

**THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER** (Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, and Luke 8:1-15)**S\_\_\_\_\_ shape culture.**

- “...the one who tells the stories rules the world...” - Plato<sup>1</sup>

**For your reflection:** when you hear the phrase, “stories shape culture,” – what stories come to mind? What stories have shaped you? Your family/extended family? What would you say are the stories shaping America/our world today?

**O\_\_\_\_\_ and New Testaments contain parables!**

*Parabole:* a conjunction of the word *para* (meaning “along-side”) and *bole* (meaning “to throw”).

**Psalm 78:1-2** 1My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. 2I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old...

- A few Old Testament examples:
  - 2 Samuel 12:1-14 and the parable of the poor man’s lamb. Isaiah 5:1-7 and the parable of the fruitless vineyard. Ezekiel 17:3-10 and the parable of the two eagles and the vine. Ezekiel 19:2-9 and the parable of the lioness and her cubs. Ezekiel 24:3-5 and the parable of the boiling cauldron.

**W\_\_\_\_\_ did Jesus teach in parables?**

**Matthew 13:10-17** <sup>10</sup>The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” <sup>11</sup>He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. <sup>12</sup>Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. <sup>13</sup>This is why I speak to them in parables: ‘Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. <sup>14</sup>In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. <sup>15</sup>For 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.” <sup>16</sup>But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. <sup>17</sup>For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

**E\_\_\_\_\_ to hear—do you have them?**

**Proverbs 27:17** As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

**John 16:13** But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.

**James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

**R\_\_\_\_\_, repent and renew your commitment to do your part, to till, to fertilize, and to weed the soil of your heart!**

- Which soil are you?

## 1. THE PATH (CALLOUSED HEART):

**Romans 1:22** For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

**2 Peter 3:8-9** <sup>8</sup>But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

**1 John 1:8-9** <sup>8</sup>If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

**Psalms 139:23-24** <sup>23</sup>Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. <sup>24</sup>See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

## 2. THE ROCKS (CASUAL HEART):

**Revelation 3:15-16** <sup>15</sup>I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! <sup>16</sup>So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

## 3. THE THORNS (CROWDED HEART):

**Matthew 6:24** No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

**James 4:8** Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

**John 15:1-2** <sup>1</sup>I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

## 4. THE GOOD SOIL (COMMITTED HEART):

**Galatians 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

**What's your next step? Do you have some "soil" work to do?**

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION/DISCUSSION AT HOME AND/OR IN YOUR LIFE GROUP:

1. If it is true that “stories shape culture,” what stories have shaped you? Your family? When your family/extended family gathers, what stories seem to be told and retold? What stories have been passed down through the generations?
2. What is your story with the Word of God? When did God's Word begin to matter to you? How would you describe the current state of the soil of your heart and mind for the Word of God? What fruit do you see growing from the soil of your heart?
3. We live in a world with lots of “thorns.” What causes you to be “double-minded and distracted?” What are the other voices that can drown out the message of God's Word?
4. What was *for you* in this message? Do you have some soil work to do? What, from this message, is God pressing upon you to *share* with someone else?

**Passage to prepare for next week:** Matthew 13:31-50

<sup>1</sup>Also attributed to the Hopi Native Americans.

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