

Sermon Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23

Rest, Renewal, and Grace: The Good Farmer (Topical sermon on rest, renewal, and grace more than expository sermon on the particular passage).

NIV:

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

¹⁸ “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Probably verses 1 through 23, but perhaps the whole chapter of 4 parables (2 explained).

Subject: If God planted the seeds, and he is good, will he not also provide what is needed to produce a crop?

Compliment: God will provide what his children need to produce a crop.

Can good soil continue to produce crops yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown if not allowed to rest, if not renewed?

By God's grace God scattered the seed on all the types of soil, and by God's grace he will provide what is needed for the good soil to produce good crops.

Homiletical Idea:

God planted the seeds, God will produce the crops.

Introduction

You may be wondering why we read the parable of the sower as I kick off 9 sermons by different guest preachers for a sermon series on rest, renewal, and grace. Well, hopefully it will make sense as I go along. Today, I want to set some framework for what I think we need to know about rest, renewal, and grace. This is tricky, because I have no idea what the next 8 preachers are going to say.

Jesus' parables were often misunderstood in their day, and their meanings are often debated even today. However, we are in luck today, because Jesus explained this parable to his disciples when they asked. By God's grace he scatters seed on all types of soil. Not exactly a practice followed by most farmers, but consistent with who the God of the Bible is; gracious. (2 Peter 3:9) Let's read the explanation of the parable.

Now, this sermon is really geared for those of us who consider ourselves to be good soil. If you think you are one of the other three types of soil, don't lose heart. You may be too tough on yourself, or by God's grace, you and God may change your soil type in the coming days, weeks, months, or years.

For those of us who consider ourselves good soil (sounds sort of conceited doesn't it?) I want to look at what it means to be soil... good soil. Saying I'm good soil on one hand makes me feel boastful, then on the other hand, it is also humbling. I'm dirt. Certainly, I am necessary to grow good things, but I am not exactly the star of the show, the most important or glamorous player. Jesus compares us to dirt, which is probably not much of a step down or up from sheep. Thanks, Jesus! It is a good reminder, that God is the key player in growing his

kingdom and in our salvation. He plants the seeds, and he will produce the crop, we just need to be good soil.

1. For soil to continue to be good, soil needs rest.

- a. Leaving soil fallow used to be standard practice in farming. Allowing the soil to rest would allow it to build up its nutrients and be ready to produce a great crop. As irrigation and fertilization became common place, leaving land fallow fell out of favor so that farms could plant more land, be more efficient, make more money. But the practice is becoming popular again as it is sustainable, free, environmentally friendly, allows the use of less irrigation and fertilizer, etc.

Like soil, we cannot just produce huge crops day after day, season after season without rest. This is, I think, a large part of the reason for Jonathan's sabbatical.

Has anyone every been really productive after a good night's sleep, a relaxing weekend, a vacation? I think we know it is important and it works.

b. Why can we rest? Is it okay to rest?

- i. Sabbath was created for man, not man for the sabbath

- 1. ²⁷ Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Mark 2:27-28

- ii. Jesus completed the work on the cross

- iii. God never sleeps or slumbers (Psalm 121:4)

- iv. He who began a good work in you will complete it

- 1. Remember, we are not the stars of the show.

c. How can we rest?

- i. We have freedom. We are not bound by the law. The only truly wrong way to rest, is to not rest.

1. ¹⁶Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. Colossians 2:16
2. Romans 14:5 (one day holy... all the same)
3. We should be proactive
 - a. I wait too long... if you are thirsty you waited too long to drink. If you are tired, you waited too long to rest. Like me working on the family room.
 - ii. Jesus is our sabbath rest (Hebrews 4)
 - iii. Jesus take the wheel
 - iv. Sabbath day
 1. Rumney story
 2. On man considers all days the same.
 3. Mind/hands – hands/mind
 4. Time with Jesus
 - v. If the way you rest causes you stress, you should probably try a different method
 - d. Ask Jesus right now. Do I rest enough? Do I trust you enough to rest more? Would you like to spend more time with me? Is there a specific rhythm of rest you want me to implement?
2. For soil to continue to be good, soil needs renewal.
 - a. To continue to grow things, soil needs water.
 - i. Worship, teaching, fellowship, prayer, Scripture
 - ii. God has graciously given us everything we need
 - b. To continue to grow things, soil needs nutrients / fertilizer

- i. God graciously spreads manure all over us to help us grow and produce crops

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4

¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2 Corinthians 4:17

- c. Ask Jesus right now. Am I getting enough water? What source of water do I need to increase? What are you trying to grow in me through the recent manure you have spread?

God planted the seeds, God will produce the crops.

Conclusion:

Soil doesn't try to grow a tree anymore than the tree tries to grow fruit. These are natural outcomes when the right conditions exist. Our job is to continue to be good soil, and that requires rest and renewal. By God's grace he gives us everything we need; all we have to do is receive. All we have to do is trust. All we have to do is rest in his completed work on the cross, and his promise to complete the work in us.

but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint. – Isaiah 40:31

Prayer.

Benediction: Psalm 23:1-3a "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul."