

“Being Well-Grounded”—Matthew 13:19-23

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Being Well-Grounded”, is Matthew 13:19-23 → Jesus explains His parable of the Sower: *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 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. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

If you were to ask an electrician if he was “well-grounded” his perception might be quite different than that of a farmer. He may immediately think about the importance of being protected from shock or electrocution while working with high voltage. The farmer may think about the quality of soil within which he plants his seed and its affect on the quality of the harvest. I wonder how Jesus would respond if one were to ask Him what it means to be “well-grounded.” Actually, we have a good idea of His concept of being well-grounded in our text which is an explanation of a parable He spoke about a farmer sowing seed.

Like so many of Jesus’ parables this one is taken from a common method of planting with which His hearers would be very familiar. Whenever a person planted a field he would walk along taking seed out of a sack slung around the shoulder, tossing the seed upon the ground. During this sowing process seed could fall along a beaten path next to or in the field, upon rocky ground connected to the field, get intermingled with weeds usually along its outer parameters, as it falls upon the field intended to produce a crop. Jesus used each of these ground conditions to describe the reception of what He refers to as *the word of the kingdom*. The parable is meant to make you think about how well-grounded you are spiritually.

The people to whom Jesus was speaking were people of *the kingdom*—the kingdom of Israel which Yahweh had established and

through whom He would send His Savior from sin. They were people of faith in Yahweh. Now they needed to be people of faith in Jesus Who appeared to fulfill Yahweh's promises to them. Thus, John the Baptizer, the last of the Old Testament prophets who appeared to reveal Jesus as the Messiah, *came preaching in the wilderness of Judea* (where the kingdom people lived) saying, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" (cf. Matthew 3:1-2) *The kingdom of heaven was at hand* because Jesus was there to fulfill the kingdom promises.

When Jesus appeared publicly to fulfill these promises of Yahweh He also *began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (cf. Matthew 4:17) The reign of God is not primarily a place. Rather, **it is a divine action that occurs where Jesus is, through His words and deeds.** Since Jesus came to deal with sin and satan once and for all to present you to God holy, blameless and righteous, recognition of your sin and confessing it in accountability to God is primary. Such a humble heart of trust in His Person & Work will receive *the word of the kingdom*—the good news of forgiveness, new life and eternal salvation in Jesus, the Christ. Jesus proclaimed *the **gospel** of the kingdom* (cf. Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 24:14).

So . . . how "well-grounded" are you as a child of God's kingdom (cf. Matthew 11:25), *baptized into Christ* (cf. Galatians 3:26-27)? Being well-grounded is directly connected to your reception of the gospel of the

kingdom, through which the Holy Spirit creates and sustains your faith in Christ for eternal life (cf. Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; 12:3). As you hear that word there are many dynamics which work to hinder you from listening to its meaning for your life.

In verse 19 of our text Jesus put forth the work of *the evil one* (i.e. the devil) who is present wherever the word is proclaimed. He *comes and snatches away* the gospel which *has been sown in the heart* of unbelief and doubt. This is pictured by the seed that *was sown along the path*. The devil is constantly attacking Christ in you, tempting you to view God's Word on your own terms, with your own understanding, rather than with faith. This happens when you approach God's Word in an academic fashion, like some textbook of information of which you need to take control. In this way the devil works to snatch the word from your heart before it takes root by submissive faith in Christ. He wants you to approach God's Word by refusing to listen to *sound doctrine* which is ***in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ*** (cf. 1 Timothy 1:10-11). He tempts you to have *itching ears* so you *accumulate for yourselves teachers to suit your own passions, and . . . turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths* (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4). 2 Timothy 3:7 describes such people as *always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth*, which is only yours by faith in Jesus (cf. John 14:6).

James 4:6-7, speaking about repentance and faith, says that God

gives more grace in Jesus Christ. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Why? Because Jesus has defeated him for you!

Another dynamic which works to hinder you from listening to *the word of the kingdom* (i.e. the gospel) is described in verses 20-21 of our text: *As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 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.* This is describing another satanic deception—hearing the word of God only on a feeling level. It can be very deceiving because it has the feel of deliverance in the midst of trying circumstances and even feels like “conversion.”

Many people experience this when they find themselves in trouble for their poor choices which have humbled them. In their search for deliverance they turn to God, many times reading His Word. However, since it is motivated by desperation to regain “control” in life rather than sorrow over their sins and repentance, trusting in gospel of Jesus Christ, it cannot take root in their heart. Once deliverance experienced with joy is accompanied by the demand for obedience to God’s Word, it’s time to leave God’s Word, worship, His sacraments, and so forth behind. True faith strives to let the Gospel take root by being nourished through

hearing it proclaimed, worshiping with others to dispense and receive God's grace in the sacraments, and seeking to *walk by the Spirit* as His fruit is produced in you (cf. Galatians 5:16-25). It's not based upon how you feel but rather who you are **in Christ**. As 2 Thessalonians 3:5 says: *May the Lord direct **your hearts** to the love of God and to the **steadfastness of Christ**.*

Another dynamic which works to hinder you from listening to *the word of the kingdom* (i.e. the gospel) is described in verse 22 of our text: *As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.* This describes how the temptation to idolatry is constantly placed before you by the world and your own sinful desires. It is very easy to fall into such idolatry because you deal with making a life and a "standard of living" in this world everyday. However, the desire of the sinful human nature is insatiable. In its pursuit for satisfaction and contentment in a world not built to give it, the word of God can be ignored, even totally driven out of your life so that the idolatrous heart hinders its fruitfulness.

Contrasted to these ground conditions, Jesus places before us the seed that *was sown on good soil* in verse 23 of our text. *This is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.* The

understanding of God's Word to which Jesus is referring is faith—trusting in Him as the Christ, your Savior and Redeemer, grounded in the written Word of God from the Scriptures. Being well-grounded is experiencing what Jesus describes in Matthew 5:6 → *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* You *hunger and thirst* to be righteous before God, completely forgiven of all your sins. God's Word reveals to you: God made Jesus, *Who knew no sin . . . to be sin, so that **in Him** you might become the righteousness of God.* In other words, **in Christ** you become good soil. You *hunger and thirst* to live righteously in the daily vocations and relationship of your life. You *hunger and thirst* to grow in grace and be well-grounded in Christ for eternity.

The gospel continues to be sown in your life and heart. It happens in worship where you hear it read, proclaimed and given in the sacraments. Here you receive the one thing the world cannot give you. Here you receive the one thing which can keep you well-grounded for eternity. Here you receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ sown in the soil of your heart, made good soil by the Holy Spirit. Through it the Holy Spirit then bears fruit in your daily life in service to your neighbors and, through you, sowing the seed of *the word of the kingdom* among them as well. Amen.

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand,

*take care that you are not carried away
with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.
But grow in the grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

(2 Peter 3:17-18)

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