

A Sower Went Out To Sow: The Good Soil; Mark 4:1-20

0363-0364

The following transcript has been electronically transcribed. Any errors in spelling, syntax, or grammar should be attributed to the electronic method of transcription and its inherent limitations.

What does it mean that God hardens the heart? It means that God brings light to you and you reject it, and the result is the hardening of your heart.

Let's read our passage. First, we'll just read once again the relevant verses that have to do with the good, the telling of the parable about the good soil. And then we'll read the, the passages about the, uh, what's titled, the Purpose of the parables. And then we'll read Jesus' interpretation, and then we'll read the following parable of the lamp.

So let's read together from verse eight. And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain growing up, and increasing and yielding thirty-fold. And sixty-fold and a hundred fold. And he said he has ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was alone, those around him with the 12 asked him about the parables and he said to them, to you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God.

But for those outside, everything is in parables. So that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear, but not understand less. They should turn and be forgiven. And he said to them, do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? And then Jesus begins his interpretation of his parable, but will drop down to verse 20.

But those that were sown on the good soil are those who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty-fold and sixty-fold and a hundred fold. And he said to them, Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed or, and not on a stand for nothing is hidden except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret, except to come to light.

If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. And so this brings us this morning to the final of the four soils, the soil that's known as the good soil. So we'll spend just a little bit of time, first of all, thinking about the good soil. And in thinking about the good soil, we really need to just observe first of all, that the good soil that the, the single.

Most visible characteristic of the good soil is it is not the bad soil. In other words, the three bad soils were described to us in the parable, but the good soil is not described for us other than to describe the bountiful harvest. So the good soil serves for us as not the bad soil. So what the bad soil is in terms of the heart pack soil, in terms of the thorny soil, in terms of the rocky soil.

This would be the opposite of that. The good soil would be. Not the rocky soil would be not the thorny soil and not the heart packed soil. So by way of contrast, the good soil represents all the characteristics that the bad soil is not. The good soil is not the hard-packed soil of the one whose heart is.

Hardened to the word to such a point that the seed of the word is scattered on that heart and it goes nowhere. The word will speak of the sinfulness of their life or their need for redemption or forgiveness or whatever it may be, and it just lands on their heart and makes no penetration at all. And two minutes later, they forget that they heard it.

The heart soil is the opposite of the good soul. In this way, the good soil has been plowed up by the word of God, specifically by the word of God that deals with sin, so that the heart has been plowed soft, and made open and soft and ready to receive the seed, which can then germinate in the soil. The good soil is not the hard pack soil.

The seed of the word lands on the good soil and doesn't blow off, or is not picked away by the birds. But it remains and it germinates and it puts down roots. The good soil likewise is not also the, the rocky soil or, or not to say ro soil with rocks in it, but it's not the rocky soil in the sense of the shallow soil that we talked about.

It has a depth of soil. It doesn't have this hard rock barrier underneath where there's this thin layer of fertile looking soil, and underneath there is this hard layer of rock that doesn't allow any root to penetrate. Instead, the good soil has depth of soil. So that once the seed germinates and begins to grow, the roots can grow deep into the life, deep into the heart, deep into the character of God.

Likewise, the good soil is not the thorny soil. The thorny soil, which had the remnants of perhaps roots of thorn bushes that had been pulled up but not pulled up completely, or perhaps some more seeds of thorns had blown onto it, and so that it looked like it was good soil, but it actually was germinated with thorns, which grew up alongside this, the good plant, and in fact grew faster and stronger and more sturdy and more vibrant and choked out.

The good plant to such a degree that the good plant continued to live, but it didn't produce any fruit. The good soil is not the thorny soil. So the good soil has had the work of repentance done. It has removed from its heart those false gods, those false idols. Not to say that that work doesn't need to continue to be done for the remainder of the life.

But it is to say that that hard work of repentance has been done, and so that the, when the seed takes root and begins to grow, it will not only grow, but it will produce fruit, which is the Bible, which as the Bible says, that is the indication of true life when good fruit is produced. So the good soil is the opposite of the thorny.

It's the opposite of the shallow soil. It's the opposite of the heart packed soil. But also we see in the description here that there will be five very important verbs, very helpful verbs, that help us to see how the good soil received the seed of the word and the verse of these verbs is that the good soil heard the word the seed.

The seed was scattered. Jesus says, and they heard the word. Now, that's the basic. Word for hear is the basic word that means to use one's faculties of hearing to recognize auditory sounds and interpret those sounds, particularly in the context of speech. To hear word spoken and understand the meaning of those words.

So they heard the good soil, heard the word, the word was proclaimed, and the good soul heard the word. Perhaps with the ears or you know, that you can hear with your eyes as well. So maybe they heard the word or they read the word, but the word was heard. And by that hearing, the seed begins to germinate.

This is what Paul says in Romans, step chapter 10, verse 17. Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. So there is no faith, there is no germination of the seed without

hearing of the word. There is no spiritual transformation without hearing of the word. But one thing that we didn't need to make, need to make note of is that, Mark makes a very noticeable change in verb tenses when he switches to the good soil.

So all along through the parable, mark has had Jesus using the verb tense, known as the aorist, which you don't need to know anything about that other than the fact that he switches verb tenses when he comes to the good soil. So when he describes what the good soil does, the good soil hears the word, he switches to the present tense, which would be rightly and correctly translated as the good soil hears.

And continues to hear the word. So the hearing is not only an action that was done, it's an action that is continued to be done. The good soul hears the word and goes on hearing the word, the good soul hears the word and doesn't stop hearing it. It doesn't hear it one time and remember it. It hears it and then goes on hearing.

It goes on feeding itself with the word. So the good soil hears the word. Secondly, we need to look to Matthew's Gospel to see the second verb here. But in your notes, we see from Matthew 13, verse 23, and Matthew's telling of the same story. Matthew says, Matthew writes this as for what was shown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it.

So there's a hearing that takes place. The words hear. And then the mind comprehends. And as you might guess, Matthew also, just like Mark makes an in a very important and a very distinctive change in verb tenses. And he changes also from the aorist tense to the present tense. So Matthew could also rightly be translated as, He hears the word and goes on hearing the word and understands the word, and continues understanding.

The word goes on. Understanding the word. The understanding of the word is a process that begins upon hearing upon comprehension, and then continues on and on. And so there is this initial hearing of the word, and it's followed by a comprehension, a comprehension here, a mental comprehension, a cognitive comprehension to understand the words, the message, the phrases, the, the reality that's being transmitted in these words, to comprehend this.

And remember, this is what we talked about a couple of weeks ago when we talked about that this is the primary focal point of the preaching of God's work, is the goal, is comprehension. God's word has come to us in words. And so our very first and most important task is to understand those words, to understand the message that's conveyed to us in the words of scripture.

So hearing they go on hearing, understanding, comprehending their mind, grasp the concepts that's portrayed in these words and they understand, and then go on understanding. And then the third word. Comes back in Mark's gospel once again. When they hear and go on hearing, understand, and go on understanding, and now Mark says and accept it.

They hear it and they accept it. Now this word accept is just translating a word that means to. Perceive something and weigh it, consider it carefully, and then finding it right or finding, finding it, uh, acceptable. They then act upon it. That's just the word that means accept. It's translated, accept.

Sometimes it's translated receive. It just means to weigh something carefully. Upon understanding it, they weigh it carefully and then finding it to be right. They then, they then act favorably upon it

or put it in place in a favorable way. It's the same word that's translated in, in, uh, Mark's Se, I'm sorry, Paul's second letter to Timothy when he's speaking about elders, and he says, do not bring, do not allow a charge to be brought forth to an elder on anything less than two or three witnesses.

So he says, do not admit a charge. It's the same idea there. Weigh it carefully. When you hear a charge against an elder, the other elders are to consider it and weigh it carefully, and if it has credence, then you receive it and accept it and move forward. Or it's the same word that's often translated, receive.

In such a way that we, we see from Hebrews chapter 12 and verse six, the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives. So in the same way, the Lord weighs carefully. The Lord regards and weighs carefully and seeing his son. Who has now been made righteous by the sacrificial death of Christ.

He receives the son. And then the point of the verse is he goes on to discipline the son. So, so this idea is that that what is heard is first understood and then being understood, it's weighed and then considered to be right or worthy of receiving. It's then admitted or receipt. And then once again, as you might guess, This word also is in the present tense.

So he hears and goes on hearing, he hears and continues hearing, he understands and then continues understanding, and then having understood. He accepts and then goes on, continues on accepting. And then the fourth word is, Hold fast now. I apologize to you. I failed to put this in your notes. I wish I had done this from Luke.

Chapter eight, verse 15 is where we find this word from Luke's account of the same parable. Luke wrote this as for that in the good soil, they are those who hearing the word. And here it is, hold it fast or hold fast to it. And as you might guess, Luke puts this as well in the present tense. So in other words, he's saying they hold fast to it and continue holding fast.

Now, this word hold fast is a strong word. It's a forceful word. Doesn't mean just reach out and sort of take hold of something and, and you got it in your hand. It means to grip it firmly, to seize upon it, to reach out and grab it forcefully and hold it fast, and not only hold it fast, but continue holding fast to it.

It is the same word that is used multiple times in the letter to the Hebrews when the writer there speaks of holding fast to the confession of our hope. Or chapter three verse six, hold fast to our confidence. Or, I'm sorry, Hebrews chapter three, verse six is in there twice. I guess that meant that, um, to be doubly important.

I'm going to, I'm going to have to talk to my editor this week, so I'll get back to you on that next week. But hold fast is the idea, or we see the same word used in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians second Thessalonians, chapter two and verse six, to describe what God is doing right now to the man of lawlessness.

He has held him fast. He's got a firm grip on the man of lawlessness so that he has not released. To wreak the havoc that he will wreak until God releases him from that hole. So that's the fourth verb. And then the fifth one, back to Mark's gospel is the verb bear fruit. So he hears the word and continues hearing it, understands the word, and continues understanding it.

Accepts the word and continues, goes on accepting it and having understood it and accepted it. Holds fast to it, clings fast to it, and continues clinging to the word. Which by the way, that is a picture, that is the picture of how all of us should regard the word holding fast, clinging to it firmly. I can't remember how many times I have been, uh, privy to the experience of someone coming to faith initially, or perhaps someone who professed a faith earlier and that faith sort of withered away and then they returned to a faith and describing to them the word of God in these terms.

Imagine that you are. On a cruise in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and you fall overboard and the boat can't stop for you, but they throw you a life preserver and they keep on going. They'll say, we'll send help when we get to the next stop. The way that you regard that life preserver is the way that you should regard the word of God.

You must cling to it with the tenacity that you would cling to a lifesaver ring in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, because that's precisely what it is. And so that's what Jesus says here, that they hear it going on. He goes on hearing it, continues hearing it, understands it. Accept it, cling to it, hold fast to it.

And then finally, the verb to bear fruit. They then bear fruit. Now this verb bear fruit just simply means to bring forth or produce that which is consistent with the nature of, of the thing that's bringing it forth. We're going to see the same word show up again in the uh, parable after this one. If you look down with me down to verse 20, uh, 27.

He sleeps at night and rises in the day and the seed sprouts and grows, and he knows not how the earth produces by itself. There it is. The earth produces by itself. And that verb, it's the same word there. It just means to bring forth the fruit or the harvest of that, which is consistent with the nature of the thing.

It harkens us back to the creation account. Remember, in the creation account, we're told that the plants brought forth according to their own kind, and the animals brought forth according to their own kind. The same idea here is that the nature. Out of the nature, out of the character comes that which you would expect to come forth.

We talked in depth about this last week, that this is the fruit, the bearing of the fruit is to bring forth that which one would expect to come from. One who has the nature of Christ, one who's been given the nature of Christ through conversion, through the new birth. Brings forth the fruit that one would expect to come from one who now has the nature of Christ implanted into them.

And so this bearing fruit, this bringing forth, if you want to, anybody want to guess at the verb tense? The present tense. So bearing fruit and continuing to bear fruit, bearing fruit, and going on continuing in the bearing of fruit. So notice these five words now, hearing and continuing to hear, understanding and continuing to understand, accepting and continuing to accept, clinging to holding fast and continuing to hold fast, bearing fruit and continuing to bear fruit that is the description of the good soil.

And that is the only assurance that the scripture gives us that we are people of good soil, that we are people who have eternal life. The only assurance that scripture gives to you of eternal life is the assurance that is based upon and grounded upon continued faith. That results in continued good works.

Those are, that's the only assurance that scripture gives you of the next life. Continued faith that manifests itself in continued good works. Now, we know that the scriptures teach us that works. Do not save anyone. We're not saved by doing good things. But those good works are another way of saying bearing fruits or producing fruit that's consistent with the nature of Christ in us that must be manifested in order to dis, to demonstrate that the conversion is real, that the faith is real.

So the only assurance that scripture gives us of the next life of our place and that next life is continued faith that manifests itself in continued bearing fruit, but with that assurance, with that continued faith. Is the rock-solid unshakable assurance of the full authority of Jesus Christ, who says, no one will pluck you out of my hand.

No one will take you from my hand. So you see here, the assurance is based not upon a faith that was once professed like the plant that sprouted, and then quickly withered and died. Neither is. Neither is the assurance based on the seed, the plant that lived, but never produced fruit because it's based upon continued bearing of fruit.

So neither the shallow soil nor the thorny soil gives any assurance as intended to be. The assurance is in the good soil, which continues. Understanding continues. Accepting, continues believing, continues cleaning fast and continues bearing fruit. So that is the description of the good soil. The next thing that we see here is of course, Jesus' description of the harvest that the good soil brings forth, once again from verse 20, but those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and continue hearing it, accept it, and continue accepting it and bearing fruit and continuing to bear fruit.

thirty-fold, sixty-fold, and a hundred-fold. So thirty, sixty, a hundred fold. That just simply means thirty, sixty, and hundred times the volume of seed that was planted is what's harvest. So you know, when you harvest grain or barley or something of that nature, you're harvesting the seed. So the seed that was sewn. Uh, thirty, sixty, or hundred times, the volume of that seed is what is described as the harvest.

Now, virtually every scholar and every biblical commentator will agree that this represents an unheard of harvest, a, a supernatural type of harvest in the days of Jesus, in which farming techniques were as they were, which everything was organic, then. No pesticides or anything like that. No farm implements, no million dollar tractors, none of that.

None of that stuff. So with the techniques in which were present in Jesus' day, we are told that a good crop was a seven or eightfold crop, A bountiful crop, a bumper crop, a tear Barnes down and build bigger. Barnes crop was a tenfold crop. So for Jesus to even hint at a thirty or sixty, or even float out a hundred fold.

Most commentators agree that what's being described here is a supernatural harvest, which is saying to us that this is not a natural, this is not subject to the laws of of agriculture. Jesus is not talking about an agricultural harvest that's subject to the laws of agriculture and, and horticulture and, uh, farming methods.

Jesus is speaking of a supernatural crop, a supernatural harvest that he describes thirty, sixty, 90 fold. So we think here of the instances, for example, Jesus' feeding of the 5,000, both instances of the multiplying of the fish and, and the bread. Or we think here of the water turned to wine or many, many such instances that teach us, or we're going to see a couple parables later.

The parable of the mustard seed, Jesus is teaching us here that the harvest, the spirit, this is spiritual harvest, not subject to the laws of physics or of nature or of horticulture. So thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold. But the question that we must ask and offer an answer for is why the difference? Why thirty, sixty, and a hundred?

Why is everybody not a hundred? Because after all, this is the spiritual crop. This is the Lord's doing. In fact, the parable after the parable of the lamp is, is teaching just that. I'm sorry, this the parable after that, the parable of the growth of the seed. But that's coming up in two Sundays. That parable is all about how Jesus is teaching that this crop, the harvest is the Lord's doing.

So if the, if it's the Lord's doing, then why is everybody not the same? Remember what Paul said? And, uh, first Corinthians one, when he says he, he uses the same analogy, the analogy of growing a crop. And he says, I planted an Apollos watered, but who provided the growth? The Lord provided the growth, right?

So if it's the Lord's crop, why is everybody not a hundred? Or why is everybody not thirty or whatever, whatever it may be. And the answer that I'll offer is this. I think that what Jesus is doing is he's leaving room, he's recognizing human agency. He's recognizing the presence of human agency and the spiritual crop that's produced.

The, the nature, the fruit that's brought forth. He's recognizing that human effort plays a role in that. He's recognizing, and I'm not, I don't want to go too far into this because that's, this is next week's parable. The parable of the measures. All right. So just, just sort of a hint, a teaser for that is that I think Jesus is, is preparing us to receive the teaching that's going to say.

There. There is a role for human agency to play according to the measure which you use. It will be measured back to you and to each who has little more be given. All right? So he's saying to us that, that there is this. Indescribable process in which God's supernatural power comes in and merges, if you will, with the human effort of producing spiritual fruit after conversion.

And as the two of those things merge together, they become one, in essence, one force or one power, or one straining, or one striving. That is both the Lord and us striving together. This is something that the scriptures will show us in places such as Paul's letter to the Corinthians in first Corinthians 15 in verse 10.

By the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them. Though it was not I, but the grace of God that is in me Now, you want to read that sentence and you want to say, Paul, you're, you're kind of talking sup uh, a little bit schizophrenic there.

Was it God or was it you? And Paul's answer is there is this coming together of both the Lord and the power of the Spirit and Paul. Or for example, Philippians two verses 12 and 13, work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is the Lord who works in you both to will and work for his good pleasure.

So I think of it like this river where, where two rivers come together. If you've ever had the opportunity to be in a place where two rivers come together, imagine being in a place where two

rivers are flowing together and you wade out into the river and you take a drinking cup and you hold that cup down in the water and you pull it up and you say, now which river is this water?

Rolling. That's, I think the, the, the idea that we're getting at the concept here is that this is both the Lord and human effort, human agency. And so this is what I think describes the difference between thirty, sixty and a hundred fold. But we'll talk more about that next week. So here's the harvest, this super bountiful harvest, and then we read, let's jump back up now to verse 10, and let's revisit the center of the sandwich.

The Turkey and cheese, if you will, of the sandwich. Let's go back up to verse 10, where Jesus is going to speak briefly about the purpose of these parables. So verse 10, and when he, meaning Jesus was alone, those around him with the 12 came to him and asked him. So as we've said before, the group that comes to Jesus here.

Now, this is the group that Jesus called up the mountain to himself back in chapter three. There's this. Flock. There's this huge hoard of people that are flocking around Jesus and from that flock of people, from that immense number of people who are enthusiastic about Jesus, excited about his healings, ready to be fed from three fish and two loaves of bread.

All that's going on from among that group of people. Jesus calls to himself what Mark says, those whom he desire. And from that smaller group, they received the Sermon on the mount. And then later we see that same group in the house receiving Jesus' teaching when Jesus' biological family come to take him back.

And then Jesus says, no, these are my brothers and sisters here. That same group is now with Jesus. And we're told, he said to them, verse 11 to you, has been given the secret of the kingdom of God. So there's another reminder. That all spiritual understanding is a gift from God to you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God.

So those who are hearing Jesus' teaching, they understand his words, they understand the parables that he's teaching, but they don't grasp the spiritual significance. They don't grasp. The inner, if you will, meaning the *mysterion* is the word that's used here. They don't grasp that inner meaning, meaning, but Jesus says to you, has been given.

This is a gift granted to you as you think of one Corinthians chapter two, where we're told that we impart a secret in his hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. These things God has revealed to us. Through the spirit that we might understand the things freely. And there it is again, given us by God.

So he says to you, has been given the secret of the kingdom of God. And that secret is in this context is that we said the kingdom of God has come and it's Jesus Christ. That's what the, that's the understanding that they've received. The kingdom of God is here, and it's Jesus Christ. It's this man Jesus Christ.

So to, to you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God. But for those outside, Everything is in parables. So again, the contrast that comes up over and over again in the New Testament is this contrast between those on the inside and those on the outside. Colossians chapter four in verse five, walk in wisdom toward outsiders.

And we could point to many other instances in which the New Testament makes a distinction between God's people, those on the inside and those on the outside. There's only two groups of people that the scriptures are aware of. And that is the people of God and not the people of God. That's the only distinction between all of the human race that the scriptures recognized.

There is those on the inside, the people of God who have received life in His name and those who have not. So then, Verse 12, so that he says to you, has been given the secret so that to you, you've been given the secret. But to those outside, everything is in parables. So that verse 12, they may indeed see but not perceive.

They may indeed hear, but not understand less. They turn and be forgiven. So the purpose of the parables as Jesus is, is this purpose of. Well, what is it? Is it revealing? Is it hiding? Is it concealing? What is Jesus getting at here? This is a, this is a passage that, as we've noted before, trips up a lot of people because it sounds as though what Jesus is saying is you guys are on the inside and you get to know what this kingdom of God is all about.

But you know what? I'm keeping it from them because to them, everything's in parables. So I'm going around telling all these parables that they can't understand. But to you, the secret has been given. That's what it appears that Jesus is saying, isn't it? Which would say to us that the parables are some mechanism of concealing the truth from those who only get the teaching and parables.

But is that what Jesus is saying? So this is why if you think back to the first message on the soils, This is why we spent a lot of time in that message to talk about the fundamental difference in people and how people learn and how people translate or, or communicate ideas and how people teach ideas.

And we talked about how that there are a lot of differences between different groups of people that, that make us learn differently and understand differently. Some differences such as age. Uh, differences such as the, the time of, of history in which you live. People today, there are differences in how we learn and receive information compared to people in the ninth century.

There's differences in differences in ethnicity, there's ethnic differences, there's, there are differences in the way we communicate and receive information compared to, uh, Chinese people. But we said that the greatest difference of all, the biggest difference between how people learn and communicate is not of all those things.

It's not even the time period that you live in. The greatest difference is whether you are a western thinking person or an eastern thinking person. Remember this? And so Western people, we trace our heritage, so to speak. Back to the Greeks, we talked about how it goes back to, to, uh, the Seneca and, uh, Socrates and Play-Doh and all those guys, and how the Greeks, what they like to do was they like to take an idea and boil it down to its essence so that they could grasp it and talk about it and communicate about it, because they've taken it down to its essence.

And so we saw how some of that takes place in the New Testament. For example, I think the example we used was first Corinthians 13, where Paul does the very thing, he takes the idea of biblical love and boils it down to his essence. He says, love is patient, love is kind. Love is always seeing the good, right?

So Paul's doing a, a type of Greek thought or Western thought. He's taking this idea of biblical love. Down to its essence and discussing it. But we also notice how that's the polar opposite of how eastern peoples think, or a better way to put it, is storytelling people. And so there are many cultures, even today, many cultures that are a basic storytelling.

P people, a storytelling culture. And the storytelling cultures ideas are communicated much more effectively. Through stories. That's how people learn. That's how people teach of their history and that's how ideas are communicated among storytelling people is through stories. Jesus is of a people that are a storytelling people and he's teaching people who are also storytelling people.

And so remember how we talked about that, that Jesus and his hearers, they, they share together the scriptures. They're, they're, they're Jesus' scriptures, and they're the, the Hebrew scriptures, the Jewish scriptures, and how did the Old Testament scriptures teach through stories and lots of them stories about Abraham, stories about Jacob, stories about Jonah, stories about job, stories about Esther and Ruth, and then the prophets come along.

And what the prophets do. The prophets tell stories. Remember Nathan, when he confronts David? David, I got a story for you. There was a guy who had a hundred sheep and another guy who had won, and the guy with a hundred sheep took the guy's sheep who had won. Remember? I mean, that's how communication took place among storytelling people.

So when Jesus is teaching with parables, here's the key to see. He is not teaching in riddles. He is instead doing the opposite. He's teaching in the clearest, most understandable way that his heroes can grasp. So Jesus is not trying to conceal anything he is trying to reveal. In fact, he is teaching in the way that will reveal the best a storyteller teaching storytelling, people with stories.

So Jesus is not teaching puzzles and enigmas. When Jesus is teaching in parables, he's teaching in the form that they will hear and understand the best. And for proof of that, there's places where we can look. For example, Matthew chapter 21. Remember in Matthew 21, Jesus tells the parable of the wicked tenants, that was a story about these people.

Jesus made up the story about the people that, that that rented a vineyard. And the rent for the vineyard was part of the harvest. And so years go by and each year they didn't pay the owner of the vineyard, the portion that was due. And so Jesus is making a point through the telling of that story. And at the conclusion of the story, do you remember what happened?

We're told that the parable, the, the, the Pharisees perceived that Jesus told this story about them. So you know what They got it. They understood when Jesus is teaching in parables. Don't get confused by this. When Jesus is teaching the groups in parables, Jesus isn't telling a story about a vineyard worker or he's not telling a story about yeast in Levin and, and bread.

He is not telling this story about, uh, seeds being sewn and the people are are like, do you know what he's talking about? He's telling some stories about some seeds. You know what he's talking about. This guy's crazy. That's not at all what's happening. They understood, for the most part, his stories. And you remember how the stories, how the parables work.

The word itself means laying alongside. And so what a parable does is it takes an earthly story and it lays it alongside a spiritual truth. And so the earthly truth, you see it. You understand it, and it's

laid alongside a parallel spiritual truth, which you don't see. But by understanding the earthly story, You can make a connection to the spiritual reality, and that's what Jesus is doing.

He's teaching spiritual realities by laying alongside the spiritual truth, an earthly truth. So when they are not understanding, Jesus is teaching. We said this, to be very careful to understand what that means. It, it doesn't mean that they just don't know what Jesus is talking about, that they don't get his point.

What it means is that the barrier between them and true spiritual understanding was not one of intelligence, and it wasn't one of poor communication on the part of Jesus. It was a moral problem. The reason that they would not understand and receive and accept, and as Mark says, go on accepting and go on clinging fast, was because of their sin.

Because the parables spoke to their sin, which they were unwilling to forsake, and that was their stumbling block, not Jesus' method. So when Jesus is teaching parables, he's teaching in the plain's clearest method that he can teach. And so now the, the, the disciples, they come, they say, Jesus help us with these parables.

Help us to understand. We, we, we get what you're saying, but we don't think we completely get it. Help us. And so Jesus answers by saying, if you don't understand this one, how are you going to understand any of the parables? But he says to you, has been given the secret. And remember, the secret we said was not that they became suddenly expert parable interpreters.

The secret that's been given to them is found in their coming to Jesus. And their relationship to Jesus and their connection to Jesus. It was given to them because they came to Jesus in belief and faith and trust and said, Jesus, we need you to help us. And so that's what's given to them through this coming to him, through this relationship to him.

So to you's been given the secret, but to them, I speak in parables now. What's all that about? If we were to look to Matthew's Gospel, Matthew—we won't turn there, but Matthew 13, Matthew and his telling are the same parable. He quotes a little bit of an extended section from the prophet Isaiah, which is where Jesus quotes here, the prophet Isaiah.

This quote shows up about six times in the New Testament. Always it shows up in the context of judgment upon people who don't understand the things of God. That's how it always shows up. So Jesus tells this, he, he quotes this par, this, uh, phrase from Isaiah the prophet, seeing they don't see hearing, they don't understand less they should believe and turn and be forgiven.

So it sounds as though that Jesus is speaking here of some type of judgment function. Of the parables, like the parables by telling the parables. This is some type of a judgment upon those who don't hear and don't understand and don't receive it. And this is the point that Jesus is getting to the function of the parables to act as a type of judge upon those who receive the, the understanding, but don't receive it.

Don't submit to it or don't yield to it. So the principle here is, The principle that Jesus is explaining to them in as clearest possible terms as he can, and the more he explains to them, the more guilt is heaped upon them. So this is a principle that scripture teaches us, and the principle is this increased comprehension of spiritual truth when paired together with a heart that doesn't yield to that spiritual truth.

Results in greater guilt, and that's what the scriptures teach us. The more comprehension that you have, or to put it another way, the more light that you're given and you reject that light or refuse to yield to it. Adds to your moral guilt or your spiritual guilt. The scriptures teach this in numerous places.

John chapter nine, uh, verse 40 and 41, some of the Pharisees near him heard these things. They said to him, are we also blind? Jesus said to them, if you were blind, Meaning blind to spiritual truth, you would have no guilt. But now you say, we see, so therefore your guilt remains. Do you see it there? Do you see the connection between seeing, comprehending and guilt?

Jesus says, because you comprehend. Your guilt remains, or John 15, verse 22. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. I have come and spoken to them and my speaking to them has given them light, has given them comprehension and understanding.

Yet they did not yield to that, and so their guilt is increased. John 15 verse 24. If I had not done among the them the works that no one else did, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my father. You see the connection there. If I had not come and performed these miracles demonstrating for them that I am from God, if they had not seen that, Then their guilt would've been less than it is now that they've seen it and yet rejected.

So there's a connection between comprehension and guilt. And so as Jesus is teaching, and again in these formats that they, they should find very easily comprehensible. In fact, they do. They understand. Remember the Pharisees in Matthew 21. We understand that he's talking about us. Their guilt is actually increased.

That's why Jesus is saying, seeing, they don't see hearing. They don't hear less. They should turn and be forgiven. So this is what is known of in the Scriptures as the hardening of the heart, the hardening of the heart, the hardening of the heart is something that the scriptures teach us That. Happens in the heart that receives light and rejects the light.

So light that is received and rejected results in the judgment of God, which is to say blindness, light, that is rejected results in blindness. The scriptures teach us this in places. The the, I think the clearest example to point to is the example of Pharaoh. Remember Pharaoh? Moses comes, God says, let my people go.

And then along with that command, remember there are these 10 plagues and those 10 plagues, all of them are a clear demonstration to Pharaoh that Moses is here to speak for the living God, the true God, because all 10 of those plagues were a direct frontal attack against a specific Egyptian God. And so all those plagues are God.

The, the true living God saying, your false God of frogs is nothing. Your false God of the Nats is nothing. Your false God of the Son is nothing. Look, I'll bring darkness. So each time that these plagues come, you remember how Pharaoh reacts at first. He says, I'll never let those people go. Then the Nile turns to blood.

Then the gnats come, then the frogs come. Okay, alright, I'll let some of you go. I'll let the men go. But not the women, not the children. Don't do that. Then more plagues come. Okay, okay, I'll let

the women go. But, but not the, not the children. The children have to stay. More plagues come. Okay, okay. All the people can go, but your, your animals have to stay.

More plagues come. So each time it's more what light. Moses is speaking for the true God. And this is being demonstrated over and over and over again. And the theme that's carried throughout that whole story is the theme. We see it multiple times. Pharaoh's heart was hardened. Many of those times that we see that phrase, it shows up like this, and God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Now, that's a phrase there that we come across in scripture in a number of instances. To the effect that God hardened somebody's heart. And that's one of those phrases that sticks right here. You know what I mean? You, you try to swallow that and it just gets stuck right there, that God hardens someone's heart, so they won't believe.

But let's just think about what exactly is happening in order for the heart to be hardened. We have seen that when light is given to someone, meaning comprehension, meaning God, who is a God who reveals himself, reveals himself to us through the scriptures or through the proof proclamation of the scriptures, or through the Pharaoh and these miracles, or to the Pharisees by way of miracles and supernatural teachings, when God reveals himself and the one who has been given that.

Comprehension of that, that understanding of that says, I won't submit to that. I will not yield to that. The result is a hardness, is a blindness is a hardening of the heart. Now you know this to be true from your own experience. You know how this works because you've experienced this. You have, if you are a child of God, you have experienced the Holy Spirit communicating in your soul.

Something of maybe there's this person that you need to go to and you need to ask for their forgiveness. Or there is something, some behavior that you really are wrapped up in or you really enjoy, or you don't really don't want to leave, and the Holy Spirit comes to you in a convicting power and you hear that, you receive that and you say, all right, Lord, I'll, I'll do that tomorrow.

I'll do that, and then tomorrow comes and it doesn't happen. So in those times, you know this to be true. When Holy Spirit comes to you and he says to you, you need to go to that person and you need to ask their forgiveness, and you don't, he never comes again with the same strength of voice, because when he returns, the voice is weaker or at least sounds weaker, harder to hear.

Am I, am I right? Do you know what I'm talking about? That is the hardening of the heart. It results from receiving comprehension or light and rejecting it, and so the scriptures will say that God hardens the heart. What does it mean that God hardens the heart? It means that God brings light to you and you reject it.

And the result is the hardening of your heart. Who brought the light? God brought the light. Why does God bring the light? Why does God, or why does Jesus keep, keep teaching in parables? Why doesn't Jesus say they'll, they don't believe me. They, they're going to, I'm going to stop talking to them. He never does that.

He continues teaching. Why does Jesus continue teaching? When their rejection of his truth results in hardness of heart, because that is the character of God, the character of God is the character that reveals himself. It is not God's nature. It is not God's character to hide himself. It is his nature to show himself.

That's why Jesus came, and so God. Would be acting contrary to his nature to hide himself. And so in consistent accordance with his nature, he reveals himself and the one who sees that revelation of him through the scriptures or through the teaching of the scriptures and rejects, it ends up with a heart that is hardened.

And that's why the scriptures say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart because God came to Pharaoh and said, I am God. Believe and obey. And Pharaoh says, I won't. And the next time God comes back, the heart is harder. And the next time the God, the heart is harder. And the next time, and the next time until the result is a completely hardened heart that is just like the footpath of the first soil.

And so this is the principle that light rejected results in blindness, and this is what Jesus is talking about. Jesus is saying, I'm teaching them in the clearest, most understandable form, but they reject it, meaning that they are then hardened to it. Seeing, they don't see hearing, they won't hear because each time they hear and reject, they get harder.

So this is the, the point that Jesus is, is getting at here because this is. This is what I will call the, the principle of the eternal movement of the soul. What I mean by that is this, your soul is always on the move, meaning you are always either moving toward God or away from him. There is no such thing as a static soul.

Th this is why Jesus would say there, there is no fence to sit on. I don't have a fence. Jesus would say, if you're not for me, you're against me. If you're not against me, then you're for me, there is no fence to sit on, meaning that you are either moving toward me or moving away from me. It's like life is a journey, which is how the Bible portrays it.

Jesus will talk about life as a path. It's either a narrow path. That results in a narrow gate or it's a wide path that results in a wide gate, but it's a path and we're moving down that path. And that path is either taking us toward God or away from God. And every time you hear the truth of God, it moves you on that path.

One direction or another. You either hear, understand, accept, clinging to it and bear fruit, or you don't. But you move along that path. To use an analogy that Spurgeon used, he uses an, he uses this analogy in a different context to, to illustrate something similar but different. But I'll use his same illustration because it works here.

He used the illustration of, of picking up your foot. So, and he used it to talk about doubt. He says, doubt is like picking up. When you doubt something of the truth of God, it's like picking up your foot and you've either got to put your foot forward or you got to put your foot backward. So imagine, I'm going to use this analogy in a little bit of a different context.

When you hear the word of God, every time you hear testimony of Christ, it's like you pick up your foot. Now I know I can pick up my foot and put it back down, but imagine that I'm in motion. Imagine your body is in motion and you pick up that foot. You either have to put that foot forward or you have to put that foot backward.

Every time the word of God is introduced into your hearing or into your reading, your foot just got picked up. Right now, I'm picking up your foot and you have to either place that foot toward God

or away from God. There is no remaining still. You are either being moved along in more belief, continued belief, continued trust and obedience, or you being moved away.

That's why the proclamation of God's word is always a moment of truth. When you hear it, that's a moment of truth. You will either accept it, believe it, clinging to it, or you won't. This is why the writer to the Hebrews will say twice in the same words, he will say today. Today, if you hear his voice, you hear that with hear his voice.

What's implied there is hear with understanding today. If you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. As they did in the, in the rebellion.