



Soil Improvement

Preparing for Fruitfulness



The Parable of the Sower – Mark 4

- Four Types of Soil
 - Wayside
 - Stony ground
 - Thorny ground
 - Good Soil
- Three of the four types of soil were unfruitful
- What can be done about unfruitful soil?



Soil Improvement: The Wayside

Mark 4:15 ESV

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.



Soil Improvement: The Wayside

- Problem: The ground has been used for many other things than serving God, and is therefore hardened and unfit for receiving God's word
- Solution: Improve the ground by plowing and tilling



Hosea 10:12

(12) Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love; break up your fallow
ground, for it is the time to seek the
LORD, that he may come and rain
righteousness upon you.



Soil Improvement: Thorny Ground

Mark 4:18-19 ESV

And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.



Soil Improvement: Thorny Ground

- Problem: Worldly riches and pursuits consume all the time and attention. The pursuit of spiritual things is choked out.
- Solution: The thorns and weeds must be pulled out



Jeremiah 4:3

(3) For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns."



Isaiah 5:6

(6) I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.



Soil Improvement: Rocky Ground

Mark 4:16-17 ESV

And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. 17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.



Soil Improvement: Rocky Ground

- Problem: A shallow faith and commitment to God
- Solution: The rocks must be removed

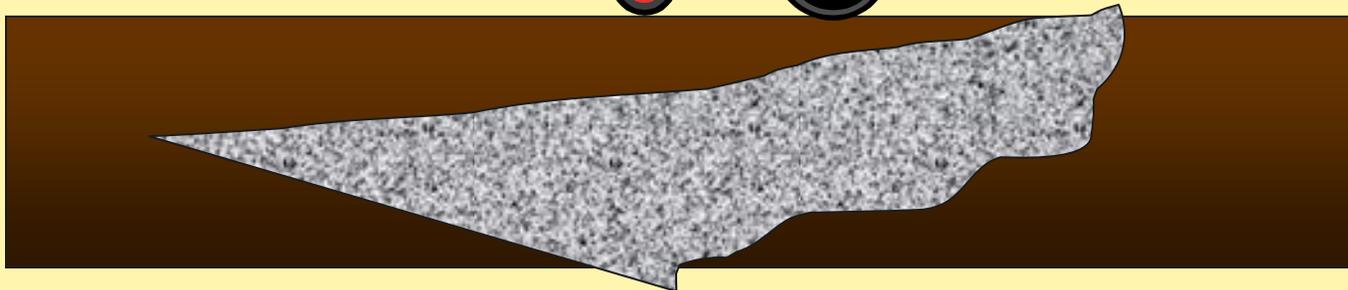


Stony Ground

- On the surface:



- Underneath:





Amos 6:12

(12) Do horses run on rocks? Does one plow there with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood--



Soil Improvement: God's Work

- God is also involved in preparing the hearts of men to be fruitful
- The Wayside (Mic. 3:11-12; Jer. 26:17-19)



Micah 3:11-12

- (11) Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us."
- (12) Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.



Soil Improvement: God's Work

- God is also involved in preparing the hearts of men to be fruitful
- The Wayside (Mic. 3:11-12; Jer. 26:17-19)
- Thorny Ground (Isa. 10:17-19; Heb. 6:7-8)



Hebrews 6:7-8

- (7) For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.
- (8) But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.



Soil Improvement: God's Work

- God is also involved in preparing the hearts of men to be fruitful
- The Wayside (Mic. 3:11-12; Jer. 26:17-19)
- Thorny Ground (Isa. 10:17-19; Heb. 6:7-8)
- Rocky Ground (Eze. 11:17-20; 36:25-27)



Ezekiel 11:17-20

- (17) Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.'
- (18) And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations.
- (19) And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,
- (20) that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.



Ezekiel 36:25-27

- (25) I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.
- (26) And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
- (27) And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.



Soil Improvement: God's Work

- God is also involved in preparing the hearts of men to be fruitful
- The Wayside (Mic. 3:11-12; Jer. 26:17-19)
- Thorny Ground (Isa. 10:17-19; Heb. 6:7-8)
- Rocky Ground (Eze. 11:17-20; 36:25-27)
- Good Soil (Mark 4:20; John 15:1-2)



Mark 4:20 ESV

But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."



John 15:1-2

- (1) "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.
- (2) Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.



What God Does to Increase Fruitfulness

- Is varied - Isa 28:24ff



Isaiah 28:24-29

- (24) Does he who plows for sowing plow continually?
does he continually open and harrow his ground?
- (25) When he has leveled its surface, does he not scatter
dill, sow cumin, and put in wheat in rows and barley in
its proper place, and emmer as the border?
- (26) For he is rightly instructed; his God teaches him.
- (27) Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is a
cart wheel rolled over cumin, but dill is beaten out with a
stick, and cumin with a rod.
- (28) Does one crush grain for bread? No, he does not
thresh it forever; when he drives his cart wheel over it
with his horses, he does not crush it.
- (29) This also comes from the LORD of hosts; he is
wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.



What God Does to Increase Fruitfulness

- Is varied - Isa 28:24ff
- Is effective



What God Does to Increase Fruitfulness

- Is varied - Isa 28:24ff
- Is effective
- Is disruptive



What God Does to Increase Fruitfulness

- Is varied - Isa 28:24ff
- Is effective
- Is disruptive
- Is ongoing



What God Does to Increase Fruitfulness

- Is varied - Isa 28:24ff
- Is effective
- Is disruptive
- Is ongoing
- Does not override our free will - Luke 13:6-9; Isa. 5



Luke 13:6-9

- (6) And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.
- (7) And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?'
- (8) And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure.
- (9) Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"



Isaiah 5:1-7

- (1) Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.
- (2) He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.
- (3) And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, **judge between me and my vineyard.**
- (4) What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?



Isaiah 5:1-7

- (5) And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.
- (6) I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.
- (7) For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!



The Goal of Soil Improvement

- The Joy of Fruitfulness



Amos 9:13-15

- (13) "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.
- (14) I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.
- (15) I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them," says the LORD your God.



Hosea 10:12

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.



Isaiah 55:10-13

(10) "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

(11) so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

...

(13) Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."



Soil Improvement

- My Work
 - Sow righteousness
 - Reap love
 - Break up my fallow ground
 - Pull up the thorns
 - Dig out the rocks
 - Keep sowing, fertilizing, weeding and watering the Word of God in my heart
- God's Work
 - He plows
 - He burns
 - He softens hearts
 - He prunes
 - He provides the seed
 - He gives the increase