

Matthew 13:1-23

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[0:00] Okay, guys, I have an envelope here. It's a very plain looking envelope, not very exciting, I'm afraid.

But I'm going to open it and we'll see what's in the envelope. It doesn't even seem very, almost, you'd think it might even be empty, maybe just a little bit of paper, I don't know. We'll see, let's see. Let's see what's in the envelope.

Okay. Okay. Well, I can see. What's in it? Well, I put them in the envelope, so I should know, really. So let's see. It would have been a bit of a fright if they'd not been there.

Oh, let's get them all. Right, that's it. It's empty now. I feel like a magician. Look, it's really empty. Right. Now, you've got very good eyesight.

What have I got in the palm of my hand? Seeds. Seeds. Yes, seeds. Do you want, let's just confirm that, just so there's no questions about that. Okay. How many have I got?

[1:04] One, two, three. It's not really relevant, but I'm just curious. Eight. Eight seeds. Now, do you know what these seeds are? Like, what they would, if I grew them, what, if I planted them, what, I'd be amazed.

If you do, I'd be very impressed. Lily, what do you think they are, these seeds? Like, what would grow from them? You need a closer look, obviously. It's fair enough. If you can have a proper. Well, they are apples. Whoa. Oh, I'm impressed. I am very impressed. Yeah, they're apple seeds. Very good. So, I'll tell you a story, right? This has nothing to do with explaining the parable of the sword, but I'm going to tell you anyway about how silly the minister is, because I thought, okay, I need apple seeds.

I need apple seeds. I need to get apple seeds. This was yesterday. I need apple seeds. Where am I going to get apple seeds? So, oh, Asda. There'll be apple seeds in Asda. So, I went to Asda, and they had all the flowers under the sun, all the vegetables under the sun, but no apple seeds.

Oh, no. What am I going to do? B&Q.; I'm at Garth D. You can picture the scene. B&Q; is the place to go. I went to B&Q;, and they had more seeds, more flowers, and more vegetables.

[2:11] They had melons. That was the only fruit they had. No apples. And then I thought, hang on a minute. I just need to open an apple to take the seeds out. So, it just shows how silly the minister is.

Anyway, so that's what I did. I opened an apple, and I took the seeds out. So, now, I like apples. And right now, I'm a little bit hungry. So, do you think it would be a good idea?

I like apples. I'm hungry. Do you think the thing to do would be to just eat these seeds, and they'd have a lovely, delicious apple taste, and if I ate all of them, eight apples or eight apple seeds, I'd be full and satisfied?

Would that be a good idea, to do that with the seeds? No, that wouldn't be a good idea. What should I do, or what could I do with these seeds so that I would be able to have some delicious, juicy apples?

Yes. What do you think? Plant them. Oh, plant them. Yes. Yeah, plant them. I think we're all agreed that planting them would be the thing to do. So, yeah, I could plant. Oh, I've lost one. Oh, no. Oh, well, I've got plenty more where those came from.

[3:14] So, I'll just put them there. So, yeah, I could plant them. Now, where would I plant them? Well, I want the apples. It's maybe a little bit selfish, but I want the apples, so I could maybe plant them in my garden at home.

Let's think of different places I could maybe plant them. How about, let me suggest some ideas, and then you can tell me if you think it's a good idea. So, some of you know my house. So, we've got a front garden, we've got a back garden, and on the side there's a driveway.

There's quite a lot of space. So, how about if I thought, well, we don't really need all the driveway, because it's like you could get like four or five cars in the driveway, and there's only two that need it. So, maybe if I planted some of those seeds in the driveway, would that be a good idea? No. Why not? Because there's no soil. There's no soil. What might happen?

Look, you can tell me. You should know what might happen to those seeds. You could round it over by a car. Well, there's that. Yes. I was thinking more in parable kind of direction. But, as well as that, what might happen to the seeds?

[4 : 15] Do you need your beak on to remind you? The bird might eat it. Yes. I know you were just under pressure to say that. You knew the answer all along. But, so yeah.

So, that wouldn't be a good idea. Now, again, if you know my house, or the house we live in, next to the house, or just along the side, there's a bit, there's a stretch there. There is soil.

So, we do have soil. But, we've put loads of stones there. So, these little stones that you can put. But, there is soil. Would that be a good place to plant them? Why not?

Yes, Lily, why not? Why not? Yeah. I think that's what, if we tried, something might try and fight its way through the stones.

But, it wouldn't work. Even the weeds don't get through those stones. And, weeds can grow anywhere. So, I think it would be very difficult for an apple tree. Now, another possibility. At the back of the garden, there's a bit where there's meant to be flowers.

[5 : 13] Meant to be flowers. There are plants. But, I don't know if you could really call them flowers. There's, well, some people say weeds are just flowers in the wrong place. I don't know if that's true. But, anyway, I think most people would call them weeds.

And, there's some nettles as well. But, there is space. Do you think that might be a good place to plant the seeds? What do you reckon? Lily? You're the expert on apples. Like, you recognize the seeds.

So, yeah, why not? Yeah, I think so. I think so. Like, I'm not really much of an expert. I think that's probably what would happen. But, we've also got a big lawn with pretty good soil, I think.

So, what if I planted the seeds there in the middle of the back garden? Would that be a good idea? Thumbs up if you think that would be a good place for my apple seeds. Right.

And, if we did that, and if we looked after it, we made sure it was good soil. We need to just make sure that it was good soil. And, we watered it. And, we made sure there weren't any weeds growing.

[6 : 14] After a while, these are gala apple seeds. I should have asked Lily if you knew what type of apple. But, that would have been a bit unfair. You would get, after probably, I was reading about this, it would probably take about five years.

So, you'd have to be very patient. But, after about five years, you would get loads and loads of these. Now, I bought five packets of six, which would be 30 apples.

But, I needed one for the seeds, as I've already mentioned. So, there should be 29 apples there. In fact, if it was a really good tree, you could get maybe, in one harvest, you could maybe get 1,000 apples.

Or, maybe even 1,500 apples. Just from one tiny little seed. How crazy is that? And, so, maybe, maybe we'll do that. Who knows? But, that's what we could do with those seeds.

Now, you'll have recognized, of course, that that little story about my apple seeds is very similar to the parable that Jesus told. And, that you acted out for us to kind of communicate the parable to all of us who are here this morning.

[7 : 25] Now, why did Jesus tell that parable? Why did he tell that story to the crowds who were gathered there? His own disciples, but lots of other people who were listening. When we read about the story there, or read about Jesus telling the story, we hear that the disciples were a little bit confused.

They didn't really know what it was about. They were thinking, you know, I imagine they were thinking, well, is Jesus trying to teach us to be farmers or to be gardeners?

Well, why would he do that? And, if there were any gardeners there, they probably would have thought, well, he's just being a bit patronizing or insulting because we know all that already. So, why is he telling us stuff we already know?

So, I don't think that's what he was doing. So, Jesus noticed that they weren't very sure what was going on. So, Jesus took the disciples aside and he said to them, look, I'm going to explain to you what this story means and what it's about.

And so, the different parts of the story, like the seed, especially the seed and the different types of soil, they represent other things. That's the idea of a parable.

[8 : 31] So, let's just think a little bit about that. Now, I know the children from Sunday school will know this already, but just as a kind of reminder to you and for the benefit of the rest of us. So, first of all, the seeds.

So, I've still got a few of them here. The seed, Jesus explained when he took the disciples aside, he said the seed is the word. It's the word of God.

In another account of that parable, in one of the other gospels, it says that the seed is the message of the kingdom, the message of the kingdom of Jesus.

It's a message about King Jesus and about how we can be part of his kingdom. So, the seed is God's word. It's what we have in the Bible. It's the good news about Jesus.

That's what the seed is. So, that's fine. We understand that. That's what the seed represents. And what do we need to do with God's word? What do we need to do with the good news about Jesus?

[9 : 31] Do you think that what we need to do with the word, the good news, is to maybe just keep it to ourselves, maybe hide it in a drawer? Or what do we need to do with the word, with the message?

Ariel, what do you think? Hear it with others. That's right. It's just like a farmer sowing his seed, so we need to share that message with other people. We sang from a psalm about somebody who sows his seed, and it's very difficult, but when the harvest comes, he rejoices.

And that's what Jesus is teaching us with the parable. He's saying you need to share the good news, the message, the word of God. And as you do, it might take time. You might not see something straight away, but there will be a harvest of people who hear and who respond to it and become disciples of Jesus.

And so, that's what you need to do with the seed. And if the seed is sown in the right kind of soil, it will produce a harvest. And that harvest will be in the life of the person who hears the word.

That person, that boy or girl or man or woman, will become a faithful and useful disciple of Jesus. But also, they will then be able to share that message with other people.

[10 : 46] And they can also become disciples of Jesus. So, like Jesus was saying in the parable, that that seed that was sown became 30 times or 60 times or 100 times what the original seed was.

And so, Jesus is saying, when we share God's word, that's what happens. That's what God makes happen. But it needs to be sown in good soil. Now, each of the soils, and you were able to show us all the different types of soils.

What was there? There was the pathway where the soil was very hard. Or what else was there? There was the stony ground. There was the, what else? Where there was the thorns. And then there was the good soil.

And each of them tells us about different kinds of people and how people respond to God's word. But what I'm going to do this morning is I'm just going to speak about one of those types of soil, which is the good soil.

Because I would hope that we, all of you, are good soil. And good soil that produces a harvest. And I'm sure that's what you want. So, for example, what would you rather be if you think of these bowls representing your life?

[11 : 59] And no, I can't do it with one hand. I'm not strong enough. Well, maybe I can. This is not wise. But what would you like to be? What would you like your life to be? Like this bowl full of fruit?

Or this empty bowl with a few seeds that don't really do much for anybody? What would you prefer? That, yes. So, for that to happen, you need to be good soil.

But there's something else. And that's what I want to think about a little bit. And that is that when Jesus explained the good soil in Matthew's gospel, but also you find in the Bible in two of the other gospels, in the gospel of Mark and in the gospel of Luke, you have the same parable.

And each of them are the same. It's what Jesus told. But each of them explain it or record it for us just slightly differently.

And it's quite interesting that when we're told about the good soil, we find that there are five things that we need to do to help the seed grow.

[13 : 02] So that there will be a strong harvest. Five things that we need to do. And that's what I want to think about or just tell you about this morning.

And let's see what they are. You'll recognize one or two of them because they're in Matthew's gospel where you've been thinking about the story. But there's one or two others you might not recognize. Well, so let's think about the first one.

The first thing you need to do with God's word if it's going to produce a harvest in your life. Anybody want to just try and tell me, even without me showing, what's the first thing you would need to do? Yeah, Noah, what would I? You'd need to? That's one of the things. But even before that, what would you need to do before you can share it? Listen to it.

Yeah, that's right. So one of the things that Jesus says when he's explaining the good soil, he says that people who are like the good soil, they hear the word of God now.

[13:57] But let's think about that because actually in all the soils, the people hear, don't they? So you know the parable better than most of us. And I think in each of them, it says that they did hear it.

So it's important to hear it, but it's not enough because some people hear it and then they forget about it or they hear it and they just ignore it. So you do need to hear it, but that's not enough. Are you thinking of some other things you need to do with it, Lily? Well, why don't we have a look? I've got a few things here. So let's see what I've got here and see if they're the same as what you're thinking. So first of all, it is important to hear it.

So before we move on, how can you do that? How can you hear God's word? Hannah, how can you hear God's word? Paying attention in church, that's one good way of hearing.

What else? Yeah, Aurel? We have to concentrate. That's difficult, isn't it? I find concentrating very difficult.

[14:59] Yes. Amara, what do you need to do to hear God's word? You're going to represent it by opening the Bible. That is very creative. Yes, that's right. You open the Bible and you read the Bible or you listen to your mom or dad reading the Bible.

And that's one way of hearing God's word. Now, there's another thing that Jesus says needs to happen if we're going to be good soil. Anybody want to guess what it might be?

Lily, do you want to jump in here? Okay, so like not just kind of hear but listen, which may pay attention.

Yeah, that's the idea. I've got another word here that we find. I think it's in Matthew's gospel. And it's this word here, understand. So, one thing's to hear. But the second thing we need to do is understand.

Now, let's just think about understanding for a moment. What if you don't understand? So, Jesus is saying it's really important to understand. If you don't understand, there'll be no harvest.

[16:00] You won't become the disciple that I want you to be. You need to understand it. Now, imagine you're thinking, okay, well, I want to be a useful disciple of Jesus. I don't understand.

What could you do? You say, oh, well, I'll just give up. What could you do? Right. Any ideas? Yeah, Lily, you go for it. Right. You can ask.

That's right. And there's different people you could ask. And you've gone straight to the heart of the matter. You can ask God to help you. That's right. We can pray, God, help me to understand. There are things in the Bible I really don't understand. I want you to help me to understand.

But do you think God places people in our lives who could also help us understand? Who else could you ask? Just shout out. Parents, yeah. Anybody else you could ask?

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Like a minister or yeah, yeah, yeah. Or maybe just, yeah. You could ask Jesus, yes.

[16:58] You can pray to Jesus and ask him to help you to understand. So you could ask maybe your parents or maybe your Sunday school teacher or maybe other people in church that you know. But you can also ask God, help me to understand.

So if you want to be good soil so that there's a big harvest and that harvest is a life that's pleasing to God, then you need to, first of all, what was it? You need to hear God's word.

Then you need to understand God's word. But there's another one, another word that I found, and it was in Mark's gospel about the parable of the sower. There's another one. Anybody want to guess what it might be?

Hannah, you want to guess what it might be? Whoa. Well, excellent. Yes, accept. Accept. So that's another word that Jesus used when he was explaining it. He said the good soil is somebody who hears.

Oh, no, don't, don't, don't. Don't cheat. Don't cheat. It's like when people nowadays, you know, you see the politicians, they've got a document or something, and somebody takes a picture of it, and they manage to work out what it says. But no, we don't want that.

[17 : 55] So hear, understand, accept. Now, what's that about? You see, let me just think about this, because some people can hear God's word, and they can understand God's word, and they think, nah, not for me.

I don't want to do that. So in God's word, it says not to gossip, not to lie. And somebody might say, oh, they understand it, but they say, no, I want to do these things. Or in God's word, it says that we should trust in Jesus and ask God to forgive us our sins.

And somebody could understand that, say, yeah, I understand it, but no, not for me. So you also need to accept. So accepting is about believing.

It's about trusting. It's about obeying. If there's going to be a harvest, if that seed is going to produce a harvest in your life, you need to hear it.

That's important. You need to understand it. But it's really important that you also accept it. That's where lots of people fall down. They hear, they understand, but they don't accept.

[18 : 59] So that's another one. But there's another one. Where did I find this? Some people might be interested in where I found these words. Which of the gospels? See if I can find it here.

So the next one. Oh, no, we've done these. I'm getting all in the muddle. That's these two I need. Right. The next one is in Luke's gospel. So the same parable of the sower.

And this is number four. There's five altogether. If somebody can guess this or knows this, I'll be very impressed. You'll get like a thousand brownie points. Anybody want to guess the fourth verb? The fourth thing you need to do here, understand, accept. Go for it, Ariel. Yeah. Wow.

I'm, well, I shouldn't, I shouldn't, I shouldn't, but I'm thinking you maybe just had a sneak, a sneak look of this. But maybe you didn't. Let's, I'll give you the benefit of the doubt.

[19 : 59] Retain. That's another word that we find. When Luke tells us about the parable of the sower, he tells us that the good soil is like somebody who hears God's word, understands it, accepts it, and retains it.

Now, retain is about keeping it, not letting it go, not forgetting it. I think retain is about having God's word with you all the time.

So it's not just about being able to answer questions like today. I ask you a question, you can give me the right answer. That's good. But retaining God's word is when you're at home, when you're playing with your brother or sister, when you're in the playground at school, when you're in the classroom, and something happens and you're thinking, what should I do?

And you're thinking, well, what does the Bible say? What does Jesus say? That's retaining God's word, having it in your mind for use always. And Jesus says, if that good soil is going to produce a harvest, that's something we need to do.

We can't just wait and hope that it will be all right. We need to retain God's word. That's number four. And there's one final one.

[21 : 11] I don't know if this was spotted by anybody, but does anybody want to try and guess? Yes, Lily, do you want to? Share, that's true. And Noah, you mentioned share, right?

Didn't you? The actual word that I found in the Bible in Luke's gospel is a different one, but it kind of has to do with it. But let me just show you what it is. It's a big word.

Persevere. So in Luke's gospel, Jesus is recorded as saying that the good soil is like somebody who hears the word, who understands the word, accepts the word, retains the word, and perseveres in the word.

Now, persevere is about carrying on day after day, week after week, and especially when things are difficult. So, you know, sometimes it's not so difficult to be a Christian to try and obey God when everything's fine.

When everybody is happy and nobody is saying anything against us, then it's not so difficult. But sometimes when we want to please God and obey God, people might say, oh, that's just silly.

[22 : 18] Why do you do that? Or why do you believe that? Or why are you a Christian? That's just silly. Nobody nowadays believes that kind of thing. And then it's difficult.

And Jesus is saying at those times, it's important for us to persevere in his word and to remain firm, even when people are teasing us or disagreeing with us or maybe are being nasty to us because of what we believe.

We need to persevere. And that's what lots of people don't do, grownups as well as children. We hear God's word. We maybe understand it. We maybe accept some of it. But then if the going gets tough, we forget about it and just do our own thing or go with the crowd.

And Jesus is saying that if our lives are going to produce a harvest, then we need to persevere. So those are five things that we need to do. So let's just see if we can get them.

I've got them all muddled up here. So let me, you help me to get them in the right order. What was the first thing? Just shout. Here. Here. Yeah. Okay. Here. That's number one. I'll put them all down here.

[23 : 25] That's what was the second one? Just shout out. Understand. There we go. Understand. Is there going to be enough room? Retain. Oh, you're right.

You're right. Oh, good. Somebody's, somebody's, somebody's. Well, no, hang on. Let's stick with retain. This hasn't been well thought out.

Right. Hang on. And the last one. Persevere. Persevere. Wait. Right. Right. I'm going to, we'll go, we'll do it. We'll do it like really fast. Okay. Okay.

You ready to do it like really, really fast? So remember what we're doing here. We're learning about what we need to do with God's word. Okay. So that there'll be a big harvest.

First of all, just shout. We're here. I'm here. I'm here. I'm here. We're here. We're here. We're here. Oh, I love it when a plan comes together.

[24 : 22] Right. Good. Right. So that's, that's what we need to do. And if we do, then our lives will be like this big bowl of apples, but even more. Because what did we, how many apples did I say there were here?

29. I think that's right. There might be 28 actually, because one might have been consumed at some point. But anyway, there's lots of apples, but there'd be even more in a proper harvest. And God wants our lives to be fruitful, to produce, to be a blessing to ourselves, to our family, to others. But if that's going to be true, we need to do all those things that Jesus tells us that the good soil represents.

It's people who hear God's word, who, what is it, understand God's word, who accept God's word, who retain God's word, and who persevere in God's word.

And my hope and my prayer for all of you and for all of us is that's what we would do. Okay. So let's, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word. And we thank you for the parable of the sower.

[25 : 25] And we do pray that each and every one of us here this morning would be like that good soil where the seed sown, uh, flourishes and grows into a great harvest, uh, of blessing, uh, to others, uh, as we become and persevere as disciples of, uh, Jesus Christ.

And we pray this in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.