

St. Matthew A.M.E. Church
Bible Study
Monday, January 26, 2009

St. Matthew 13:1-23

Our spiritual mind set greatly affects how we listen to God. In St. Matthew 13:1-9 Jesus tells a parable that describes four different people with four different spiritual mindsets who hear the Word of God. In the parable a very narrow strip of soil is cleaned of rock and thorny bushes. Next to the strip were paths for donkeys and people. The people would scatter the seed as they walked. Occasionally they would put a sack of seed on a donkey, cut a small hole in the sack, walk through the field, and let the seed drop out. Sometime the wind would blow seeds on to unprepared soil, or the animal would randomly drop seeds as it crossed the hardened path along the rows.

A Closed Mind

In verse 4 Jesus said, “Some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.” Jesus interpretation of this is found in verse 19: “when anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.” This is the person who hears with a closed mind. This doesn’t mean just the unbeliever, for the believer can also fit in this category. This could be a person who goes to church regularly or listens to gospel programs on television and radio. A closed minded person decides what he or she is going to hear or not going to hear. He or she shuts their mind to anything that demands of him or her something they don’t want to hear. They sit and listen passively but have no intention of applying what was said or of changing their behavior. Hearts become hardened when they are passive and fail to respond. Persons with a closed mind are like seed dropped on a hard surface where it has no chance of germinating. The animals and people trample on it, which is tantamount to Satan snatching the seed away.

A Cloudy Mind

In verses 5 and 6 of the parable, Jesus describes a second listener: “some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.” In verses 20 and 21, Jesus interpreted the analogy: “But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures for only a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.” This is the hearer with a cloudy mind. Hearers with a cloudy mind listen to the Word of God and get excited. Having been saved they just want to praise God and enjoy the thrill. The problem is they don’t take the time to study Scripture and sink their roots into the Word of God and gain a firm foundation. They are not committed to anything and have no doctrinal basis. When the storms of life come they’ve had it.

This is why so many people who have been Christians for quite some time fall apart when they experience a crisis. They shout Hallelujah until trouble comes and devastates them. Why? Because our minds are filled with confusion, turmoil and unbelief. We are to constantly renew our minds and ground ourselves in the Word of God. Jesus Christ isn't a temporary, momentary thrill. He is life! If a believer is satisfied being saved and keeping a cloudy mind, not knowing what he or she believes, why they believe or who they believe in they are a poor listener. The cloudy minded believer has no real interest in the Word of God or growing. They just like the thought of missing hell and going to heaven. The tragedy of a believer with a cloudy mind is that they are likely to transmit their mindset to their children and those around them.

A Cluttered Mind

The third category is pictured by Jesus in verse 7: "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them." Jesus explanation is given in verse 22: "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful."

He or she comes to church and Bible Study, and while the Word is being delivered, their mind churns with questions like; "did I turn the stove off", "what am I going to do tomorrow", "will I get a raise this month", "how am I going to pay bills this month?" The cluttered mind is full of yesterday, today and tomorrow, full of things, people, money, business and school. Satan bombards our minds with so many things that there is no room for God anymore. It becomes difficult for God to speak to our hearts when our minds are cluttered with other things.

Have you ever come before the Lord for devotions and our mind is cluttered with business or home or children? While these things are normal and normal to think about, Satan will do all He can to detour our minds away from listening to what God has to say. When this happens we should change gears a bit. If we were praying or reading Scripture then we should change and begin praising God acknowledging His goodness to us and giving Him thanks. Praise will clear our minds.

A Committed Mind

Jesus describes the fourth mind set in verse 8: "But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." He expounds on that in verse 23: "But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." The committed mind is fertile soil. It has been cultivated and ready for the seed to penetrate. The committed mind is a teachable mind. A child's mind is a wonderful example of the teachable spirit. Children believe with hearts open and are impressionable. They are sensitive, and they want to learn. In order to have a committed mind they are several things we must do:

1. Listen carefully to God's Word through the pastor, Bible Study or whatever means it comes.
2. We must be determined to resist outside clutter. We have to close off the means by which this clutter comes.

3. We must be committed to evaluate our lives in the light of what we hear. This means evaluating our lives in the light of God's Word.
4. We must apply the truths that God places in our hearts. If we don't Satan will steal them quickly.
5. We must make the effort to obey those truths that God has given us. Preaching and the power of the Word have no impact upon our lives because we have not obeyed.

It is spiritually impossible to apply the Word week after week and remain the same. The fruitful mind set begins with the seed of a committed mind that leads to productive disciples who hear and obey God's Word.