

November 11, 2012

HOCL

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Parables: The Sower

Parables Introduction

We are beginning a brand new sermon series today and this is going to be a MEGA-SERIES!! We will be taking a look at 13 of Jesus' parables in the book of Matthew and it's going to be a great time of spiritual growth and renewal for us through these coming months.

So for today.....let's jump into our lesson on the parable of "The Sower"

Read: Matthew 13:1-23 (lengthy)

Pray

Today I want to talk to you briefly about 5 Practical Lessons on the Art of Sowing –

Let's get into the lesson.

If you and I are going to learn how to sow, we need to make sure that we

1. Plow the field (Matthew 13:3) – ³Then Jesus told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed".

III. I didn't grow up around a lot of farming but what I do know about it, I learned by watching my grandparents prepare their 4-5 vegetable gardens by getting their rototiller out and spending hours walking up and down and all around those gardens, just letting the rototiller dig up all the ground. And the reason they had to do that each spring is because after the harvest in the late summer and early fall, and all through the winter and early spring, the ground had become hard, and it often had leftover debris from the harvest on it and it wasn't suitable for planting and so by digging up the hard ground, it brought to the top some softer soil, with better nutrients, and a greater opportunity for them to produce a good crop.

The same is true in our spiritual lives as well. If we are going to produce a good crop, then we first have to begin by preparing ourselves. We have to plow up some fields in our lives. Jesus gives us some insight into this preparation when he says in **verses 13:13-15** – ¹³"This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. ¹⁴In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: " 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. ¹⁵For this people's heart has become **calloused**; they hardly hear with their

ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them”

Jesus was speaking about those who had “untilled soil” – they had calloused or hardened hearts. And the idea of these people producing a good crop was pretty slim. The only way that they would be able to produce a good crop was to see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts the things of God. And this would require soft soil. Soil that had been broken up, mixed together, turned over, and brought to the top.

And friends, I guess my question for us tonight would be simply this – “Do we have soft or hardened hearts?” Are there some things in our life that we need to dig up, mix in, and turn over? Are there areas of our lives that desperately need to be plowed, in preparation for producing a great crop?

I wonder why Jesus said in verse 9 – “he who has ears, let him hear!”? Maybe it’s because he knew that we would be here today and that we would have an opportunity to listen to the voice of God and start getting prepared for producing the good crop that He has in store for us! Friends, don’t let this opportunity go by today without letting God speak to you about areas that need plowing and preparation. If we are going to learn how to sow, and produce a good crop, this is the place of beginning for us!!

If we are going to learn how to sow, we need to make sure that we

2. Plant the seed (Matthew 13:4) – “⁴As he was scattering the seed...”

Here’s a deep theological spiritual truth for us today – I bet no one has ever thought about this but you will want to write this down – are you ready??? **“We won’t produce a crop if we don’t plant the seed!!”** The farmer knew that if he wanted to produce a crop, he was going to have to plant some seed. And out of this passage we can learn a few things about planting seeds. I only gave you a couple of them in your notes, so you may want to write these others down as well...

a. You have to plant the seed that corresponds with the crop that you want to produce – Galatians 6:7 – “A man reaps what he sows”

b. You have to spread the seed everywhere - the farmer scattered the seed everywhere – God calls you and I to plant seeds everywhere we go – in our personal lives, as well as in our corporate lives

c. You have to realize that not all the seed will produce a crop–

Jesus speaks to this spiritual idea when he talks about receiving and understanding in verses 18-23. If we look at the verses we see that the ground received 100% of the seed that was scattered. But, only 75% of the seed grew. And then only 25% of the seed that was planted produced a crop. In verse 23, Jesus says, “the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and UNDERSTANDS it...he produces a crop. This idea of “understanding” is really about the application of

the seed in our lives. James 1:22 “Do not merely listen to the word, (don’t just receive the word!) and so deceive yourselves. But (understand it and) Do what it says.” We have to plant the seed, and in that planting, we need to receive and then understand it if we are going to produce a spiritual crop in our lives...the great news is that this isn’t complicated for us!! We can do this!!

And this leads us into point #3.....

If we are going to learn how to sow, we need to make sure that we

3. Put down roots - Again, it’s important to note here that of all the seed that the farmer planted, only 25% ends up being successful. 75% didn’t make it. Why? Because the root wasn’t strong enough.

- a. We can read about the seed that fell along the Path (Matthew 13:4b,19) – there was no root and satan snatched away what was sown in a person’s heart.
- b. We can read about the seed that fell along the Rocks (Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21)- there was just enough soil in and around the rocky places that the seed began to grow but after a short time, the shallowness of the soil couldn’t sustain the growth that was necessary.
- c. We can read about the seed that fell among the Thorns (Matthew 13:7, 22) – the soil was good, but the “weeds of life” - the worries, the fears, the heartaches, took over and choked out the good growth that was occurring – it just sucked the life out of the healthy growth!!
- d. And then we can read about the seed that was planted with the Good Soil (Matthew 13:8, 23a) – it had good, plowed up and prepared soil, it was rich in nutrients, and deep enough to establish roots. And friends, this is where God wants us to live – He wants us to have some deep roots in our spiritual lives. He doesn’t want us living in the shallowness – we won’t make it for long if we think that we don’t have to get deeper. In order to get deeper, it’s going to require gathering together in worship, it’s going to require growing in your spiritual life through personal devotions and prayer, and getting plugged in to a bible study. And it’s going to require giving to others with your time, your treasures, and your talents.

Are your roots deep today? Or is there some work that you need to do in order to be a little more grounded? The reality is that all of us need to be a little more grounded, we need the roots to go a little deeper.

If we are going to learn how to sow, we need to make sure that we

4. Pull out weeds (Matthew 13:7, 22) – Even as we journey along in our spiritual life, there are times when we simply need to stop and reflect, and get rid of some of the junk in our lives that keeps us from growing. Our passage here talks about the person who was so consumed with the worries and troubles of this life that it simply choked him and made him unfruitful.

God does not want us to be unfruitful in life. John 15 speaks to this idea of being fruitful and in verses 1-2, we are instructed with these words – “I am the true vine, and my father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that does not bear fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”

If we are going to learn the art of sowing, we have to keep this point in mind – God wants us to be fruitful. He wants us to be healthy and we have to pull out the weeds and allow him to cut off every branch that isn't bearing fruit.

And finally, if we are going to learn how to sow, we need to make sure that we

5. Produce a crop (Matthew 13:8, 23) – Here's the thing about producing a crop – if we do the first 4 points, we will produce a crop!! And I love what the scripture says, “we will produce a crop, not twice as big as what we sowed, not 10 times as big as what we sowed, but 30 or 60 or 100 times what was sown!!!

If you and I truly want to live a spiritually productive life then we have to plow the field and prepare our hearts to receive God's word. Then we need to plant the seed, and put down roots so our journey with Christ can be sustained. And along our journey, we need to make sure that we are pulling out the weeds in our lives so that we don't get spiritually choked by some of the junk in life. And then, and only then will we produce a crop worth harvesting.

Is that your choice today? Is that your hope today?

Pray