



Mark 4:4, 14-15

*And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it...<sup>14</sup> The sower sows the word. <sup>15</sup> And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.*

Matthew 13:4, 18-19

*And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them...<sup>18</sup> Hear then the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.*

Luke 8:5, 11-12

*A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it...<sup>11</sup> Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. <sup>12</sup> The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.*

### Explanations

- A parable is an earthly story with a deeper meaning.
- The Seed is the Gospel: Jesus is the Messiah who lived a perfect life, died for our sins, and rose from the dead.
- The Sower is whoever shares the Gospel.
- The soil represents our heart condition in responding to the Gospel.
  - This parable is the key to all the other parables!

Mark 4:10-13 *And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. <sup>11</sup> And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, <sup>12</sup> so that "they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven." <sup>13</sup> And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?*

Isaiah 6:8-10 *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." <sup>9</sup> And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive." <sup>10</sup> Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."*

Q: So, what's the key, and why does it matter?

A: According to Jesus, not everyone who claims to be a Christian is a Christian.

### *The Hard Heart*

- Birds devoured the seed – 4:4 *And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.*

What does it mean?

- Satan steals the Good News before it takes root – 4:14b *when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.*

Q: How does Satan take away the word?

A: Lies. Fallacies. Preconceived ideas that "eat up" the Gospel before it's deeply implanted in our hearts.

### Steps to a hardening heart

- Allegiance to systemic, unconfessed, and unrepentant sexual sin – Ephesians 4:18-20 *They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.<sup>19</sup> They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.<sup>20</sup> But that is not the way you learned Christ!—*
- Pride and arrogance – Obadiah 3-4 *The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, “Who will bring me down to the ground?”<sup>4</sup> Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord.*
  - Daniel 5:20 – *But when his [King Nebuchadnezzar] heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him.*

### Symptoms of a hardening heart

- No need! I don't need anything. Life is good.
  - Confusing the Gospel as only Good News for people who are down and out.
- No! I have life figured out already. I have university degrees/financial success.
  - Unwilling to lean in and listen because of how much I think I know.
- Christianity is restrictive and oppressive.
- The Bible is outdated.
- There are no absolutes.
- Christians are hypocrites.
- I've got time. I'll follow Jesus...later.

Proverbs 28:14 *Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.*

*Reversing a hardening heart*

- Seek God in humility – Psalm 139:23-24 *Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!*  
*<sup>24</sup> And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*
  
- Put yourself in the path of God's Word – Romans 10:17 *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*
  - Hear the Word.
  - Accept it.
  - Walk in it.

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