

# Message Transcript

THE SOIL OF THE HEART | THE KINGDOM BREAKS IN  
RYAN BRAMLETT | MARK 4:1-20 | MARCH 14 & 15, 2026

Traders Point how are we doing? So good to be with you as we continue in our series The Urgent Kingdom going through the gospel of Mark.

For those of you who are new that is one of the biographies of Jesus' life. It is filled with what He said and what He did, and Kingdom language. Maybe that's new to you. But we're talking about the Kingdom of heaven that is breaking through.

And maybe that kind of shatters your worldview because to you we're here on earth now and then one day we're going to be in heaven. But Jesus came with a very different message. He says, "Now that I am here, heaven has invaded." The Kingdom is anywhere where Jesus' way reigns and rules. It is upon us.

A big part of our mission, as a church, we are all about taking ground for the Kingdom across Indy and beyond. And I just want to share with you a little bit of what that looks like here at the church.

I just got back from a trip to Seattle where, because of your generosity, we were able to plant a church in downtown Seattle—tough soil. It gets better. Keep celebrating. Alright? A year later, only a year later, they have already broken over 1,000 in attendance, hundreds of baptisms. The Kingdom is breaking through.

And I know a lot of times here, among us, it's like every first Sunday we get to see a few baptisms during the service where we are at. But I just want to update you. Last weekend, here at Traders, we had 58 baptisms across all of our campuses. Let's celebrate all that God is doing.

And today we're still in the gospel of Mark. But this is actually Part 2 and the title is The Kingdom in Word and Power. And what you'll notice as we begin to work through chapter 4 and beyond is Jesus is going to begin to describe more of what the Kingdom of God is like. What you will also begin to see is that not everyone responds in the same way. They don't hear it in the same way.



Maybe you've noticed that in your life. Maybe when you came to know Jesus it was you and your best friend growing up. And you guys agreed on everything except for this. You fell in love with Jesus and he never gave his heart to that.

Or maybe for you, you're noticing this as a parent. You've got two kids. You raised them in the same house, bringing them to the same church, under the same teaching and one is falling in love with Jesus but the other one, not so much.

Maybe you experienced it during a sermon. And you are just looking and you're just thinking about it—you're not even in the room, really—you are somewhere else. You are like, "I wonder what we're going to have for lunch." And you look over and there is this person next to you just bawling. You are like, "What am I missing?"

What we're going to look at today is: why. Why that happens. So, if you have a Bible, and I hope that you do, go ahead and get to Mark, chapter 4, verse 1. Alright? Mark, chapter 4, verse 1. Let's set the scene. It says:

"Once again Jesus began teaching by the lakeshore. A very large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat in the boat while all the people remained on the shore. He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:" (NLT)

So, let's pause on this for a second. Okay? It's a very large crowd. It's a diverse crowd. Not everyone here is King Jesus—some have pure motives, some are there for selfish reasons, some are neutral, some are there, literally, to kill Jesus.

And He sees all of this and makes a little space by pushing back on a boat to get out on the water. He creates a little bit of an amphitheater so that His voice can carry through the crowd. And you could hear a pin drop. And it says Jesus began to preach in a parable.

Now, for us to begin to understand the Kingdom in Word and Power, we have to understand what a parable is, because roughly 35 percent of all of Jesus' teaching through the gospels come in the form of a parable. Now a parable is just a word that means to come alongside or to cast alongside. But here's a working definition for all of us:

A parable is when Jesus takes an ordinary part of life and places it alongside a spiritual truth so we can see what God's Kingdom is like.



A lot of times this is what Jesus is going to do. He says, "I'm going to use something that you know to understand something that you don't know." A lot of times it's agricultural. Like today is going to be with a farmer. Everyone has seen this over and over again, "I'm going to give you that and I'm going to come alongside it with a spiritual truth so that you can begin to see what My Kingdom is like."

Growing up, maybe you have experienced a different kind of parable. Your parent would give you a teaching and then would come alongside your backside with a different form. You know what I mean? It's to reinforce what they were saying.

What Jesus is going to do, a lot of what we see moving forward, He is going to speak in parables. And we're going to read this right now in its entirety. I'm going to read all of the way through it and then we'll kind of dissect it, and Jesus is going to break it down for us. Alright? So, let's start in verse 3. This is Jesus speaking. He says:

"Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn't have deep roots, it died.

"Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain. Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! Then he said, 'Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.'"

What? Understand what? What are you talking about Jesus? Imagine. I always try to put myself in this space. Imagine you are a part of the crowd and you brought everyone from your town with you. You went and you've seen this Jesus. And all you have been talking about is Jesus.

And then you heard He's right down the street and you go get your friends like, "This is the one I've been telling you about. The one who did the miracles. This guy was paralyzed. Jesus told him to get up and he got up. He has these amazing... You want to see this Jesus." And then they bring Jesus in front of them. And He stands up and He says: "A farmer went out and scattered some seed." I can just picture them looking like, "This is the guy? This is the guy I had to see?"



Like, maybe this happens with you. A lot of times I'll find a Reel or a video or something and I'll be sitting in the same room with my wife and I'll send it to her because I want to watch her experience it like I experienced it. But when it gets to the part where she is supposed to be laughing, she's not laughing. I'm like, "Oh, no. I have messed this up."

That was the space that they were in as Jesus begins to talk. No one knows what He is talking about. Look at this. This is how we know, verse 10. It says:

"Later, when Jesus was alone with the twelve disciples and with the others who were gathered around, they asked him what the parables meant."

Even they even didn't know. It wasn't just the crowd that didn't understand. It was His closest followers who didn't understand. But you know they were hyping up Jesus during the sermon. They were there on the side, "Oh, this is so good, Rabbi. Preach." But so many just cowed in the room, "Mmm this is so good."

And everyone around is like, "You understand this? Do you know what He is saying?" "Of course. I get it. You're an outsider. This is new to you. But this is what I do. I am on Team Jesus."

And then the moment they get back, they are like, "Alright. See you guys later. But, Jesus, really quickly, we're going to have to go back out there and do this again tomorrow, what are You talking about? None of us—well, I did, but Peter didn't understand. So, could you break it down for what exactly You were saying?"

And what He is going to do now, He's actually going to explain, not just this parable, but He's going to explain why He uses parables in the first place. Look at this in verse 11:

"He replied, 'You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders, so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled: "When they see what I do, they will learn nothing. When they hear what I say, they will not understand. Otherwise, they will turn to me and be forgiven."' (NLT)

Now, when we just read this on the surface it can sound harsh. I want you to remember the diverse crowd that is there. Everyone has different motives for why they are there. And their motives are going to show whether they come away with anything or not.



Those who were just there to see a miracle, to be entertained, they left empty. For those who were there neutral because they were dragged by somebody else, they left unmoved. But for those who wanted to know, they were brought to a place where they could understand the very Kingdom of God.

And the clue as to why Jesus is doing this is in verse 9. So, can you throw verse 9 back up here on the screen? Look at this. It says:

"Then he said, 'Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.'"

The difference is between hearing and listening. And we all know that there is a difference between hearing and listening. Right? Just so we're all on the same page, look at this. Here's what it means to hear:

### **The process, function, or power of perceiving sound**

It makes me think about... You guys ever take one of those hearing tests in school where they put the headphones on you and you're sitting there in a room really nervous. And they are like, "Raise your hand when you hear a beep." And you are like raising your hand many, many times, "How did I do?" "You did great. You got all of them and 37 that weren't there." "It's because I've got that dog in me. You didn't know I can hear things you can't hear."

But there is a difference between hearing and listening. Listening:

### **Actively paying attention to the words and sounds for the purpose of absorbing their meaning**

Now, some who were there were just there to hear. Some of them were there and were leaned in to listen. And I would say it is safe to say in this room and across all of our campuses that there are diverse crowds here today. And I would ask you in the most loving way: Why are you here? Are you here just because someone brought you? Are you here just in a neutral place?

What I would encourage you to do is the same thing Jesus was doing with this original crowd—not just to hear, but to listen. To absorb what He is saying, to take it in with the understanding that, "There is something I need to do with this living word from Jesus." Sound good?

So, let's take a look at this in verse 13. It says:



"Then Jesus said to them, 'If you can't understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables?'" (NLT)

In short, this is a parable about why He uses parables. This parable is also about what the Kingdom of God is really like. We've already said this. He's telling this story because He knows one thing that is true about humanity is that we are horrible listeners. Some of you are leaned over right now asking, "What did he just say?"

The first thing that we need to see is:

### **The Kingdom of God is like a seed**

If you are taking notes, I would write that down. The Kingdom of God is like a seed. And this is very different. That original audience would have known what it meant for a kingdom to come. They were ready for a king to come out and conquer. And what they got was a farmer who came out to scatter some seed. Different—both powerful. It's just going to look different. And if I'm expecting one thing, I'm going to miss what Jesus came to do.

It reminds me of Fred the tree. Anybody know about Fred the tree? Yep. No it's fine. I'm going to tell you all about it. My family went on vacation to the Florida Keys and we discovered something that the locals call Fred the tree.

Fred the tree is literally growing out of this bridge—this seven mile bridge. No one knows how Fred got there. A seed was dropped from a bird or something and this thing began to grow through the bridge—they say maybe 30 or 35 years it has been growing.

But here's the wild thing. If you remember, about 2017 hurricane Irma made landfall in the Keys. We're talking about 132 mile an hour winds came through that place—busted up everything.

When people came out the last thing that they expected to see was old Fred. But Fred is still standing even after all of that. This is what the Kingdom of God is like. A seed that found a way to grow, even when the conditions looked impossible, still standing no matter the storm. That is what the Kingdom is. And that's what Jesus came to bring. He says, "It's like a seed."

It's easy to look back now, but it had to be hard in those early days of the church, those first followers of Jesus, when the Roman Empire was trying to destroy everything, they had to wonder, "Is this really going to happen?" They were reminded that this is a seed.



I mean, I even think about our church. You know, sometimes people ask if Pastor Aaron started the church. I mean, listen. Pastor Aaron is old, but he's not that old. Alright? This church, Traders Point, started in 1834. I think Pastor Aaron was born in the spring of 35. He'll be fine.

But you've got to think about this small, little community, this trading post between here and out west, between here and Chicago. They knew the gospel, they respond, and they built a church. Just a few people showing up week in and week out. But a seed was planted. And they would never have gotten to see the fruit of their obedience.

Looking now, if they could know this. That 192 years later this one small church would now turn out to have campuses all throughout the city—that now over 14,000 people are gathering under the name of Jesus because of the seed that they planted.

Think about that. Those early settlers. Maybe they could do baptisms a few times a year. Just a small group of people and they would go out to the creek and they would baptize someone. Seeds were being planted and coming up and now, through that obedience, how could they ever know that almost over 200 years later, in one year's time, we would baptize over 2,000 people? It was a seed that was planted.

And I think I am here today... Somebody needs to hear this. God is real. He has done a real work in your life and you are growing impatient because it's not happening as big or as fast as you want it to.

I believe that I'm here to tell you, remember the Kingdom of God is like a seed. Don't grow impatient. Remain faithful. Trust that what God is doing under the surface will one day sprout through. Keep sowing that seed and one day a harvest will come. Does anybody believe that today? Our God is faithful. And the Kingdom of God is like a seed.

Now, what He's going to do, He's not going to leave us hanging. In verse 14, He's actually going to explain the parable for all of us. Okay? So, pick up with it in verse 14. It says:

"The farmer plants seed by taking God's word to others. The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away. The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word.



"The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced.

"And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!" Mark 4:14-20 (NLT)

This is the word of the Lord.

What Jesus is unpacking here as He goes line by line is this is exactly what I mean. So, let's get some particulars. What did He describe to us?

### **Farmer = God**

Well, now we know that the Farmer is God. He is the One who is scattering the seed.

### **Seed = God's Word**

And what is the seed? It is the word of God.

### **Soil = Our Hearts**

And what is the soil? It's not just some farm out there; it is the heart of humanity. It is our heart—me and you.

And the parable, if you remember, begins with a challenge from Jesus, "Don't just hear but lean in and listen." When Jesus gave these for the first time, this parable, the hope is that everyone would pause and ponder about the soil in their heart. As we unpack this, as we go soil by soil, this is the question, if you are taking notes, that I want you to have in your mind:

### **What is the soil of my heart?**

What is the soil of my heart in this season? Right? There are four soils. Four soils—let's look at them:



## **4 Soils of the Heart:**

**Footpath**  
**Rocky Soil**  
**Thorns**  
**Good Soil**

It's the footpath, it's the rocky soil, it's the thorns, and it's the good soil. Every heart in every room today is made up of one of these soils. And here me in this. This is not a death sentence. This is about awareness so that we know how we treat the soil of our heart so that it can become good soil. Sound good? Let's just go through this one by one.

### **The footpath represents a hardened heart**

What is the footpath? Well, the footpath represents a hardened heart. The footpath represents a hardened heart. It represents those who hear the message only to have Satan come at once and take it away.

And I want us to hold onto that. There is a real enemy whose whole goal in life is to keep you from receiving the seed of the Kingdom. It's not just you and God playing catch and Him throwing it. There is someone trying to get in the way and intercept everything that God is doing because he knows once the seed goes under and is planted and begins to grow roots, there is nothing he can do. There is a real enemy who is trying to keep you from not only hearing, but listening, to the voice of God.

So, I would ask you today:

### **What's preventing you from hearing God's voice?**

If you have that hardened heart, what is keeping you? I would say that it's usually one of two things. The first one:

#### **I don't want to know**

You may be here today but you are not here because you want to be here. You are here because it's a family thing. You are here because she is pretty cute kind of a thing. You are here because it's something to do or that you have always done, but you are not really listening.



And if you are being honest, you don't want to know. You don't want to know what Jesus said. You don't want to know what He has for your life because you like being in control of your life. And the idea of submitting everything to anything or anyone else sounds like a horrible idea. You don't want to know.

Or, I'd say the other place is just as dangerous:

### **I already know**

I already know. I know what God is about. I already know what the church is about. In fact, I already know what this parable is about. Mark, chapter 4—I've heard it. God doesn't have anything for me. I've already got it.

If that is you, this is what you need to do. You need to plow up the hard ground of your heart so that God's seed can be planted.

Hosea, who was a prophet, a mouthpiece for God, spoke on God's behalf to His people. He had a very similar message that I think applies to us. Hosea says:

"Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will harvest a crop of love. Plow up the hard ground of your hearts, for now is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and shower righteousness upon you." Hosea 10:12 (NLT)

How do we do that? It's not to go clean yourself up. It's not to work harder. How do we till up the soil of our hearts? Here it is:

We plow the hard ground of our hearts by seeking the Lord and staying curious about what He wants to say about every part of our lives.

We move from: I don't want to know to I want to know. We move from: I already know to I believe there is more to know. One of the ways that we say it around here is, every time we show up, no matter what we show up to do, whether it's at work during the week or serving, whether it's in a room like this where we are worshipping, we're saying, "Hey, I'm going to come ready. I'm coming ready."

"I'm showing up. I'm leaning in. I believe the word of God is living and active. I believe that my God is alive and on the move. And I believe that if I lean in I'm going to catch a glimpse. I believe that if I'm here and I'm present, I'm going to have an encounter with the living God who contains everything. That even if my circumstances don't change, me being with Him is going to give me everything I need."



Anybody here believe that today? I just want to come ready. See, that begins to change the soil of your heart, to lean in. Not try harder but get closer to God. That's the first soil.

The second soil is:

### **The rocky soil represents a shallow faith**

The soil represented those who did hear it, and they immediately received it with joy like a rocket that just hit—all about it, big smiles, all joy. But since they don't have deep roots, it doesn't last long. They fall away. As soon as they leave. As soon as they get confronted with the world and the everyday grind they stop. They feel themselves pull away.

And if that's you, here's maybe what that looks like. Maybe you had a mountaintop moment. You had an encounter with the living God. Maybe it was a spontaneous baptism. Maybe it was a Men's Night, a Women's Night. Maybe it was summer camp. And nobody could tell you anything. You met God on that mountaintop but as you begin to live it feels like you are moving further and further away instead of getting closer and closer.

Here's the thing. You can't live on that mountaintop. The Lord wants to take you where your roots can grow deep. You have to have the soil needed to support the growth that God wants to do in and through you.

Some of us want the fruit of the Spirit without the roots. And what God is calling you to do today is to get closer to Him. Not to just have a shallow faith, to have a deep faith. Roots need to grow.

That's why we literally offer something called Rooted. We really do. Something to help people grow deep in their roots. And if you are here for the first time and you are like, "There is no way, you are up there talking about roots and you have a thing called Rooted."

We do. Over 5,000 people have gone through it. And here's what it is. It is a 10-week, small group experience that is designed to help you connect with God, the church, and your purpose. You become deeply rooted to know and to do all the things that God has for you.

Sign ups are open now. You can scan this QR code. Our next one is starting in May. I'm telling you, if that is you, if you feel that drift, if you are being honest, "I'm not as rooted as I want to be, I don't feel like I have the purpose of what He has for me," this is the best place to start.



Now, the third one, the third one, if you remember:

### **The thorns represent a divided faith**

The thorns represent a divided faith. The parable says that the seed is planted but where it fell was among the thorns. And as it tried to grow it got crowded out by everything else that is going on around it.

And maybe this is you. Like you came and you believed the gospel but it's just one of the many things that you believe in. You are kind of hedging your bets. You're believing in the Kingdom of God, you want that seed to grow and to come up, but you're also scattering some other seeds of self-sufficiency. God's seed isn't growing quite enough so you are beginning to plant all of these other things.

Well, how do I know? What do those thorns look like? The ones that can crowd out the gospel? He gives us three here:

**Worry**  
**Money**  
**Desires**

He says there is a thorn of worry, money, and desires. And all of these things together cannot grow. And they are not even, necessarily, bad things all of the time. They are only bad because they are going to choke out what God and God alone can do.

Can I tell you why I think so many people come to faith at rock bottom? It's because everything else they planted has died. Most of us were given a description of what it looks like to have a good and healthy life, what it looks like to be secure. And we went after those things. We planted those seeds and we watered those seeds. And then a storm came. Life came. We realized that thing isn't standing any more.

So, we came to the doors of the church. We had a moment with God. We prayed a prayer. And God wants to do something that is real, something that only He and He alone can do. But everything else has to be cleared.

**What worries, desires, or pursuits are crowding out your trust in God?**



So, I want to ask you: What worries, what desires, what pursuits are crowding out your trust in God? And if you are taking notes I would just jot that down. What are the things that the Spirit of God has already bringing to the top? What are the worries? What are the desires? What are the pursuits that you have that, if you are being honest, that are keeping you from all that God has for you? They don't have to be bad, but they are choking out what God wants to do. They need to be removed.

And hear me. The answer is not just to hate these things, the answer is to fall madly in love with Jesus, to listen, and to believe that the gospel really is as good as it says that it is.

The truth is worries are real, before you follow Jesus and after. There is so much of this world you can't see, so much of tomorrow that you don't know what is going to happen. But here's what changes. You can't see what's going to happen, but now you know that there is One who sees you. You can't see into tomorrow, but you do know that there is a God who sees today, tomorrow, and every day after. And that gives you comfort. And four people are excited about that. I have a God who sees me. I don't have to worry. I can trust Him that He will take it on.

And money is still real. But here's the place that I've come to with the truth of the gospel. There is something that is more real. Money promises to provide security and freedom, but it is so fragile. But what if there is something that can truly produce the freedom and security that I've been searching for? And what if it's only found in Jesus?

And my desires aren't completely wrong; they are just disordered. But what if, when I begin to follow Jesus, everything falls into place? And I come to realize the desires aren't bad, but there is a hole in my heart, a God-shaped hole, that only He can fulfill.

So, instead of planting and watering all of these other things pretending... I have all of these priorities, I'm going to say, "Jesus is my priority." And we slowly begin to see the thorns of this world get broken by the gospel.

See, in the third soil, the seed can grow that wasn't the problem. The problem is everything else can grow. And because of that, it never gets to produce. It never gets to mature. It never gets to have the fruit that it was designed to have. And that's the difference.



Do you notice the difference between what happens in the good soil and every other soil? It that's the good soil produces, and supernaturally. The farmers back then, a good kind of ratio of earning would be 1 to 10. But Jesus doesn't use numbers like that. He says, "No, it will return a fold of 30, 60, 100. That is what Jesus wants to do in your life. What does that good soil look like?"

Here's the way that I would say it:

### **When God's word takes root, character changes, obedience grows, and the kingdom multiplies**

When God's word takes root, character changes, obedience grows, and the kingdom multiplies. That seed that goes into your heart, before it shows up externally, begins to do a work in your heart. When you listen and you believe the gospel, He begins to transform you from inside out.

You literally become like Fred the tree. Improbable, unexplainable, only by the grace of God you begin to live in such a way, you have a character that doesn't match your circumstances. People are watching you. You are living a literal sermon. They are like, "How are you going through that storm?" "How are you experiencing that hate and offering forgiveness?"

And over and over again you get to point to the grace of God. It is only by Jesus Christ. That's the good soil. The good soil yields what? It yields fruit. What kind of fruit? The fruit of the Spirit. How do I know that it is taking root in my heart and I'm showing up and the fruit of the Spirit is coming out? I'm talking: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. He's making room and we're getting to see the fruit and the power—the power of God is coming through us. The Kingdom of God is here. And He's using you to do things that you never thought you could have done before. You are conquering things that you never thought you could have conquered before. You are telling people about Jesus and you used to be the one making fun of people talking about Jesus.

That's one of the markers. It's a seed which multiplies. As you get going, and the love of God begins to overflow, you live out of that overflow. You can't help but tell everyone everywhere about all that Jesus has done and the gospel stays on your lips. And you become, not just a recipient of the seed, you begin to scatter and spread the word of God as well. That's what it looks like to have good soil in your heart.



And maybe you're there. And like I said, it's taking longer than you thought. And you are wondering, "How long do I have to wait? I want some of that fruit." Can I tell you it will probably take longer and be harder than you think it should be, but you are on God's timetable, not yours. You can grow something quickly, but what He's trying to grow can be sustained and never die. "How long do I have to wait?" Until you see a harvest. Until you see fruit.

I'm telling you, I'm leading a Rooted group right now. I've got a bunch of guys in their 30s mostly. And we just finished up week 10. Ten weeks, two hours a night, 20 hours I've been with these guys. And that's not including all of the devotional time, prayer time.

So, as we were closing out I just said, "Hey guys, if you look back 10 weeks can you see how God is moving in your life and in your heart?" And one by one we went around the circle and they said things, they thought they were small things, but to me I was like, "These are the big things."

They were like, "I can see my integrity has changed. I'm becoming a different person." Others would say, "I can tell that I'm present in the moment. I'm not so worried about what is going to happen, but I can really be there for my family." Others were talking about, "I'm beginning to pray more. It's like I'm walking with God throughout the day. And I'm saying I can see it."

And maybe the people around you can see it. Do not grow impatient. The work that God is doing, the seed has been planted, give it time to mature, give it time for that fruit to begin to grow.

And if you are here today, I just want to double down on this. No matter where your heart is, it can be softened. No matter what you've been through, no matter how much you think this is not for you, or you've done too much. I just want you to know there is a God who sees you, knows you, and wants you.

And for all of us, this isn't a one and done type of a thing, it's us monitoring the soil of our hearts. We all have different places in our hearts that maybe are a little bit hardened or shallow. Right? So, the question I would put before you is this:

### **Where is my heart hardened, shallow, or divided?**

Where is my heart hardened? Where is it shallow? Or where is it divided? The way I began to think about it this week as I was studying, my heart, what I'm about to do is I'm trying to say, how can all it be farmable to the things of God? How can the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit alone take up residence over my heart?



Like, this concept of following Jesus: discipleship, sanctification really what it is it's me giving little bits, little parts of my heart zoning it exclusively to the things of God. I keep giving more and more of my heart. And I notice spaces that I thought I'd given Him all, but then I give Him more and more and more and more to Him until it is Christ alone. That's the process that we are on. And we all have hearts that are divided, shallow, or hardened.

This is the active part. The seed is going to be given. He is very generous with the seed. But it is on me and you to guard it. This is a partnership. There is a book of Proverbs, a book of wisdom literature. And look at the way it talks about the importance of the heart, chapter 4, verse 23. It says:

"Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life." (NLT)

If you've never received the gospel, maybe you've heard it but you never really listened to it, this is for you. The best way to guard your heart and your life to determine where you are going is to give your heart to God. Today, if you hear God's voice, don't harden your heart. Think about this parable.

And for some of us, when you begin to think about the word of God, it's the seed. But there is another part in Scripture that tells us what the Word of God is as well. And it's the gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 14. Look at what it says:

"So the Word became human." The Word of God became human, the Word of God became Jesus, "and made his home among us."

I tell you, this story really comes to life when you realize that Jesus, Himself, is the seed. The Son of God that was scattered for all of us knowing that some of it would fall on the hard places, but He was willing to give His life for me and you. Jesus would leave heaven, live the perfect life that me and you couldn't live. He did have a softened heart, the good soil. He listened. He heard everything from God. And He was faithful. And with all of that He went to a cross for me and you to pay the debt to make the sacrifice, to defeat sin and death once and for all.

And I want you to think about this. The devil thought he had Him. As He was being nailed to that cross and then thrown into an empty grave, the devil thought he was bending down to snatch the seed before it ever got a chance to grow. But what we know is three days later Jesus was resurrected. Three days later Jesus would determine that all of us now have a chance at eternity with our heavenly Father. He didn't know that the Kingdom of God was like a seed and Jesus was being planted. He didn't know that Jesus was just the first in a harvest of many. And that harvest is still growing today.



You want to understand the gospel? It's this. God is madly in love with you. His death wouldn't be forever. And through that death He would extend life to everyone who hears and listens, everyone who listens and believes and places their faith in Him. And it's available to you. Seek Him. Offer your heart to Him.

I want us to close by reading James, chapter 1, verse 21. These words were true then. They are true today. James says:

"So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your soul." (NLT)

This is a call of repentance. This is a call to say whatever you've planted before, don't wait for it to die. Now you can hand it over. You can move to a place of saying, "God, I don't want this to grow. I don't want to water it. I want to do something new. I want Your Kingdom to come inside of me. I want you to birth something new in my heart. I want to confess that You are Lord and Savior. I believe that You defeated sin, death, and the grave and I want You to be Lord over every aspect of my life."

So, what we're going to do right now is we're going to enter into a time of prayer. We're going to trust that God's Word is still active, that He is still speaking. And I want to encourage you to listen to what He says and to respond accordingly. Okay? So, at all of our campuses close your eyes and bow your head and pray this with us.

Father, thank You so much for Your Word. God, thank You that even if it is painful it cuts through and it shows us what we didn't even know was there. God, I pray for everyone here today whose heart has been hardened, that they never heard or listened to Your gospel. They never received how good it is. It never had a chance to be planted. But I pray today is that prayer.

If that is you, pray. Jesus, I believe in Your gospel. I believe in Your Kingdom. I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You lived a perfect life. I believe You went to a cross for me. I believe You defeated sin, death, and the grave. I believe You are welcoming me into Your family. I believe in You and I ask, I confess that You are not just Savior, I want to make You Lord over my life. I want to trust You with all of my heart. Ask for it.

And for all of us, I pray that we could look at our heart and know that there is more there that needs to take ground in our heart. So, God, search us. Find the parts that are hardened. Find the parts that are shallow. Find the parts that are thorny. And God, I pray that we would hand them over to You and You would do something new. We give You the landscape of our heart. We trust You to guard it.



And, God, right now I pray for our whole church. That we would become that good soil. That Your Spirit would fall. The seed would go and it would reap a harvest. We are coming up on 200 years and we believe You are far from done.

So, God, I pray that Your Spirit empowers us. God, You do a work inside of us, our character changes, our obedience grows, we hear Your Word and we respond accordingly. That, God, we go from here and there is no storm that could stop us, no scheme of the devil, no power of hell. And Your Word would go forward.

God, I pray for the day, I look out and I believe, I ask for Your Kingdom to come. God, for You to take ground across Indy and beyond. God, I pray for You to knock down the gates of hell. God, I pray that everything that has been planted would be removed and only the seed of Your gospel would remain standing. Jesus, we ask all of this in Your perfect name. And everyone says: Amen.

