Plant Seeds Anyway

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Date: 21 August 2022

Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[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.!

This past week and you've dealt with that emotion or others who took your kids to a new school or for the first day in high school or for some in our congregation who moved out a child to college and your house is a little bit more quiet this weekend, whatever different life stage or emotions you may be in.
I've been there and I get it. I get it. For those who are teachers and administrators or work in our school system anyway, and you've gone back to your normal routine of doing what God's called you to do and with the students that are there, we're thankful for your ministry there in the schools.
For those of you who homeschool and school has kicked back off as you teach your children your home, we are thinking of you as well and so thankful for all of the young people and families in our church.
We started back Wednesday night with our full Wednesday night ministries. Juana had a great kickoff. We're thankful for all the army of volunteers that helps there and our youth ministry and music ministry and Bible study.
[1:39] Everything is going back as normal on Wednesday nights. If you don't have a place to be on Wednesday nights, call us. Let us help you find a place. Sunday nights, we kicked back off our Sunday evening service last Sunday.

We'll keep going again this week. We are studying through the Lord's Prayer together to try to help each of us to learn about prayer, to energize our prayer life. We'll also be taking the Lord's Supper tonight at our evening service at 5, and so I want to encourage all of you to come back at 5 o'clock. We'll start at 5, we end at 6, and we'll have a great time of worship tonight. And then ladies, our next ladies' night of theology is one week from Tuesday.
Tuesday, August 30th. If you don't know what ladies' night of theology is every couple of months, we do these. We meet right in here in the sanctuary. I'll teach from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m.
You don't have to sign up, no cost. You just show up. It's open to anybody. We're expecting about 300 ladies or so to be here, and we would love for you to come. And any lady of any age is welcome to join us from anywhere.
[2:50] And if you're able to be here a week from Tuesday, ladies, we invite you to be a part of that. We'll have ladies from all over our church and all over the area that will come and be a part of that time of study.

We have an amazing time of fellowship and worship and Bible study together. Next one is a week from Tuesday, 6.30 to 8.30. So make plans to join us if you are able to.
Mark chapter 4, we began last week looking at this parable that Jesus tells us called the parable of the sower. It really is an illustration, a story that tells us about the different conditions of the hearts of people as they hear the message of the gospel.
And as we looked at last week, there are four different kinds of hearts in the parable called soils.
And so what you have in Mark 4 is a man who is a sower.
He's scattering the seed. And that's a picture of someone who is proclaiming the word of God, who is teaching and sharing the gospel. And that seed falls on different kinds of soils.
[4:04] And that's a picture of the heart condition of those who hear the gospel. And so the sower is sharing the word. The seed is the gospel.

And the soil is the heart of those who hear it. And Jesus is teaching, and he gives these four examples. And what's unique about this parable is he gives us the four kinds of soils that the seed, the word, falls on.

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And then he interprets the parable for us so that we really can't miss it. But we do need to look carefully and closely at all that he is teaching us.
And so we looked last week at the first two kinds of soil that the seed can fall on. First, we looked at what we call the disinterested heart.
Saw that in verse 3. Listen, behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. And other seed fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil.
[5:12] 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. And so we looked last week at the disinterested heart and then the deceptive heart.

Let me give just a couple of minutes of reminder of what we looked at. With the deceptive heart that he speaks about, he says that the seed was scattered, and the birds just immediately came and devoured it.
And the Lord gives us the exact interpretation of that in verses 14 and 15, that this is when it says, Satan immediately came along and takes away the word that is sown in them.
These are the ones who hear the gospel and they have no response whatsoever. No interest, no change, nothing whatsoever.
They may hate what they hear. They may be indifferent to what they hear. They may casually listen to the gospel that is told to them, but their heart has zero response.
[6:26] It is as if you put seed on a beaten down path, and as soon as that seed was laid down, the birds came and devoured it, and there's just nothing left behind.

That is one kind of person that hears the gospel. They're just disinterested. They may be calloused. They may be cruel.
Or they may just be numb. But there is no response at all. People that are in that first category may hear the gospel and reject it.
They may be invited to church and reject it. Or they may come sit in a church service every single Sunday. They just never consider the claims of the gospel.
Some are hostile. Some are quite friendly. But their heart has no penetration whatsoever of the truth of the gospel getting into the soil of their life.
[7:35] That's one kind of person. Then we looked last week at a second kind of person that we called a deceptive heart. That was from verse 5 and 6 that I read.

That that seed, it said, fell on rocky ground. And what happened was because there was no way for the roots to go deep, it just grows up really fast and everything looks very strong.
There's an initial promise of response. But in time, they show they never truly were believers. They had instant bloom and they had instant fade.
And in verse 17, as we looked at last week, it tells us why they faded. Look again at verse 17 with me. They have no root in themselves, but they endure for a while.
Then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the Word, immediately they fall away.
[8:39] So because of tribulation, trials that come, because of persecution of the Word, it's costly to name the name of Christ, they fall away.

This second category is the person who hears the gospel, and they have some kind of immediate response to the gospel. They like the music.
They like the kids' programs. They like the way they felt. They like the kindness of the people. Something stirred in their heart, and they had some kind of emotional, immediate response, thoughts, but it never really got in their heart.
They weren't converted. They were just curious. They have deceptive hearts because for a season, they give off the impression they really belong to the Lord.
But when tribulation comes, they're gone. When persecution comes, they flee because they weren't really committed.
[9:41] That brings us today to verse 7, to a third kind of heart. We'll call the distracted heart. The distracted heart.

Verse 7, Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.
It's interesting. We learn this lesson. We know this from our own lawns here, that if you allow just a few weeds to exist, they will quickly spread and will take over your lawn.

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Weeds can grow anywhere. They need no attention. I'm often amazed that in my lawn, I will work the soil.
I will bring in new soil. I will plant new grass. I will water it. I will fertilize it. I will pick the weeds out by hand. I will baby it. I'll do everything I can.
[10:41] And I've got some parts where no matter how hard I work, I just can't get the lawn to grow. And then I go to a parking lot and look, and there's weeds growing up out of the concrete.

How does that happen? How can it be that my lawn that gets so much attention has parts that can't grow, and yet up to a concrete curb, the weeds can somehow flourish?
Weeds don't need any attention to grow. They're just there. It's as if the weeds stick their head up just to mock us and say, your grass can't grow, but here am I.
Weeds in Palestine were similar. Weeds in the land where Jesus walked would grow to be, if left untreated, they would grow to be several feet tall.
They would block the sunlight. They would consume most of the nutrients that were there in the soil. And you could take soil in Palestine, just like you could here, and you can turn the soil over, and it looks like good soil.
[11:52] But there beneath the soil are still the seeds of all of the weeds that will grow. It mentions in verse 7, the thorns.

We in this part of the state know all about stickers and sandburs. They're there, and you can pull them up, but they're still beneath the soil.
And hypothetically, if your neighbor were to let them grow and mow it and scatter it over in your yard, hypothetically, of course, they would actually infiltrate your own yard.
They're very, very pesky things. You don't have to water them. You don't have to fertilize them. You don't have to manicure them. They're just there. And remember, as I told you last week, in Palestine, they would have these wooden plows, and it would turn the dirt over, but the plows are only about four or five inches in depth.
The problem is underneath that would be where these thorns and seeds of these weeds would reside. So what does Jesus mean by this?
[12:59] Well, turn over to verse 18 and 19. He tells us, verse 18, Others are the ones who sown among thorns. They are the ones who hear the Word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things enter in and choke the Word, and it proves unfruitful.

The third category that Jesus says hears the Word are these who hear it, and something resonates in their mind.
Something clicks. Something, it's not just an immediate emotional response and then easily, quickly gone.
Something's different with this third kind of person. They hear the gospel, they consider it, and something clicks, and they are highly interested.
And as they go along, they certainly seem genuine. Until, Jesus says, the cares of the world or the deceitfulness of riches or the desires for other things enter in and choke the Word, and they prove unfruitful because they were never converted.
[14:44] The Bible tells us about a man named Demas. I think of Demas when I read this. Demas is mentioned in the New Testament, I think three times.

Two of them, he's mentioned as a fellow worker. Demas is a man going on mission trips. And then this real tragic statement in 2 Timothy 4.10 that says, Demas, having loved this present world, has forsaken me.
Demas loved the world. It's exactly what Jesus speaks of here in verses 18 and 19. The cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, choked out what was there.
I think if the rich young ruler goes to talk to Jesus, something is stirring in his heart. Jesus tells him the demands of the Gospel.
Jesus tells him he's got to love Christ above all else. He's got to relinquish his love of stuff and follow Christ no matter the cost.
[16:09] And something is stirring in his heart. And yet, when he considers his love for worldly things, he walked away from Jesus.

It says he walked away sad. I think a lot of people walk away sad because deep in their heart, they understand that their life is missing something.

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They don't have real peace. They don't have real fulfillment. They don't have real hope. And yet, they just can't let go of their stuff.
They just love the world too much. This is the third kind of person who hears the Gospel, and this is a particularly painful reality.
Now, again, notice why they walked away. It was because of their cares for the world.
[17:17] It was because of their desires for other things. In the second kind of soil, it was tribulation and persecution that exposed that their heart wasn't converted.

It was outside pressure. In this third kind of person, it's not pressure from the outside that exposes they're not genuine. It is their desires on the inside that proves they were never transformed by God's grace.
There are some who have some kind of response to the Gospel, some kind of favorable view of the church, and they are apart, and they seem to be growing, and they seem to be flourishing, and you see them serving, and they appear to be genuine.
And for some, when the pressure of the world hits, that drives them away. But for others, in this third category, it's not the tribulations and the persecution.
It's the internal desires for worldly things. Given enough time, exposes.
[18:33] Now, notice that in the second heart that he talked about, the one with the rocky ground, so you've got the seed that's here. Underneath that, you have this limestone rock, and so the roots try to grow, and they hit that rock, and the roots can't go any deeper, and so when the sun comes up and scorches it, that seed, that plant, dies out.

That doesn't take very long. That happens quite quickly. In the third category, it takes a little bit of time.
Because these weeds, these thorns, these stickers, don't instantly come out. It takes time, the right time of year, the right conditions, and they're going to spring up, and they're going to choke the Word, verse 19 says.
And the Lord gives us three specific things that does this in the hearts of people. First, the cares of this world. Verse 19.
Now look, we all have things we have to care about. We have to feed ourselves. We have to take care of our families. We have to have a place to live. We have to be able to provide for the needs of those in our household.
[19:57] All of us have some things of the world that we have to contend with. But remember, the danger with this third category of a person is they have a distracted heart.

They're divided. They never fully gave their life to Christ. They were curious but not converted.
I wonder, friend, if that might even be you today. there could be people even among us in this room and nobody in this room would for a second guess that you weren't truly converted.
But in your heart, that part of you that nobody other than God sees what you really love are the things of this world.
And for so many people, if going to church helps them get the things of this world or if going to church doesn't hinder them from getting the things of this world, they're all in.
[21:26] But given enough time, people in this third category get exposed that their greatest concern is not for the kingdom, it's for the things of this world.

He gives a second reason why this category, this kind of person gets exposed. He calls it the deceitfulness of riches. It's an interesting phrase.
the deceitfulness of riches. It's not saying here that wealth in and of itself is the problem, it's that it's deceitful.
It's deceitful. How is that? Well, it's because wealth promises happiness, but it cannot truly satisfy. It's deceitful.
It promises significance, but it can't endure all things. It's deceitful. It promises to bring ease, but it often just brings headaches.
[22:35] It's deceitful. Now, be careful because for most of us in this room, when we hear Jesus talk about the deceitfulness of riches, for most of us, we don't think we could be guilty of that because most of us in this room don't consider ourselves wealthy, but understand what he's saying, that wealth is deceitful and it lures your heart, and for some people, they achieve great wealth and their heart gets exposed.

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For others, they may never achieve it, at least not in their own mind, but yet the pursuit of it all their life reveals that they were never truly one of God's.
When you give a godly man great wealth, that godly believer, man, woman, whoever it may be, that they love the Lord and the Lord blessed them with great wealth, they immediately begin to say, how can we strategically invest this for the kingdom?
many people who love Christ more than anything else are very successful in their business and they do very well and God blesses them in very tangible ways and their first thought is, how can we use this to honor Christ?
It's a wonderful thing. But you give an unconverted man great wealth and he'll make it his God.
[24:09] and it's not a God that can satisfy. It's deceitful. And then he gives a third phrase here.

It's not just the cares of this world or the deceitfulness of riches. He says the desire for other things. This is a distracted heart.
It's a divided heart. It's a heart that longs for other things. And it's not necessarily that it's just one thing that's always luring it away as much as there's just always something that it loves more than Christ.
This is the person who seems to be committed but they've got wondering eyes and they're always looking to see what else is out there.
better. It reminded me of a story I recently came across and this man was he'd been dating his girlfriend for several years and he had saved up the money to buy an engagement ring.
[25:19] Didn't have much money. Wasn't a real impressive ring but it was the best he had to offer. So he was excited. Took his girlfriend out. Had a nice dinner.

Went on an evening stroll. They talked about their relationship. Then he dropped to one knee. And he took his girlfriend by the hand and he said honey you know there's no one in the world I love more than you.
And he said I know I don't have a high paying job like Jimmy Smith does. I know I don't own my own yacht and probably never will like Jimmy Smith does.
I know I'm not in line to inherit millions of dollars like Jimmy Smith is but I love you with all my heart and I want you to be my wife. And the girl said honey I love you too.
Could you tell me a little more about this Jimmy Smith guy? It's a distracted heart right? I'm committed to you but who's this millionaire guy you're friends with?
[26:31] That's how some people are with the gospel. With their mouth they'll tell you I'm all in but you watch their life and they have other gods.

They have other idols. They may not recognize their idols. Most of us don't. They certainly don't bow down to images and so it doesn't feel like idolatry but if you watch them and if they could carefully examine their own heart what they would realize is they've just got other things in this world that gets first place in their life.
Most all of us know enough to know the right answers. And so you ask most any married man they'll tell you I love my wife more than anything else but watch how they treat her.
Watch how they talk to her. Watch how they speak of her to other people. You ask a wife do you love your husband?
Of course they'll say of course I do but watch how she responds to him. Watch how she speaks of him. Listen to how she talks of him to other people.
[27:55] You talk to her who will go to church and you say is Christ first place? We know enough to say yes of course he is but watch us. Watch how we spend time with him or not.

Watch how quickly we are pulled away from the things of God for the things of the world. If you want to know what your real God is it's really quite simple.
What is it? that when competition for your time or your attention arises which one always wins? That will tell you what your God is. And Jesus says give enough time the cares of the world the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things choke the word.
I wonder this morning if there were any of what Jesus calls other things that are first place in your life. Not that these things by themselves are sinful.
[29:12] The other things that choke the word don't have to be things that are evil and terrible. they're just things of the world that have first place in the life of those who aren't truly converted.

It could be the other things of hobbies. It could be the other things of activities your kids are involved in. It could be the other things of building a career.

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None of those are evil wicked things. None of them are. However, anything that you love more than Christ, that is an idol.
And for those who are converted, we would need to confess that and repent of that and turn away from that and return to our first love. And for others who are not truly converted, it may be that everyone around them assumes they're really believers because for a while things seem so genuine, but in their heart of hearts, they've never bowed the knee to Christ.
They've never repented of their sin. They've never embraced the gospel. Now, for some, they're proven to be false very quickly.
[30:41] for others, it takes years. But it says that they were unfruitful.

Why is it that the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things choke them out? Why is it that they are unfruitful?
It's because they had divided, distracted hearts. Trying to get enough Jesus to get heaven, but enough world to stay happy.
And in the end, if that's how they live their life, they don't have heaven because they're not converted, and they'll never know true happiness. This isn't new for Jesus to make this clear.
Matthew 6, 24, he says, no one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.
[31:46] You cannot serve God and money. Revelation 3, I know your works, you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot, so because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of my mouth.

Jesus graphically explains that he knows our true hearts condition. And if you read this parable of the sower, what you recognize is that time is needed to reveal people's hearts.
hearts, but it's just needed to reveal our hearts for each other to see. The Lord always knows.
The Lord always knows. And the danger of category two and category three are people who look to be genuine and they have convinced those around them and they find comfort in that, but remember my friends that we are not ultimately the judge of each other.
You're not going to die and stand before me nor will I die and stand before you. So, fooling each other or convincing each other that we're converted when we're not is going to have zero lasting value because the one that you have fooled will not be your judge on that great day.
[33:29] It is the Lord who sees all things. It is the Lord who knows all things who you will stand before.

The first kind of heart, the disinterested heart, they heard the gospel, they closed their ears. They never pretended to be a believer, they never said they were a believer, that seed was just devoured.
But the deceitful heart, the distracted heart, something in their life gave at least for a season an impression they were real.
And the thing that we've got to keep in mind is that second kind of soil and that third kind of soil, if you were to ask them questions, they would be able to give you the right answers.
The first category doesn't know anything, doesn't want to know anything, has no interest in anything. But the second soil and the third soil, they could tell you some Bible facts, they could tell you some Bible stories, and if they've listened long enough, they could even retell them, which means it's possible even to be a leader or a teacher or a deacon or a pastor and not really be converted.
[34:53] And then for the second soil, when tribulation hits or persecution hits, the external pressures, they get exposed for the third kind of soil, the distracted heart, that divided heart, it's internal.

It's not the pressure of the world, it's the desire for worldly things. Just never stopped loving the world. soil. And Jesus gives four kinds of soils.
We've made it through three of the four. And I want you to notice three of these four are not believers. Praise God, there's a fourth kind, which I trust most of you, this is true, that we'll look at next week, are true, good soil.
You are truly converted and that gospel has got into your soul. But Jesus doesn't hide anything here.
Three of the four soils are not believers. believers. So don't fool yourself. Most of the people you see, most of the people you share the gospel with, most of the people you encounter, the seed of

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the gospel never got into their heart.
[36:25] And so we want to make sure that we're believers. we want to make sure we trust. We want to make sure that we really belong to the Lord.

We want to make sure that we follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me show you just one word here and we'll close and say the rest for next week.
Verse 8, he's going to mention the fourth and final kind of soil. Other seeds fell into good soil, soil, and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding 30-fold and 60-fold and 100-fold. What's the difference? The difference is the preposition. In verse 8, it fell into good soil. The first kind fell along the path.
second kind fell on rocky soil. Third kind was scattered among the thorns. Only in this fourth kind is it falling into, in the heart, penetrating the mind, getting into the heart.
[37:42] So my question to you today is, has the gospel taken root in your soul? gospel. Not just your mind, not just your words, but into your heart.

Lord, thank you today for your word. We thank you today, Lord, that you give us clear biblical warning. We pray that we would be wise with it, that we would listen carefully, believe and respond. In Jesus' name, amen. On your way out, you're going to see our giving boxes, member or guest. If you have a question of how to know Christ, if you need someone to pray with you, you want to sit down with somebody and talk about how to know the gospel, what baptism is, how to grow in your walk with the Lord, use that connection card.
Let us know your need. Drop that. In that offering box, we would love to follow up with you and serve you and help you in that way. If you have a prayer request for any of you, please drop that in there also so we can be praying for you.
Remember tonight, five o'clock, evening worship, Lord's Supper, as a part of that, please come back, be a part of that. We look forward to seeing you there. All right? Love you, church family. God bless you. You're dismissed. Don't love you, church family.
[39:11] God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

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