Plant Seeds Anyway

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. In fact, I heard a friend of mine say a couple of days ago that if you look at the Gospel of Mark, chapters 11 to 16, as we know, are the last week in his life.

The middle part of chapter 3 to the middle part of chapter 5 records one long day, and so as he rightly observed, when you put that together, what that means is 8 out of the 16 chapters, half of the Gospel of Mark deals with just one week and one day of his life.
The Gospels by no means try to tell us everything Jesus did, as the Gospel of John says, if you try to record everything Jesus did, there's not enough volumes in the world that could contain it.
But through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John record for us certain elements of his life designed to teach us who he is and to reveal to us the truth of the Gospel that we would believe.
You probably, at the beginning of chapter 4, have a heading in your text that says the parable of the sower, as this is often called. It's actually a parable more about the different soils than it is the sower.
[1:37] And in this story, Jesus tells us he's going to talk about four different kinds of soil. He tells us exactly what the parable means. You have a sower, that's the preacher or the one who's teaching the truth of the Gospel.

In the story, the sower is scattering seed, and that seed is the Gospel message. And the seed falls on four different kinds of soil, which represents four different kinds of hearts.
Four different kinds of people that hear the Gospel message. Now, for us, when we read Mark chapter 4, we can pretty quickly understand what's being said.
Although for most of us in this room, farming and seed scattering may not be a normal part of our day. But in Jesus' day, this would have been extremely commonplace.
And they would have understood, those who had the spiritual eyes to see it, the profound truth that he is talking about. A farmer would go, and he would break up the soil.
[2:49] He would remove the rocks and remove the dirt clods and loosen up that soil. And he would plow it. He would put the seed into it.

And then wait for growth to come. And so Jesus uses this very familiar setting and analogy to explain to us that there are different kinds of people, different kinds of hearts that hear the Gospel message.
That was true in Jesus' day. That's actually true in this very room right now. There are different kinds of people who are here today.
And depending on the heart, there will be different kinds of responses even today to the Word of God. And so we're going to walk through this for the next couple of weeks.
And let me just show you the four kinds of hearts that Jesus mentions. First, if you want to take notes, write down, there's a disinterested heart. A disinterested heart.
[4:02] We'll begin in chapter 4, verse 1. Again, he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in 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.
Here's the story. Behold, a sower went out to sow, and as he sowed, here's the first heart, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.
Now, in that day, you didn't have fences to segment off property like would be commonplace in our day. What you had were these paths, these pathways.

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In between land and in between farms, there would be walkways where people would be able to get from here to there. And as people would walk along this certain pathway, basically like a sidewalk, yet just without any concrete, that ground would get beaten down and compacted.
[5:11] It's not a place for you to be able to grow any kind of crop. And so he says in the first part of the parable, the first part of the illustration, that a sower went out and some of the seed fell along the path, along that hard, beaten down ground.

And it says that the birds came and quickly devoured it. If you were to put seed out in a pathway in that kind of ground, nothing's going to grow.
And because it's out there and exposed, uncovered in the illustration, the birds just come and quickly eat and devour, and there's nothing left. Now, I'm no kind of farmer, but I've got a little bit of experience trying to grow grass.
I've got parts all around my house that are shaded. And like all good men, I take my pride in life from the condition of my lawn. A few of us on staff will often exchange pictures of how our lawn looks in just blatant pride.
I have no pride because my lawn looks terrible, but I've got parts where I can't get any grass to grow. So the last three years I've tried to plant fescue.
[6:33] And so go out there and prepare the soil and get it tilled up and get it aerated and clear it off and add better soil to it and plant the fescue seed.

And then you have to water it about six times a day for about two weeks. And I sit there and we get all this seed everywhere and I'm so excited, so anxious for it to grow.
But I've done this the last three years and inevitably as the seed is out there, I see these birds come and they start to eat at it. And the squirrels come and they start to steal it.
And we've got all kinds of turkeys where we live and we'll have 20, 30, 40 turkeys come out. And they just wallow around in my dirt, in my seed. And I'll go out there and try to scare them off, which is quite the sight to see the sounds I make up trying to scare off these animals.
And I can hardly even sleep at night just thinking, who is stealing my fescue seed while I sleep? And I go out there first thing in the morning, I try to look around and see where did my seed get stolen from these creatures of the land and air?
[7:43] And then you just sit back and wait. And then you weep. Because there's so many sections and parts where you scatter the seed, you prepare the soil, but it falls on just hard places and the birds come, Jesus says, and devours the seed.

Now, we don't have to wonder what the exact interpretation is because he tells us. Go to verse 14. He tells us exactly what happens and what it means.
The sower sows the word, he says. And these are the ones along the path where the word is sown, that when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.
So, the very first kind of soil Jesus mentions is this hard soil. And the picture is the birds come and devour it.
And that's a picture of how when the word of God is taught and proclaimed, for some hearts, it just lands on a hard, cold, disinterested heart.
[8:58] And verse 15 says it's because the devil comes and just removes that seed and there's no root taken at all. This is somebody who hears the gospel maybe once, maybe repeatedly.

Maybe it's when they went to church one Sunday. Maybe it's somebody who sat in church Sunday after Sunday. But every time they hear the word of God, hear the gospel, it just falls on a hardened, cold, calloused, disinterested heart.
And as soon as that seed of the word of God is spoken, the Lord says the seed's just immediately taken away. This is someone who hears the gospel and they just ignore it.
They may mock it. They may hate it. They may have a cruel response or they may have just an indifferent response.
Either way, they hear it and they walk away completely unchanged. Like rain on a tin roof, nothing sticks.
[10:14] It just slides away. That could be some of you in here this morning. Maybe you hear the gospel at church regularly and for you it never moves you.

It never penetrates into your heart. It never gets past your ears just to audibly hear it. Maybe you're here today and you're not normally in church and somebody has mentioned to you before about Jesus and the gospel and the cross and the empty tomb.

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And to you it was just kind of noise and you never even thought about it. It never changed your life. For believers in this room, maybe there are people in your life that you love and you care about and you pray for them to believe and you have shared the gospel with them and every time it just feels like it's just going nowhere.
And it hurts because you care about them so much. You love your parents. You love your child. You love your coworker. You love your neighbor. And you want them to know Christ.
You want them to have their sin forgiven. You want them to have the peace and joy and hope that can only come through knowing Jesus Christ. And sometimes you share with them the good news of the gospel and you just think to yourself, I'm doing everything I can and it's just not going anywhere.
[11:39] Well, that's not unique to you. In fact, even Jesus in his day says, there's a kind of person that you scatter the seed of the gospel and it's as if the bird just comes and immediately devours it.

Because it's just falling on a disinterested heart. He gives us a second kind of heart. Make note of this.
There's a deceptive heart. A deceptive heart. We read about it in verse 5. Other seed. Other seed. So here's a second example. 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. Now, in the second example here, he says it's a rocky ground.
And the idea is not that there's a bunch of loose rocks that are visible. The farmer would have been far more skillful than to leave that there.
[12:48] He would have cleared out all the rocks that are visible. This is speaking of what is underneath the soil. No farmer is going to go scatter seed where there's visible rocks.

You clear that off. But what they would do is they would use a wooden plow and they would turn the soil over to plant the seed. But in that day, the wooden plows would only reach about 4 or 5 inches into the soil.
Well, you would often have this limestone rock that would be deeper underneath the soil than their plows could turn over.
And so the farmer is out there working and he's turning that soil over to prepare it. And it looks good. The soil looks rich. It looks like it's been prepared well.
But beneath the surface, what you can't see is this limestone rock. And the seed can be planted and watered.
[13:52] And what happens are those roots begin to grow down. But they very quickly hit that rock. And the roots are unable to build a deep, effective root system.

And because the roots can't grow deep, the plant will grow up very quickly because it can't grow down. So it shoots up quickly.
And for a very brief season, everything looks really good. But what was unseen is what's below the surface where that rocky ground is going to be a real problem.
For a brief period, everything looks healthy. It looks strong. But then the initial promise gives way to disappointment.
Look at verse 6. When the sun rose, it was scorched. And since it had no root, it withered away.
[15:01] The reason it had no root is because of that rocky ground that was just beneath the surface. When my wife and I were newly married, we had our house and had a real little bitty tiny lawn.

And I loved to try to go and take care of it. I had this one little section in the front yard that I would water it. I would fertilize it. And the first of the year, that grass would get really green.
And it looked great. And then it just, as soon as it got the least bit of high temperatures, it would just die off. And I'd have this entire lawn that looked really nice. And this small little, just small little square that just died off as soon as it got hot.
And I tried all year long to figure out what was going on. By about the second or third year we lived there, I could not get any grass to grow. I added soil and I added fertilizer and I added water.
And so I thought, what is going on here? And so I just got my show. I started digging out that little square of grass. And what I found was just a square of concrete.
[16:08] Where they had poured a sidewalk or a curb and emptied some concrete right there. Didn't remove it. And so it wouldn't have mattered what I tried to do to that grass.

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When those roots went down, it just hit that concrete. It had nowhere to go. Every May, it looked great. When the sun got hot by late June, it was scorched.
Well, that's the analogy that Jesus is using here. Seed falls on the rocky ground. There's not much soil there. It springs up quickly, but there's no depth there because the roots can't grow.
And when the sun rose, it got scorched and then it withered away. This is the person who hears the gospel and they've got some kind of quick, some kind of immediate emotional response.
They're not truly converted because they don't believe. They're just enamored with it. There's this kind of quick, immediate, instant emotional response to something.
[17:17] But given enough time, it gets exposed. There were no real roots there. This is why it's such a tragedy that so many churches in our day try to simply bypass the mind and try to speak simply to the emotion and just try to get people to get an emotional, immediate response, which is not hard to do at all.

And it's why there are so many people who went to church, who went to a camp, who went to a retreat, who came to a revival service, came to a Bible study, and they had some kind of immediate emotional reaction because the story was so emotional, the music was so moving, whatever it may be, and there's no real gospel, and there's no heart penetration.
It's just this quick, immediate, emotional kind of response. And for a short season, man, it looks good.
For a short season, everything looks fine. Until they get exposed. Turn now to chapter, or verse 16, where Jesus interprets this second kind of soil.
He gives you the exact interpretation of verse 16. He says, these are the ones sown on rocky ground. That's what He just talked about.
[19:02] So here's the interpretation. 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.
Instant bloom. Instant fade. Jesus says, there's one kind of person who hears the gospel, and it's like the seed is scattered and the birds just take it.
No response at all. That's that first kind of disinterested person. But He says there's a second kind of person, and they're more deceptive.
Because for a while, they look genuine. They hear the gospel. People, something stirs in their heart. Something connects, at least on an emotional level.
[20:09] And for a season, they look so good. They come to every church service. They volunteer for every ministry.

They meet everybody. They know everybody's name. They're at church every time the doors are open. And for a little season, they look like, just like, the Hall of Fame of church members.
They're everywhere, doing everything. Until, Jesus mentions two things, tribulation and persecution.
And when tribulation or persecution hits, what gets exposed is that beneath the surface, it was just rock.
And the soil, the soil, the Word of God never really penetrated into their heart. It was this instant bloom of emotion.
[21:10] And then when the scorching heat of tribulation or persecution hit, it withered away.

Two things, He says, expose this. First, tribulation. Trials. Now, understand, there's a reason why the Bible says in James chapter 1, count it all joy, my brothers, when you face trials of various kinds.
The wording there, we translate in English, various kinds. It's a word that means multicolored. Count it all joy when you face multicolored trials.
All different kinds of trials. Different intensity. Different duration. All different kinds of trials. Count it all joy when you face trials of all different kinds.
From trials like you have to change schools and you don't know anybody, all the way to trials where you unexpectedly get laid off from your job and you don't know how you're going to provide for your family.
[22:22] Multicolored trials. Trials like somebody hurts your feelings or you don't get invited to the birthday party or trials like the doctor calls and says, I've got some really bad news.

Your results came back in. It's not good. Multicolored trials like inflation. And you start to wonder what can we cut out of our life and cut out of our budget because this is getting difficult all the way

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up to trials like arresting and murdering those who named the name of Christ.
Those are all trials. Different levels of intensity. Different levels of duration. And James says, Count it all joy when you face trials of various kinds.
Multicolored. All different kinds of trials. Now, why in the world would we consider it joy when we face trials? Why would it be good?
Well, there are a number of reasons why it's good, but in keeping with the theme of Matthew 4, one of the reasons why trials are good is it exposes our heart.
[23:45] It helps us know, are we genuine believers? Or are our hearts just deceptive?

Do we look like the real thing and for a season act like the real thing, but when trials come, we quickly fall away?
For some, they face trials in this life and they run to Christ. And they cling to Christ. And while they may have a broken heart and weep through the night, their joy, their faith, their hope comes from knowing that Jesus is with them.
For others, for others, they just simply respond to some kind of an emotional thing. And as soon as trials hit, they say, I don't want any part of this.
I thought coming to church was going to make my life easy. I thought if my wife and I went to a Sunday school class, our marriage would instantly be perfected. I thought if I made my son come to church with me, that he would instantly begin to obey.
[25:00] And that hasn't happened. And trials have come. And all of a sudden, I didn't get from God what I wanted from God. And the trials for some exposed as they were never truly believers.

He gives another example. Look back in verse 17. He says, not only those who have tribulation, but he says, also, when persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.
when persecution comes. When it gets a little more costly to name the name of Christ.
Everybody goes to church when they think it's good for business. people go to church because it's a place to make contacts.
People go to church because you get to be around nice people, safe people, friendly people.
People go to church because it gives them some kind of a nostalgic feel back to when they were children.
[26:11] Lots of reasons why people come to church. church. But if you don't love the Lord, when persecution hits, if there's no spiritual roots that have really sunk deep into your heart with belief, Jesus says, when persecution hits on account of the word, they immediately fall away.

This could be the middle schooler who comes to church and has some kind of emotional experience at a youth service or a church worship service or a youth camp or retreat and they, for a season, it looks like they're just really growing and they go to church and everything's wonderful. Then summer's over and school starts. They go back to school and all of a sudden somebody says, you're not one of those kind of weird, wacky Christians, are you? A little bit of persecution hits, all of a sudden they say, I don't want any part of this.
And they fall away. Or the adult who has some kind of an emotional response to the gospel, some kind of a stirring in their heart and for a season, immediately, they look like everything is good and things are spiritually strong and they go to work and all of a sudden, people start to talk about biblical issues and cultural issues and all of a sudden, to be a Christian is met with words of derision.
You're not one of those narrow-minded, hateful people who thinks you know what's right and wrong, are you?
[28:04] And the sun begins to scorch down on their heart with tribulation and persecution. And for the one who is not truly converted, just had some kind of an emotional response, Jesus says, the heat of the trial and the heat of the persecution exposes they never truly believed.

Now, the next couple of weeks, we're going to look at the rest of this chapter. There are four different kinds of hearts that Jesus speaks of. Only one of the four are true believers.
Now, it would be a mistake to think that Jesus is giving us a mathematical equation as if to say only 25% of people who hear the gospel are saved. It's not about the mathematical equation.
It's about the reality that by comparison, a majority of the people who you share the gospel with and who you preach to and who you talk to and who you invite, a majority of the kinds of hearts that hear that are not real believers.

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And I want you to understand that what was true in Jesus' day is true in our day. There are still people who will hear the gospel and walk away unchanged and there are people who will hear the gospel and have some kind of an instant emotional response but not truly believe in who the Lord Jesus is.
[29:59] And so I want to say to those of you who are believers, don't quit praying and don't quit inviting and don't quit sharing the gospel.

It's hard, it gets frustrating, it gets hurtful but just know this isn't hidden from us, Jesus has told us that for most they're not going to believe.
Matthew 7 tells us that most are on the broad path that leads to destruction, the narrow gate, few find it.
So Christian, don't lose heart. Keep loving your family, keep loving your neighbors, keep loving those in your school, keep serving them, keep praying for them, keep sharing the gospel with them, keep telling them the truth that Jesus saves.
And for all of you that are here today, consider in your heart this question, do you truly believe in Jesus?
[31:21] Jesus? How would you know? Well, how do you respond when trials hit? Do you question God?

Do you get mad at God? Do you run from God? Do you see trials as somehow God has done you wrong? When persecution hits, do you become quiet and cowardly?
Or when trials come, do you say, I count this all joy because while I don't like the trial itself, in my heart I'm still trusting in you Jesus and that lets me know I really belong to you.
And when persecution comes, are you willing to stand if nobody else will? are you willing to say, if my public love for Jesus costs me everything, I wouldn't even consider turning my back on Him. He's my Lord. He's my Savior. And to live is Christ. And to die is gain.
[32:44] my friends, there are lots of people who will endure a church service and listen to a sermon.

Even some who will have an emotional response to it. Do not confuse your emotion with conversion. Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God?
Have you repented of your sin and placed your faith in Jesus and Jesus alone and declared though none go with me, I still will follow and take up your cross daily and follow Jesus no matter what.
You may have questions about that. You may wonder how can you know if you're a believer? You may say I know that I've never trusted Christ. I need to.
You may say I need to know how to pray for people in my life that don't know Jesus. We would love to help you. We would love to sit down with you and open up a Bible and just walk with you through your questions and give you biblical answers and pray with you about the questions that are in your life.
[34:01] For any of you, member or guest, if you would get that connection card from your bulletin and you just tell us your need, your question, how we can help you, drop that in one of the boxes on the way out.

We would love this week to sit down with you. As you're going to see the next number of weeks, we've got all kinds of people of all ages who have recently given their life to Jesus, God still saves, the gospel still changes lives, and if you would believe in Him, it will change yours.
if you would call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, you would be saved. This church cares about you. We want to walk with you through life, and it starts with you making certain that you belong to Him.
Amen. Amen. See you next time.
Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. fathers. fathers. fathers. fathers.

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