind of soil is rocky ground. The picture you need to have here is a layer of topsoil with bedrock underneath. The soil here is shallow.

[15:17] Jesus stresses the shallowness of the soil twice in verse 5. The plant immediately springs up, but it does not have a root system sufficient to sustain it. When the sun rises, the plant is scorched, but it does not have a root system that can go deep enough to keep it alive.

It withers away because of that. Farmers would clear the soil of loose rocks, but for areas with shallow soil because of the bedrock underneath, the farmers could do nothing.

Past experience here had taught a farmer not to expect much from that area. Next came the weed-infested soil, and it was plagued with choking thorns.

Plowing and planting, fertilizing and cultivating were required to produce a crop of grain, but weeds would grow anywhere. The weeds were tough, hardy, useless, and militant.

The people hearing Jesus likely had often cursed the weeds that grew in their own gardens at home, especially the thorns that fought back, tearing at their hands and clothes. Good seed had no chance once the thorns had taken over.

[16:23] Thorns would compete for every inch of soil. Finally, in contrast to the first three useless soils, other seeds fell into the good soil.

This ground was not hard-packed like the path, or shallow like the rocky soil, or weed-infested like the thorny ground. The good soil was soft and deep, free from thorns, and rich in moisture and nutrients.

When seeds landed on this soil, they grew up and increased, so that they yielded a crop and produced 30, 60, and 100-fold. When Jesus spoke of crops that produced harvest of 30, 60, or 100-fold, percentages that were unthinkable high, his listeners would have been stunned. Those kind of results would have been unheard of in that day. This brings us to verse 9. After telling the parable, Jesus said in verse 9, He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus is talking about spiritual ears here. Not everyone who heard Jesus speak was able to understand the truth that he was explaining. The meaning of the parable would only be revealed to those whose hearts were ready to receive it.

[ 17 : 36 ] For the rest, it was an unsolvable riddle. The religious leaders, along with many of the lay people in the multitudes, had already rejected Jesus. The judgment on them was that their hearts and ears were closed to his teachings.

Consequently, they were not given any interpretation of the parables. Yet, Jesus' statement served as an invitation to believers who were willing to listen.

To them, he gave the explanation. Now that we've seen the story, let's move to the second section of the passage. In verses 10 through 13, we learn that Jesus' true followers also fail to understand the parable.

And in response, Jesus tells his followers the secret. The secret is your second section. Listen to Mark 4, verses 10 through 13 again.

Speaking again about Jesus, Mark wrote, And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, To you it has been given the secret of the kingdom of God.

[ 18 : 45 ] But for those outside, everything is in parables, so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.

And he said to them, Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? These verses probably happened on the evening of the day when Jesus taught the parable.

The crowds have dispersed, and Jesus is alone with his true followers. Matthew's account gives us more detail. Listen to Matthew chapter 13, verses 10 through 14.

Here are Matthew 13, 10 through 14. Then the disciples came and said to him, Why do you speak to them in parables? And he answered them, To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.

But to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

[ 20 : 00 ] This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, You will indeed hear, but never understand, and you will indeed see, but never perceive.

Jesus's followers sound like they have a great concern for people. Matthew shows us that the followers ask, Why do you speak to them in parables?

Those followers really were saying, Why do you speak to us in parables? They didn't understand it either, but they didn't want to admit it. Jesus, though, perceives that his followers have yet to grasp the meaning of the parable.

Notice the question that Jesus asked in Mark 13. He said, Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?

We know that Jesus will explain the parable to his followers. Before he does that, though, Jesus first explains why he has started speaking. In Mark's version, Jesus gives this answer in Mark 4, verses 11 and 12.

[ 21 : 18 ] It says, And he said to them, To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God. But for those outside, everything is in parables, so that they may indeed see, but not perceive, and may indeed hear, but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.

In verse 11, some of your translations will say mystery instead of secret. For example, the New King James Version says at the beginning of verse 11, And he said to them, To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.

The word secret or mystery is found in the Gospels only here, and in the parallel accounts in Matthew 13, 11, and Luke chapter 8, verse 10.

The Greek word, though, appears 21 times in Paul's letters, and four times in Revelation. Paul used it to mean a truth that was not known in the past.

Paul was referencing a truth that cannot be known apart from divine revelation, and was noting that the truth recently had been revealed by God. This meaning best explains the meaning in Mark's text tonight.

[ 22 : 34 ] The secret or revealed truth here is that the kingdom of God has drawn near in Jesus Christ. God, implied by the passive voice, revealed the truth to some.

The vast majority of the Jews of Jesus' day did not realize that. To them, everything about Jesus, including his parables, was a riddle. Those outside, as Jesus puts it in the second half of verse 11, should not be limited only to Jews.

That expression actually includes all unbelievers. The scripture Jesus uses in verse 12 is from Isaiah 6, 9, and 10.

Isaiah 6 documents when he commissioned Isaiah to be his prophet. Listen to what God told Isaiah in Isaiah 6, 9, and 10. And he said, Go and say to this people, Keep on hearing, but do not understand.

Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and be healed.

[ 23 : 50 ] The division of people into insiders and outsiders is the purpose of the parables. The phrase, so that, signals an intent.

Jesus knows exactly what he's doing. He's fulfilling Isaiah 6, 9, and 10. That's why Jesus uses parables. People see, but do not perceive.

They hear, but do not understand. The intended effect is that they do not turn and are not forgiven. All four types of soils receive the word, but only one of the four soils sees and perceives, hears, and understands.

Only one group turns and receives forgiveness. Parables are more than mere illustrations. They constitute spiritual tests that separate those who understand and believe from those who do not. Jesus reveals the secret of the kingdom to his disciples as his true family. The outsiders do not receive this insider information. They only receive the parables.

[ 24 : 56 ] In fact, Jesus uses parables with this explicit purpose in mind. The outsiders get only the parables. The insiders hear the same parables of the outsiders, but they are given something extra, and that is how to interpret those parables.

People might assume that serious and devoted Jews like the Pharisees and the scribes would be insiders, and that common people, especially tax collectors and sinners, would be on the outside. But the reverse is true. These verses show that the disciples of Jesus are directly dependent upon Jesus. He alone can reveal the secrets of the kingdom.

Jesus is the Son of God. He's the only one who really knows the plan and purpose and work of God. Not everyone can see God's reign and rule at work in what Jesus is doing.

Jesus must disclose those things to them. Everyone is dependent upon Jesus for this revelation. Isaiah 6, 9, and 10 show up at least four other times in the New Testament with this same sense.

[ 26 : 05 ] That's why the context of Isaiah 6 is so important for understanding what Jesus said in Mark 6, 11, and 12. God declared judgment upon Israel for their idolatry.

God was communicating that this was poetic justice. They had become as blind and deaf and mute as the idols that they worshipped. The psalmist gives the same warning in Psalm 115, verses 4 through 8.

Here are Psalm 115, 4 through 8. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths but do not speak, eyes but do not see.

They have ears but do not hear, noses but do not smell. They have hands but do not feel, feet but do not walk, and they do not make a sound in their throat.

Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them. The scribes and Pharisees avoided making idols of silver and gold.

[ 27 : 16 ] However, they had made idols of their own works-based religious system. The false religious system was just as worthless as any physical idol would have been. The scribes, Pharisees, and other outsiders had no interest in Jesus' gospel.

We've seen throughout the Gospel of Mark that some of those outsiders were violently opposed to Jesus. The outsiders had closed their spiritual eyes and ears to Jesus.

In response, God left them in their sin. God handing the outsiders over to their unbelief fulfills another prophecy in Isaiah. Listen to Isaiah chapter 44, verse 18.

Isaiah 44, 18 says, They know not, nor do they discern, for He has shut their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot understand.

Listen to this sobering quote from John Phillips. He said, Ordinarily, God speaks to be understood. At times, however, He speaks only to seal the blindness, deepen the deafness, and confirm the hardness of those to whom the message is sent.

[ 28 : 33 ] It is the first step in setting the stage for judgment. Noah preached in vain right up to the day he entered the ark. The men of Sodom were smitten with blindness even as their doom was about to fall from the skies.

The people of the Lord's day had seen a most amazing and countless display of miracles. They had heard the most gracious and glorious teaching ever given, yet they had rejected Christ.

The nation of Israel confirmed its rejection of Christ by its subsequent rejection of the church. The hardening process began. Their blasphemy of the Holy Spirit had put them in a terrible category.

For such people, there was no healing, only hardening. No salvation, only judgment. The world is entering a similar phase of increasing apostasy in our own day, especially in lands that have been singularly blessed by the gospel.

We've already touched on how Mark 4.13 shows that Jesus' true followers also failed to understand the parable. Let's move on to the next section of tonight's text.

[ 29 : 48 ] In that section, Jesus will graciously explain the parable to the insiders. So far, we've seen the story and the secret. In the last section of our passage tonight, Jesus gives the summary.

So the summary is your last blank. We see that summary in Mark 4.14-20. Here are those verses again.

Jesus said, The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.

And these are the ones sown on rocky ground, the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while.

Then when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And the others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

[ 31 : 06 ] But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

The first thing we see from Jesus' explanation is that the seed represents the word of God. Think about actual seed for a minute.

We do not manufacture actual seed. God provides it. It contains the secret of life and it reproduces after its own kind.

God makes himself responsible for the mysterious and complex process whereby a seed germinates in the soil and grows. In a similar way, God also makes himself responsible for the way the word of God germinates in a human heart.

Our responsibility is to sow the seed or, said another way, to preach the word. We must avoid adding to God's word, subtracting from God's word, or trying to improve God's word by attempting to make it more appealing to modern minds.

[ 32 : 13 ] Our responsibility is simply to spread God's word. The sower initially represented Jesus. However, the sower now represents anyone who spreads the word of God.

The soil represents the hearts of those who hear the gospel preached to them. The message of salvation is received differently by different people. Many may demonstrate a superficial and temporary interest in the gospel, but only those whom the Spirit of God has prepared will respond in true faith and bear lasting fruit.

Jesus' words would have been both clarifying and encouraging to the disciples those whom he would soon commission to preach the gospel to all nations. This parable prepared the disciples for their evangelistic task by equipping them to expect some people to respond positively to the gospel while other people would reject the gospel.

The parable encouraged the disciples with the knowledge that God was already at work in the hearts of his elect cultivating the soil so that it would be ready to receive the seed of the gospel. The Lord was preparing his disciples and all subsequent generations of Christian evangelists to expect four basic responses to the preaching of the gospel. Those would be the unresponsive, the superficial, the worldly, and the receptive.

[ 33 : 41 ] The unresponsive people are represented by the hard soil of the path and the area around that path. These people are so callous by their unbelief that the seed of the gospel is unable to penetrate their hearts at all.

The same sun that gives life to the seed planted in good soil hardens the clay of unbelief in the hearts of those rejecters. Such people fail to receive the gospel because having continually resisted the truth about Christ, their hearts have become hard like pavement.

Their calloused animosity toward the truth is so great that when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. Refusing to believe, they become enslaved to the prince of darkness himself.

Satan may use any number of means to take away the word which has been sown. During the ministry of Jesus, the primary stumbling block to belief came from Israel's religious establishment. The Pharisees and Sadducees who disguised themselves as angels of light really were agents of Satan. They openly opposed Jesus and denied his authority.

[ 34 : 54 ] Those religious leaders promoted an external system of works righteousness that was completely opposed to the true gospel of grace. And they used their influence to pressure people into following their lead.

Since Jesus' time, Satan has continued to use false teachers, hypocritical religion, and the fear of men to keep the gospel from penetrating the hearts of unbelievers. Superficial followers are represented by the rocky soil.

Their face seems to shoot up overnight and they seem to have great joy in the Lord. Some of Jesus' audience may have been in this category. These are the people who followed Jesus from place to place and longed to have him heal them or feed them.

But Jesus' teaching eventually became too demanding for them and they turned away. You can read about that in John 6, verse 66. There was a lack of moisture in their soil.

When the going got tough, they simply left. Persecution, trouble, or even hard teaching shriveled the word until it became as nothing in their hearts.

[ 36 : 06 ] These superficial followers proved that they were never true believers. The superficial followers are like the people that John later described in 1 John 2, verse 19.

1 John 2, 19 says, They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.

But they went out that it might become plain that they all are not of us. Jesus describes the thorny soil next. The thorny soil represents worldly people.

Jesus says in verse 19 that the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things distract and derail these people. These people show that they never were true believers because they never produced spiritual fruit.

Here's how J.C. Ryle described such people. He said, These are people who attend to the preaching of Christ's truth and to a certain extent obey it.

[ 37 : 13 ] Their understanding assents to it. Their judgment approves of it. Their conscience is affected by it. Their affections are in favor of it.

They acknowledge that it is right, good, and worth receiving. They even abstain from many things which the gospel condemns, and they adopt many habits which the gospel requires.

But here they stop short. Something appears to chain them, and they never get beyond a certain point in their religion. The grand secret of their condition is the world.

The worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things prevent the word from having its full effect on their souls. With everything that apparently is promising and favorable in their spiritual state, they stand still.

They never come up to the full standard of New Testament Christianity. They bring no fruit to perfection. Then he continued, to go so far and yet go no further, to see so much and yet not see all, to approve so much and yet not give Christ the heart, this is indeed most deplorable.

[ 38 : 27 ] And there is but one verdict that can be given about such people. Without a decided change, they will never enter the kingdom of heaven. He says, Christ wants our whole heart.

As James 4.4 says, friendship with the world is hatred toward God. Verse 20 tells us about the good soil.

The good soil represents the true believer. J.C. Ryle also had an excellent description of the true believer. And here's what he said about that believer. These are the people who really receive Christ's truth into the bottom of their hearts.

They believe it implicitly and obey it thoroughly. In these, the fruits of that truth will be seen. The fruit will be uniform, plain, and unmistakable results in heart and life.

Sin will be truly hated, mourned over, resisted, and renounced. Christ will be truly loved, trusted, followed, and obeyed. Holiness will show itself in all their conversation, in humility, spiritual mindedness, patience, meekness, and love.

[ 39 : 39 ] There will be something that can be seen. The true work of the Holy Spirit will be visible. The good soil is good because of the supernatural work on the soil by God the Holy Spirit.

The only people who embrace the Word of God are those who have first been changed by that Holy Spirit, making them able to receive the Word of God. Regeneration comes before faith.

The Holy Spirit must change a person's heart before the person will say yes to Jesus. Remember the main idea. Jesus explains various responses to the Gospel.

So each of us needs to ask ourselves this question, which type of soil best represents me? Again, that question is, which type of soil best represents me?

2 Corinthians 13.5 tells us, Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves, or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you fail to meet the test?

[ 40 : 49 ] As we saw last time, God will forgive each and every sin of someone who truly repents and believes in the Gospel. That's why the Gospel really is good news.

God is still in the business of changing unproductive soil into good soil. For believers, this Scripture should make us even more thankful that God has chosen to reveal His truth to us.

For every parable, there are two levels of understanding, the physical and the spiritual. Everyone received this parable at the physical level, but the disciples were granted understanding at the spiritual level.

The disciples, and now us as believers were chosen as were the people of God in the Old Testament. We have been given a sacred responsibility.

True believers should pray that God will allow us to use this sacred responsibility as an opportunity to bear more fruit. In John 15, 5, Jesus provided the key to how believers can bear much fruit.

[ 41 : 52 ] In John 15, 5, Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this overview of what we can expect when we share the gospel with other people.

rather than having us be discouraged that more people will reject the gospel than receive it, let us be encouraged that there will be people who receive it because you have supernaturally prepared their hearts.

Make this truth make us be more willing to share the gospel with others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.