

**Pastor Jim Lloyd**

**Date: February 28, 2016**

**Title: What Kind of Heart Do You Have?**

**Text: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23**

A World War II soldier who was part of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau, Germany, where thousands of Jews had been exterminated told this story: "A buddy and I were assigned to a boxcar. Inside were human corpses stacked in neat rows, exactly like firewood. The Germans, ever meticulous, had planned out the rows, alternating the heads and the feet, accommodating the different sizes and shapes of bodies. Our job was like moving furniture. We would pick up each body – so light – and carry it to a designated area.

"Some fellows couldn't do this part. They stood by the barbed wire fences retching. I couldn't believe it the first time we came across a person in the pile still alive! But it was true. Incredibly, some of the corpses weren't corpses. They were human beings. We yelled for doctors and they went to work on these survivors right away.

"I spent two hours in that boxcar; two hours that for me included every known emotion: rage, shame, pity, revulsion. Every negative emotion, I should say. They came in waves...all but the rage...it stayed, fueling our work.

"After we had taken the few survivors to a makeshift clinic, we turned our attention to the Nazis: the SS officers in charge of Dachau. Our captain asked for a volunteer to escort a group of a dozen SS officers to the interrogation center, and a guy named Chuck...his hand shot right up. Chuck claimed to have worked for Al Capone before the war, and not one of us doubted it.

"Well, Chuck grabbed his machine gun and prodded the group of SS prisoners down the trail. They walked ahead of him with their hands locked behind their heads, their elbows sticking out on either side. A few minutes after they disappeared into the trees, we heard the rattling burp of a machine gun and three long bursts of fire.

"Soon Chuck came strolling out, smoke still curling from the tip of his weapon. 'They all tried to run away,' he said with a kind of leer.

"It was that day that I felt called by God to become a pastor. First, there was the horror of the corpses in the boxcar: I could not absorb such a scene. I did not even know that such absolute evil existed! But when I saw it, I knew beyond a doubt that I'd spend my life serving whatever opposed such evil...serving God. Then came the Chuck incident. I had a nauseating fear that the captain might call upon me to escort the next group of SS guards; and even a more dreadful fear that if he did, I might do the same thing that Chuck had done! The beast that was in those guards was also in me. The beast within those guards, the beast within Chuck, the beast was also in me." [*Descending Into Greatness* by Bill Hybels, Zondervan, 1993. Pages 144-145.]

That soldier understood something that many people never quite get. He understood the fact that he didn't really know his own heart. He didn't know what he might do if he was called upon to escort his enemies. He had a concern that his heart might be wicked and full of all manner of evil. God tells us in Jeremiah 17:9 this about our hearts: "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" Apparently it's only a few that ever grasp the reality of their heart's condition. Of course, God knows all about it. He tells us this in Jeremiah 17:10: "*I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*" He knows everything there is to know about us. In our text today, the Parable of the Sower, it becomes clear that this is one of the lessons that can be gleaned from this passage. You see, Jesus knows your heart! The question for you is this, "How well do YOU know your heart?"

In today's portion, the Word of God addresses every person in this room – really every person in the world. Today He wants to speak to every person in this room. God wants you to be honest about your condition before Him and He'll even give direction concerning what you should do if you are found lacking. I suppose there may be many things about yourself and your life that you do not know, BUT you NEED TO KNOW the condition of your heart! It is the most important information you can know about yourself. We would all do well to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us and to find out what kind of heart we really have. Today's scripture is easily broken down into three parts: the SOWER, the SEED, and the SOILS.

1. **A Sower (v. 1-3).** "*That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A farmer went out to sow his seed.'*" In the work of the Sower, there are three lessons that become clear. **A. There is a Lesson in Devotion.** The Sower must be dedicated to his work. He knows that if he doesn't sow, there will be no harvest. In the work of the Kingdom, it is very important that those who sow

the Gospel seed be devoted to the work. Without witnesses, there will be no harvest (Romans 10:13-17)! There is a desperate lack of devoted witnesses who are willing to go out and sow the seed of the Gospel. Notice, this man sowed as he went forth. Psalm 126:6 – *“He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”* When was the last time you went forth in the Spirit bearing precious seed? **B. There is a Lesson in Discipline.** The Sower must discipline himself to the work of sowing. There were days when he didn’t feel like going into the field, but he went anyway. Perhaps you didn’t know, but there are days when the preacher doesn’t feel like coming to the pulpit. Any reasonable sower knows that without him going forth and sowing that the field will never become the harvest. If we so choose, we can sit here in the church while the world goes to Hell and act as if we do not care. Haggai 2:19a asks, *“Is the seed yet in the barn?”* The seed is to be dispersed FROM the barn. It is NOT meant to stay IN the barn. Seed left in the barn doesn’t fulfill its purpose. What is the purpose of the seed? Its purpose is to BEAR FRUIT. There will come a day of reckoning before the Lord and there will be an accounting if the seed is found to still be in the barn! I suppose we could have 12 services here today. The point isn’t how many services we have on a given Sunday. We can make good the proclamation of the Word in all of them. Much seed could be displayed in those services, BUT if the seed stays here, we might as well have kept the doors closed because there will be no harvest. The question isn’t how much seed is in the barn. The question is how much seed makes it to the soil. When we get to heaven I don’t know that God will ask you how many times you went to church on Sunday, BUT don’t be surprised if He asks what you did with the seed you were given when you did go. **C. There is a Lesson in Discouragement.** As the Sower scattered his seed, he must have known that ONLY about 25% would grow up to bear fruit. Yet, he continued to go forth and sow the seed. The Sower knew that even though 75% of his seed would never bear fruit, he had to sow it anyway. Else, there would NOT be a harvest at all! Our duty in the church is to go forth and obey the Lord’s command to spread the Gospel (Matthew 28:19-20). Growing the church is the Lord’s obligation. If we will do our part and sow, He will do His part and bring the harvest in its time! 1 Corinthians 3:6 – *“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.”* God gave the harvest, BUT it was contingent on Paul sowing and Apollos watering. IF there’s no sowing of the seed or watering of the soil, there’s nothing for God to bless. By the way, sowing isn’t just for the preachers and other paid workers. If you’re not a missionary, then you’re a mission field. Every Christian is to be a sower of the Good News (Matthew 4:19; Acts 1:8).

2. **Some Seed (v. 4).** *“As he was scattering the seed, ...”* There are three quick lessons to notice about the seed.
  - A. Its Worth.** The seed is the Gospel (Luke 8:11). When we go forth and bear the precious seed of the Gospel, we are carrying the most important message the world has ever heard and will ever hear. It is a living, powerful message! It is the message that the world needs to hear! **B. Its Weight.** The message of the Gospel has tremendous power! Just as seed can transform a barren field into a place of life and blessing, the Gospel can transform a dead and dry life into something that can bless men and glorify God. Hearing the Gospel and meeting the Master can forever change us – examples: Bartimaeus, Zacchaeus, the 10<sup>th</sup> Leper, Saul who became Paul, Me AND You! **C. Its Work.** When the Gospel seed lands in good soil, it will do its work! It has the potential to change every life it touches! By the way, it will work the same for every person!
3. **Different Soils (v. 4-8).** *“As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”* Here is where we get to the heart of the message and the HEART of the message is a message about the heart. One of these soils mentioned here represents YOUR HEART. You are on display here in the Word of God. **A. Hard Soil (v. 4 & 19).** <sup>19</sup>*“When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.”* As the Sower sowed, some of his seed fell on the hard packed pathway. This seed was never allowed to get into the ground where it could germinate. It lay there exposed and was eventually carried away by the fowls of the air. The picture here is of that person who hears the Word of God, but refuses to allow that Word access into his heart. It isn’t that this person can’t receive the message, rather, it is that he won’t! He has hardened his heart against the call of God for repentance and salvation. And, just like the birds in the parable, Satan is more than willing to help this person go forward in their hardness by stealing away the unheeded Word from their hearts. This is a very serious condition in which to find yourself! A heart that is hardened against the Gospel is a heart that, if unchanged, will eventually find itself in Hell! God’s advice to the hard hearted is found in Hosea 10:12 – *“Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and*

*break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.*" If you have allowed your heart to become hard, please listen afresh to the call of Jesus. He loves you and died for you. He desires, more than anything, for you to be saved. If you will open your heart to Him, He will give you eternal life and He will save your soul, washing every sin away! Is the HARD HEART a fitting description of your heart? This type of heart produces NO fruit! The hard hearted person is NOT a child of God! **B. Rocky Soil (v. 5-6 & 20-21).** <sup>20</sup>*"The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup>But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away."* This is soil that is shallow and filled with rocks. There is no depth here. The seeds fall on the shallow, rocky soil and quickly germinate. However, before they can produce fruit, the sun beats down upon them and because there are no roots which can tap into a source of life, they die. This type of soil pictures the heart of a person who hears the Gospel, understands it and desires the benefit of it, yet they are shallow in their commitment and never truly believe unto salvation. It seems that they respond not out of conviction, but from some other motive. Perhaps it is a desire to belong, or just wanting to bear the name of Jesus supposing that it brings some benefit. Whatever the motive or reason, the results are the same! When the sun rises, that is when persecution or trouble comes into this person's life, he/she will flee from their profession and will go back to the world. Sometimes, there will be a call to sacrifice or to follow Jesus without reservation and this type of heart cannot stand the heat. The one who has made a false profession will then wither away and drop out. This seed never produced any fruit and without fruit, there is no salvation. There are many who start out "gung ho," but never make it to first base. The reason? Perhaps they never really got saved! You can't tell how much gas is in the tank by how loud the horn honks! *"Not everyone who says, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the Kingdom."* **C. Thorny Soil (vs. 7 & 22).** <sup>22</sup>*"The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful."* This is soil that is unprepared for seed and is covered with weeds. There is ground there, and the seed is received and germinates, but as soon as the plant begins to grow, the weeds overpower the plant and destroy it. This soil represents the type of heart that responds to the Gospel in a positive manner and gives every indication that it is sincere and valid. However, it isn't long until the desires of the flesh or the cares of the world cause this person to turn from their profession and to return to the world they left behind. This is the type of person who claims Christ, but demonstrates no change of life. Again, this is a life of an unbeliever. There is absolutely no fruit being produced for God! It pains me to say that there are those around us who have passed through these doors or knelt at these altars who fit this profile. They come in, come to the altar, make a profession and hang around for a while, but after a time, they are gone. The heart pictured here, is the heart that loves the world, pleasure, money, freedom or whatever it is that this person loves more than they love God. In truth, they don't really love God because they do not know Him. They are still dead in trespasses and sins and a dead heart loves only dead things! **D. Good Soil (v. 8 & 23).** <sup>23</sup>*"But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."* This is soil that has been broken up, plowed under and tilled in preparation for the seed. When the seed lands in this type of soil, it finds a fertile place in which to germinate. There are NO HARD SPOTS, they have all been broken apart. There are NO ROCKS, they have been removed and the soil is deep. There are NO WEEDS, they too have been plowed away in readiness for the coming of the seed. When the seed germinates here, it produces a plant that grows strong. It is on its way to producing abundant fruit. This is the kind of soil every farmer longs to plant his crop in. This soil represents the person whose heart is soft and yielding to the call of the Spirit of God. This heart has seen the vanity of riches and the flesh life. This heart responds because it wants to be right with God. It comes because it knows it is wrong and the only way to be right is to yield to God. When the Gospel enters this heart, there is a life change and an amazing difference. This life produces fruit in abundance. THIS IS THE LIFE OF THE SAVED INDIVIDUAL! Does this type of soil picture what your life is like? Are you truly saved today? Now, I am not trying to make anyone doubt their salvation, but I do want you to be absolutely certain of where you stand before the Lord. Are you good soil today? I have spoken about bearing spiritual fruit today. Some might ask what spiritual fruit is. If you are really saved, there will be some things that will be evident in your life. Notice in verse 23 that not all plants yielded the same amount of fruit. Some were more abundant than others, but the point is, that ALL of them were fruitful to one degree or another. This is an encouragement to the sower! Of the 25% that bore fruit, all of it was abundant! What this tells the sower is that if we will do our little part – Sow as we go – scatter Gospel seed everywhere – God will take that effort and will produce a harvest that only eternity itself will begin to unfold for us! One corn seed can grow a plant that will bear thousands. Anyone can count the seeds in

an apple, but only God knows how many apples are in one seed! Therefore, go with the Gospel and share it joyfully to a lost and dying world! Let me say a word about the reason for all this talk about fruit being so important to proving our salvation. Notice the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:16-20 – <sup>16</sup>“You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup>A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. <sup>18</sup>A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. <sup>19</sup>So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.” **1. A Changed Life** – 2 Cor. 5:17; Romans 6:7, 13. **2. Righteousness** – Hebrews 12:11; James 3:18. **3. The Fruit of the Spirit** – Galatians 5:22-23. **4. Praise unto the Lord** – Hebrews 13:15; Romans 8:15. **5. Reproduction** (the law “after his own kind” introduced in Genesis 1:11-12) – The saint of God will reproduce! The bottom line is this: Good fruit is the evidence of salvation. Is your life bearing fruit for the glory of the Lord?

4. **Conclusion.** This passage of scripture describes four types of hearts. Like it or not, every heart here this morning fits one of these descriptions. Which is your heart? What kind of soil are you? If you have allowed your heart to become calloused and hard, then you need to let God do His work in your life. If you have made a shallow profession in the past, but have never brought forth fruit and you know you are still lost, then come to Jesus and receive Him into your heart. If you made a profession and never really turned loose of the world or the flesh and you stopped short of a total commitment to Jesus, now is the time to come to Him and get that settled today. If you are found to be good soil, then rejoice in the saving grace of Jesus and come before Him with a thankful heart this morning, and continue to do what you can’t help but do – BEAR FRUIT! However God has dealt with you, I encourage you to respond to His call. He will meet your need today.