

## Introduction

Many years ago when I was playing professional golf I sat on the plane next to the Chancellor of Rice University. Rice is one of the premier universities in America and I asked him what made Rice so special. He told me of all the Ivy League schools that Rice had the smallest student teacher ratio. He said that the smaller classes translated into a better learning experience and a better education. As I look back at my college days, there were definitely some classes that were significantly better than others, and class size did matter. In many of my smaller classes we could raise our hands and ask a question. We could also get with the professor after class if we needed help. But in some of the very large classes that I took, they held them in large theatre-type rooms that held several hundred people. There were no questions being asked. It was simply a lecture that you attended. My Management Information Systems (MIS) class was one of those. It was taught by a foreign graduate student, who was difficult to understand, and there were a couple hundred people in that required class. I got absolutely nothing out of the whole semester.

Most large churches are livestreaming their services or using Facebook live while the COVID-19 restrictions are in place. Because of the size of most of their churches, there are no questions and there is no participation. You simply watch a message. We are using zoom to do a video conference meeting so that everyone can participate. Because of our size, we are able to have participation, and we can also have a Question and Answer time. Last week, I had planned to do a Q&A time, but I got to the end of my message and forgot all about the Q&A. Please forgive me for not following the plan and giving you the opportunity to ask questions. Allowing questions and answers helps people to gain understanding.

What do smaller classes at Rice and our zoom conference calls have to do with our message? Well, in our text today, Jesus sits down in a boat and teaches the crowd. He taught in parables, which most of the crowd did not understand. After teaching the crowd, His followers and His twelve apostles privately began asking Him questions about the meaning of the parables, and He explained the parables to them. The Greek word for parable is *parabole* (Strong's G3850), which means to place beside or to compare. That means that our English word is a transliteration rather than in translation. They simply made an English word out of the Greek word rather than translating it. A parable is a simple story that is used to convey a moral or spiritual lesson. One of the things that I was taught about parables is that we should use the parable for the main spiritual truth, and not try to build doctrines over every little detail. This particular parable is given in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Jesus said to his small group of disciples and apostles that they were being given the mysteries of the kingdom of God but those outside were getting everything in parables. The outsiders were like my MIS class, they saw and heard but they had not understanding. Small groups are extremely important. At some point, we will have Connection Groups at the Connection Church so that questions can be asked and our body can gain further insight, understanding, and applications of the word of God. Today's message is not about small group ministry, but that is the context of the message. This morning we are going to cover the first parable, which is about a sower who went out to sow seed. Some fell by the road, a hard ground. He cast some seed in rocky soil. He cast other seed in thorny soil. Finally, some of the seed that he cast was in good soil, and it grew and produced lots of fruit. Our passage today is about four different types of soil. The soil represents our hearts. The sowing of the seed is about sowing the gospel of the kingdom. There will be four different responses in people when we sow or share the word of God with them. Our title could have been, "What Are Four Responses To The Gospel?"

### What Kind Of Soil Is Your Heart?

1. Hard Soil
2. Rocky Soil
3. Thorny Soil
4. Good Soil

(Mark 4:1-20) “He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. {2} And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, {3} “Listen *to this!* Behold, the sower went out to sow; {4} as he was sowing, some *seed* fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. {5} Other *seed* fell on the rocky *ground* where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. {6} And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. {7} Other *seed* fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. {8} Other *seeds* fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.” {9} And He was saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” {10} As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, *began* asking Him *about* the parables. {11} And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, {12} so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.” {13} And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? {14} “The sower sows the word. {15} These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. {16} In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; {17} and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. {18} And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, {19} but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. {20} And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

#### 1. The Hard Soil (Mark 4:3-15)

Many years ago when we were living in Georgia a friend of mine took me deer hunting. He taught me how to set up and climb a deer stand. He also took me around and showed me the deer trails. He had a keen eye and could tell where the deer had been traveling to and from. He knew where they were feeding and how they got there. He could tell where the bucks had been rutting. Of particular interest to me were the deer trails. Where the deer walked every day, their feet compressed the soil and the result was that a trail was formed. I had learned many years earlier when I took agronomy that the composition of the soil needed to have the right balance of soil, organic matter, and oxygen. In golf course management, we would aerate the greens several times a year. As golfers walked on the greens they compacted the soil. When the greens got compacted, the water would run off the green and it would not soak into the green down to the roots. In addition to that, when the greens got compacted, the oxygen was squeezed out and the roots could not breathe. Consequently, the greens would start losing color and would have dry spots. When we aerated the greens we put sand and organic matter on the greens and filled up the

holes that we had punched with the aerating tines. It was the same principle that the deer hunter was showing me. The constant treading of the deer hooves on a trail compressed the soil and no plants could grow, and a trail was formed.

(Mark 4:3-15) “Listen to *this!* Behold, the sower went out to sow; {4} as he was sowing, some *seed* fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up....{14} The sower sows the word. {15} These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.”

Some of the seed that was sown fell on this hard, compacted ground. It sat on top and did not germinate. The birds came and ate it up. Jesus explained that when the gospel is sown on hard ground or hearts, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown. There are going to be those that we share a testimony with and they do not respond. There are those that will attack you and persecute you. The Pharisees had hard hearts, and some of the people that Jesus was talking to were Pharisees and scribes who had come down from Jerusalem to persecute and/or destroy Jesus. When Jesus healed the man with the withered hand, He asked them whether it was lawful to do good or to harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill. They kept silent and Jesus looked around at them in anger. Jesus grieved over their hardness of heart. Notice that the Pharisees went out and began conspiring as to how they might destroy Jesus. Part of this parable was aimed at these Pharisees and scribes, who were hard-hearted.

(Mark 3:3-6) “He said to the man with the withered hand, “Get up and come forward!” {4} And He \*said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?” But they kept silent. {5} After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He \*said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. {6} The Pharisees went out and immediately *began* conspiring with the Herodians against Him, *as to* how they might destroy Him.”

I was hard-hearted like these Pharisees when I was a teenager. What changed my heart? What softened my heart? First, there were people who loved me and were praying for me. We need to pray for people with hard hearts. We can’t change or soften their hearts. Only God can change hearts. Second, we need to water them. Water softens hard ground. I believe that water can be many things. Water can be words of encouragement. Water can be testimonies. We need to water those with hard hearts. Third, we need to show demonstrate the love of God to them. There was a man going to Southwestern Baptist Seminary who would come by periodically and visit with me. I could see the sincerity of his heart. I could see the love of God in his eyes. We need to love those who are hard-hearted. We need to show them the kindness of God. We need to live in a manner that is worthy of the gospel.

If you share with someone and they reject you and the message you share, don’t take it personally. In John 15:18-21, Jesus said that if the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If they persecute you, know that they also persecuted Jesus. Some are going to reject you, just as they rejected Christ. Don’t take it personally. There are going to be some seeds sown on hard ground. It is not your fault that their hearts are hard. Our job is to faithfully sow the seed. We are not responsible for their response. (See Act 13:48 – “as many as were appointed...”) We are responsible for faithfully sowing seeds, not the results. We must be wise in our sowing and our dealings with people, but the results are up to God. There are times that we need to keep silent and just listen. But if the Spirit leads us to share with people and they reject the message, do not take it personally.

(John 15:18-20) "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you....{20} "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also."

## 2. The Rocky Soil (Mark 4:5-17)

The second type of soil mentioned was the rocky soil. It did not have much depth of soil, but it did have some at the surface. The seeds sprouted, but they were not able to put down any roots, so they withered away. Jesus' explanation of this soil was that these were people who heard the word and received it with joy, but because they were not rooted, when affliction or persecution arose because of the word, they fell away. Many times when we share with people, we do not know how much soil they have. We do not know what rocks are in their soil. Our job is to sow the seeds. When we sow, there will be some that will fall away when afflictions or persecutions come up in their lives. I personally believe that many of those who do not go to church today, but went at an earlier time in their life are in this category.

(Mark 4:5-17) "Other *seed* fell on the rocky *ground* where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. {6} And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away....{16} In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; {17} and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away."

In John 6, Jesus taught that He was the Bread of Life. He said that the bread He was going to give was His flesh, and that we had to eat His flesh and drink His blood. This was a difficult statement. In John 6:60 we read that many of His disciples said "This is a difficult statement." In verse sixty-six, many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. These people had eagerly embraced Jesus when they first heard Him. They saw the miracles, healings, and deliverances. They heard Him preach about the kingdom, but they were not rooted and when something difficult came up, they left.

(John 6:60-66) "Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?...{66} As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore."

In Hebrews, we are exhorted to encourage one another day after day so that we do not fall away. The Christian life is not to be lived out separated from one another. It is a community of believers and we need one another. When we are being afflicted or persecuted, we need that encouragement from one another so that we do not get hardened and fall away.

(Heb 3:12-15) "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. {13} But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. {14} For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, {15} while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."

I was reading some quotes by Billy Graham this week. He said that there were multitudes of people that had an emotional experience but had never made Jesus Lord of their life. The emotional experience is not the basis of our faith. Our faith must be in Jesus Christ and nothing else. In an article he wrote entitled, “**What I Would Do To Change The Church**”, Billy Graham gave seven things. I won’t read the whole article, but I would be happy to send it to those who would like a copy. His second point is a genuine conversion. He said that **after preaching the gospel all over the world, he was convinced that there are great hordes of people loosely identified with the church who have never experienced scriptural conversion.** I believe that Billy Graham is acknowledging what Jesus taught in this parable. There are many who received the word with joy, but never got grounded. They never had a genuine conversion.

- a. I would call the church back to biblical authority.
- b. **I would suggest that every member of the church begin where the disciples began—at genuine conversion. Jesus said, “By their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:20). The very fact that the fruit of the Spirit, such as love, joy and peace (Galatians 5:22), does not characterize average professing Christians indicates that they have never had a genuine experience with God. After preaching all over the world and observing the work of the church, I am convinced that there are great hordes of people loosely identified with the church for various reasons who have never experienced scriptural conversion.**
- c. I would teach the necessity of the infilling of the Holy Spirit.
- d. I would call the church back to biblical discipline. The Scripture says that the Christian is to live a life separated from the evils of the world.
- e. I would teach the centrality of Christ. (Acts 17:28)
- f. I would call the church back to the thrill, excitement, joy and expectancy of the early church.
- g. I would call the church to a new relevancy.

Sometimes we have done a disservice with the gospel. We promise a life insurance policy if you say this prayer. Jesus told people that they could not be His disciple if they did not hate their own family or their own life. Jesus does not want us hating our family or our own lives. He meant that we must love God and put Him above every other relationship. He said that whoever did not take up his cross could not be His disciple. Jesus told people that they needed to count the cost. He did not make it easy. (See Luke 14:25-33.) In Romans 10:9-10, we find that we must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and we must confess Him as Lord. When we confess Jesus as Lord, we are telling Him that He is Lord of our life. We are giving up the reigns to our lives and submitting to His rule and reign in our lives. That is the starting point.

Billy Graham said there are hordes of people loosely identified with the church. I believe there are millions of people who call themselves Christians but are not part of a local church. When a problem came up, they got hurt and left the church. Some of these are genuinely believers. But, I believe that many of these were like the rocky soil; they immediately received the word with joy, but they are not rooted and when a problem came up, they left the community of believers.

When people receive the word of God, it is important to begin to disciple them. In a discipleship program we have to encourage people to get into the word of God. We must get people rooted and grounded in God’s word.

### 3. The Thorny Soil (Mark 4:7-19)

The third type of soil was the thorny soil. Some of the seed was sown where there were also thorny seeds. The thorny seed came up and choked the good seed so that it yielded no crop. Jesus explained that these are the ones who heard the word, but the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word and it becomes unfruitful.

(Mark 4:7-19) “Other *seed* fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop....{18} And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, {19} but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

A few years ago a man and his wife came to the church I was pastoring at that time. Since he was a visitor I went out of my way to greet him after the service. He asked me if I believe in the “name it and claim it” doctrine. I told him that I believed that if we pray anything according to His will, we will receive it. I told him that when we have two or three agree about something, we are agreeing that this is God’s will. We can’t find two or three to agree with us that we will get a new jet or yacht or million dollars. That may not be God’s will. We are to pray in Jesus’ name, which means that we are doing kingdom business in His behalf. The man said he could not go to church with us because he believed in the name it and claim it doctrine. We have to be very careful what we tell people in the gospel message. Gaining worldly things was not the reason for receiving Christ.

In Mark 10, a rich young man came to Jesus and asked Him what he needed to do to have eternal life. Jesus told him to go sell all his possessions and give it to the poor and then to come follow Him. The man went away saddened and grieving because He owned much property.

(Mark 10:17-22) “As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”...{21} Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” {22} But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.”

The thorny soil indicates a heart that is still trusting in worldly things and still seeking worldly possessions. The rich young ruler loved material things. Notice what John said in 1 John 2:15-17. He said that we are not to love the world nor the things in the world. If we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us. All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

(1 John 2:15-17) “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. {17} The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”

I want to make some comments about these three soils before I go to the last soil. The parable is about the different responses that we will get when we sow the gospel. There are different responses. The main idea of the passage is not about how to tell if someone is saved or not. Most scholars say that only the fourth soil, the good soil, represents those who are saved. That is probably correct, but that is not the main point of the passage. In John 15, Jesus said that He chose us that we might bear fruit. God wants us to be fruitful. It is only the fourth soil that is fruitful. It takes the right soil or right heart to bear lots of fruit.

(John 15:16) “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

I spoke for nearly half an hour with Jim Elliff last Sunday about this passage. I told him that when I became a Christian, I was not well rooted. I told him that over time God got me rooted. I told him that there were worries and worldliness in my life after I prayed to receive Christ. God had to deal with me about each and every issue. There has been a process of sanctification. I mentioned Proverbs 4:18 that says that the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter until the full day. My life looks more like Christ now than it did forty-two years ago. That did not mean that I was not saved. That does not mean that when we receive Christ that we are instantly rooted and every sin pattern in our life has been eradicated.

(Pr 4:18) “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.”

Jim agreed with what I said, but he added that there should be fruit in our lives when we come to Christ. There should be changes as a result of coming to Christ. Jim cautioned me about over analyzing the passage. We are both in agreement that the passage is about the responses that we get when we share the gospel. It is about four types of hearts. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and have received Him into your life and confessed Him as Lord, then you should see evidence of this new life. The old things pass away and new things come.

(2 Cor 5:17) “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

If God convicts you of worldliness or worry, simply repent and confess your sin before Him. Ask Him to forgive you and to cleanse you from that unrighteousness. As Billy Graham said it, we should see the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We should have evidence in our lives of our relationship with Christ. If we do not see that evidence, we should examine ourselves. Notice what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 13:5, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test.

(2 Cor 13:5) “Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?”

#### 4. The Good Soil (Mark 4:8-20)

Now, for the fourth type of soil, the good soil. Some seeds were sown into good soil. The seed in the good soil grew and increased and yielded a crop of thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. There was not a lot of explaining that Jesus had to do. Those who had good soil bore lots of fruit. That is the kind of soil that I want in my life. I want to bear thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold fruit.

(Mark 4:8-20) “Other *seeds* fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold...{20} And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

In Luke’s account, we find that the good soil is one with an honest and good heart. It also says that it bears fruit with perseverance. I love these three things. We must be honest people if we want to bear fruit. I place a lot of emphasis on honesty. There are not many things that ruin our credibility more than being dishonest. God places a lot of emphasis on being men and women of truth. We must always speak truth. If people can trust you to always be truthful, you will have opportunities to minister to them. They will open up to you if they trust you.

(Luke 8:15) “But the *seed* in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.”

Our industry has been in a terrible downturn for six years. I have asked God to help me learn to persevere in these difficult times. I want to be one who perseveres because I want to bear fruit. Many years ago I was walking around our neighborhood in Orlando, Florida and as I was praying, the Holy Spirit gave me a spiritual download. He gave me a song out of 2 Peter 1:5-8. In this passage God tells us that if we have these certain qualities and they are increasing, they will render us neither useless nor unfruitful. Let me translate that in a positive way. If we have these qualities and they are increasing, we will be useful and fruitful. Notice that perseverance is right in the middle of these key qualities that we must have.

(2 Peter 1:5-8) “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, {6} and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, {7} and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. {8} For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I don’t think the sower knew the condition of the hearts that he was sowing into; only God knows. If the sower knew which soil was good, he might not have wasted any seeds on the first three soils. I am glad that when my heart was hard, there was someone who sowed the gospel. I am glad that even though there were some rocks and thorns in my life, someone still sowed the gospel. Paul wrote that the gospel is the power for salvation to all who believe. Our job is to sow seeds and to keep sowing seeds. There will be some seed that falls on good soil and will bear lots of fruit.

(Rom 1:16) “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

## Conclusion and Applications

Today, we looked at four different types of soils. Jesus told a parable about a sower who sowed seeds in the four different types of soils. There is the hard soil by the road that had been trampled on by people and animals. When the seed fell on the hard soil, it would not grow. The second kind of soil was the rocky soil. The plants would germinate but because of the rocks they could not establish a good root system and they did not bear fruit. The third soil was the thorny soil. Like the rocky soil, the seeds would germinate and sprout up, but the thorny plants would rob the plants of the water, nutrients and sunlight and would choke out the good plants. Finally, there was the good soil. When the seed was cast on it, the seeds would germinate, the plants would grow and would produce a crop of thirty fold, sixty fold and a hundred fold. We looked at the four different types of soils, which represent our hearts. The question in our passage this morning is what kind of soil is your heart?

I want to make a couple final comments on this passage before fielding any questions. First, if you see yourself as someone who has rocky soil, and you know that you have a relationship with Christ, don't get discouraged or feel condemned. I mentioned Proverbs 4:18 that we are all learning to make our paths brighter and brighter to the full day. We are in a sanctification process. The theologians call it progressive sanctification. Let me encourage you to do three things. First, spend time reading and meditating on God's word. When God shows you something that you need to do, be obedient. Let God's word perform its work in your life. God will remove stones and increase the depth of soil in your life. Second, get involved in a good Bible-teaching church. People need to be fed God's word. We need to be in the word ourselves, but we also need the teaching and equipping from pastors. Third, get involved in the small groups. Eventually, we will have Connection Groups. A lot of growth and maturity happens in the context of small groups.

If you are here and you feel like the worries of the world and the cares of life are robbing you of your fruitfulness. They are weighing you down. If you know that you have made a commitment to Christ, and you have a relationship with Him, let me encourage you to do three things. First, make Jesus Lord of every area of your life. He must be pre-imminent and Lord. Get your priorities right. Second, memorize some Scriptures about anxieties and worry. Philippians 4:6-8 is a great place to start. 1 Peter 5:7 is another good one. Use your concordance and find some scriptures to memorize and meditate on. If you come to me, I can help you with some of these. I had to memorize a lot of these so that I could learn to trust God in all circumstances. Third, if God convicts you of things, confess them as sin and repent of them. Allow the Holy Spirit to remove these thorny things that can choke your spiritual life and rob you of fruit.

If you know that you have good soil and you are bearing fruit, rejoice. First, keep abiding. Keep abiding in the Lord so that you can continue bearing more fruit. In John 15:4-5, Jesus said if we abide in Him we will bear much fruit. God chose us to bear fruit, so keep abiding in Him. Second, keep abounding. In 1 Corinthians 15:58, Paul said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord."

If you have never received Christ into your life, you can receive Him right now. In Romans 10:9-10, we must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. Second we must confess Him as Lord. You could pray with me... "Father God, I believe that You raised Jesus from the dead. I want to receive You into my life. I now confess Jesus as Lord of my life. Amen."

**Introduction** (Mark 4:1-20)

**1. The Hard Soil** (Mark 4:3-15, 3:3-6, John 15:18-20)

**2. The Rocky Soil** (Mark 4:5-17, John 6:60-66, Rom 10:9-10)

**What I Would Do To Change The Church** – Billy Graham

- a. I would call the church back to biblical authority.
- b. I would suggest that every member of the church begin with genuine conversion. (Matt 7:20)
- c. I would teach the necessity of the infilling of the Holy Spirit.
- d. I would call the church back to biblical discipline. The Scripture says that the Christian is to live a life separated from the evils of the world.
- e. I would teach the centrality of Christ. (Acts 17:28)
- f. I would call the church back to the thrill, excitement, joy and expectancy of the early church.
- g. I would call the church to a new relevancy.

**3. The Thorny Soil** (Mark 4:7-19, 10:17-22, 1 John 2:15-17, John 15:16, Pr 4:18, 2 Cor 5:17, 13:5)

**4. The Good Soil** (Mark 4:8-20, Rom 1:16, Luke 8:15, 2 Pet 1:5-8)

**Conclusion and Applications** (Pr 4:18, Phil 4:6-8, 1 Peter 5:7, 1 Cor 15:58)