

*The Parable of the Sower (Family Worship Sunday)*

*Mark 4:3-9*

*Bellevue Baptist Church*

*March 29, 2026*

Kids, there's something Jesus said that might surprise you. He said that unless grownups become more like little children, their lives will not turn out like they'd hoped.

**“Truly I tell you,” Jesus said, “unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” - Matthew 18:3**

Did you know that Jesus said that?

Isn't that wild? All of us grownups have the same assignment—as we get older and older, and our skin wrinklier and wrinklier—what are we supposed to do? We are supposed to spend time with little kids and learn lessons from them!

And here, all along, you thought it was your job to become more like the old people! Yes, in some ways, that's true—those with life experience can show you a thing or two—but believe it or not, the aged must take caution lest we become old fuddy-duddies.

Now that may be a new term to you, fuddy-duddy. But I looked it up online, and a definition was readily available:

**A "fuddy duddy" is a slang term for a person who is old-fashioned, fussy, and overly preoccupied with traditions. It often describes someone resistant to change or new ideas. Synonyms include old fogey, stick-in-the-mud, and dinosaur.**

You see, age is a state of mind. There are 75-year-old people that have stayed young at heart. And there's the opposite too. Occasionally you will meet an older person that looks like they just ate something sour, it is likely that they fell under the curse of the fuddy-duddy. Unless we turn and become like little children, unless we learn from little kids, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

But what does that mean? In what ways should old guys like me and Ken Hindman take our cues from children? Should we go back to eating Pop-Tarts for breakfast? I'd be fine with that. Should we go back to the pajamas we used to wear as kids? I'd be fine with that too!

No, I don't think this is what Jesus or our wives really hope for. Jesus isn't talking about Pop-Tarts and pajamas. When Jesus says that we should become like little children, he's talking about the way that a child naturally trusts their parents. Children naturally

trust their parents, and even when we are 50 years old, we should trust our heavenly father.

There's that, but also, I think Jesus is referring to the way a child looks up at the sky with eyes of wonder. Even as we grow older, we should keep believing that all things are possible with God. We should not allow life to rob us of our imagination.

In a wonderful book called *Honey for a Child's Heart*, the author Gladys Hunt says:

**Children are the freest and most imaginative of creatures. They love the fun of words and have a spectacular ability to learn. We must respect their eagerness by introducing them to good books. –Gladys Hunt, *Honey for a Child's Heart***

Amen to that! Kids love words, and they love stories—stories about a starving worm who eats up all the snacks. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* is one of the best-selling children's stories of the last twenty years. Why wouldn't it be? Who isn't interested in a caterpillar who can't stop eating ice cream and pickles?

We remember this story because the pictures are colorful, the story is fun. And we relate to a good story. And that's exactly why Jesus loved to tell stories. When Jesus spoke to grown-up people, He clearly saw them as just little kids who now lived in grown-up bodies. Jesus told stories to grownups and one time, he made up a little tale about a farmer who threw seed in all directions.

That's one of my favorite ones he ever told, and it's found in the Gospel of Mark: Let's read it together, in Mark 4:3...

**<sup>3</sup>“Listen! Consider the sower who went out to sow. <sup>4</sup>As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. <sup>5</sup>Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn't have much soil, and it grew up quickly, since the soil wasn't deep. <sup>6</sup>When the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it didn't produce fruit. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good ground and it grew up, producing fruit that increased thirty, sixty, and a hundred times.” <sup>9</sup>Then he said, “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen.” Mk 4:2–9**

Just like that Hungry Caterpillar—some people come to church hungry for the Bible, excited to hear the stories Jesus shared. Those are the good-soil people—that's who we want to be. But others, Jesus says, they aren't hungry for God at all.

And that's what this story is about—it's not actually about dirt, but about the different types of people that hear the words of Jesus but respond in different ways.

Did you notice, there are four soils Jesus describes? Let's go through them one by one and see what we can learn, shall we?

*Soil One: the hard soil*

Once upon a time, Jesus said, there was a farmer with a very big bag of seed!

He had so much seed that he was certain one day it would turn into a thousand plants. A seed is something that has huge potential. Have you ever planted a seed? If you have, then you know that when that little thing is pushed under the right kind of dirt, when it's given the right amount of water, and the right amount of sunshine, something magical happens. It comes up from the Earth, like a caterpillar turned to butterfly. It's more beautiful and much bigger than it what it started as. That's what happens to people who ask Jesus into their hearts—with time, they become far more beautiful than when they began.

But that farmer was sad on that first day because none of those seeds survived. What happened? Jesus says in V. 4 says, that some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

Those pesky birds! They ruined the crop. They destroyed any chance for the seed to sprout into something special, but we all know that birds are some of the best creatures God ever made. We can't be mad at the birds for wanting breakfast. They have to eat too.

The birds would not have gobbled up the seed if the soil had been softer, allowing the seeds to be tucked underneath the dirt.

Jesus said that the dirt in that area was hard, because it was on a pathway where people walked, and made it hard as concrete.

Later on, Jesus would explain what this soil means.

**Some people are like the word sown on the path. When they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word sown in them. Mk 4:15**

Who is Satan? Satan is the bad guy in the story of the Bible. He's not a made-up character like in movies. He's real. I'm telling you the truth—way back before the Bible was written, Satan was in heaven with God. He was a good, glorious angel, but Satan wasn't happy with how God made him, and he wanted to be in charge of the whole world, and God pushed him out of heaven for being so greedy.

As you get older, you're going to realize that we all have a little bit of that bad stuff in us—selfishness. Because of sin, we sometimes want to be more than God made us to be, to have more than God intended us to have. And we get really jealous when other people get better toys at Christmas, or a better house on their street.

A man named Jim wrote a book once and said this:

**We buy a new car and we say to our neighbor, “The old buggy was nickel and diming me to death. It spent a lot of time in the shop and besides, new cars get better gas mileage.” But truth be told, we’ll never save enough on gas or repairs to pay for the new one. What’s going on here? We don’t want to admit that we simply wanted a new car. –Jim Petersen**

We’ve all done this, grown-ups and kids—we get tired of our toys and we want bigger and better, newer and shinier. That’s called discontentment, and just like Satan, we can ruin our relationship with God when we aren’t happy with what God has given us.

That’s what this first soil is about. Jesus warned us that the Devil is like those birds in the story—he likes to ruin people by telling them that they need more than what God intended them to have. And that’s a lie.

You will notice as you get older that grown-ups with lots of things are not happier than grown-ups with a few things.

So the first soil is the person who hears about Jesus but then falls for the same trap that Satan fell for.

### *Soil Two: the rocky soil*

But the farmer wasn’t discouraged. He kept on scattering that seed and some of that seed fell in another place. V. 5 says...

<sup>5</sup> *Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn’t have much soil, and it grew up quickly,*

The birds didn’t eat these seeds! They actually grew. And the plants were off to a great start!

This happens in the church sometimes. Some people hear a sermon and they stand up at the end and they walk forward in the service. And they say: “Yes! I want Jesus to be in charge of my life! I want to be a Christian! But later that year, when God allows hard things to happen—let’s say they lose some money, or they find out a friend was not

really a friend—in those moments, they get mad at God and they say, “If you were real, You wouldn’t let bad things happen to a good guy like me.” They wave their fists at God and say, “I’m giving up on you. I’m going back to the way I was. Becoming a Christian has only made my life harder!”

Mark 4:16 says about the seed on rocky soil...

***When distress or persecution comes because of the word, they immediately fall away. Mk 4:16–17***

*This is the problem with the seeds that land in hard places. Jesus said in v.5...*

*...the soil wasn’t deep...*

<sup>6</sup> *When the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. Mk 4:5–6*

On a blazing hot summer day, the plants started to wither. You see, the roots of a plant are crucial to its survival. The roots are what keep the plant alive when sun blazes, or the winds blow, or the storms show up. Without roots, a little tree just withers or blows away.

So, there you have the second bad soil. It was softer than the first, but it went away when its world got warm.

### *Soil Three: Thorny soil*

Now, Jesus describes the third soil—the thorny soil.

*V.7... Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it didn’t produce fruit. Mk 4:7*

Here, the farmer scatters the seed but the thorn bushes grow like weeds in a garden. They just kind of take over. Those sharp thorns outgrow the leafy green plants, and they drink all the water and block all the sun.

Notice the thorn doesn’t kill the seed by poking or prodding it. No, they kill the plant by taking up all the space, all the water, and all the sun. There are not enough resources for all those plants all wedged in there together.

Some people live their lives like this, Jesus says. They let too many things crowd out the most important thing.

Later on in the chapter, Jesus goes on to say:

**Other people are like seed sown among thorns; these are the ones who hear the word,<sup>19</sup> but the worries of this age, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. Mk 4:18–19**

Some people hear a sermon, they walk down the aisle and say they want Jesus to be in charge of their life, but then they go back to their very busy life and pretend like nothing happened at church. They go right back to the lives they had, thinking very little about the life God wants them to have. And nothing that they are doing is bad—they are building their next house or planning their summer vacation.

This is why Jesus said you cannot serve both God and money. When your heart tries to have more of God and more money, there's not enough water in your heart for both. One of those two plants will starve, and it's normally God. Sometimes, Jesus says, a man or woman allows too many things to fill up their days and the seed of God simply dies of thirst.

So that third soil turns out to be a waste also. Too much stuff competing for resources.

Well, I think it's safe to say that things aren't going so well for this farmer, are they? His big bag of seed has mostly gone to waste. At this point, it feels like a sad story. BUT...it's not over! Like a good song, it ends on a high note!

*The 4th soil: the good soil.*

There's a fourth soil.

This farmer isn't going to give up. Even though the first three rounds of seed have died, he knows that eventually a good soil will do what only good soil can do.

That farmer throws what's left of his seed into the field and watches what happens. The growth of those seeds will make up for the loss of all the others. As it turns out, it only takes a few good seeds to bring forth a great harvest. Jesus says in V. 8:

*“Still other seed fell on good ground and it grew up, producing fruit that increased thirty, sixty, and a hundred times.” Then He adds, “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen.”*

Why does Jesus always say this, what he says at the end of V.8—if anyone has ears, let him hear? Have you ever walked up to a person and said, “I wonder what happened to their ears?” They are missing their ears, like a Mr. Potato head. I have never met a real person that looks like this. Have you?

But this happens to people, Jesus says! They don’t actually lose their ears, but as they get older, they start to think they know everything. They no longer act like a little child open to new ideas. They no longer trust the Father’s loving voice.

The good seeds, Jesus says, are the ones who want to listen and learn from God. And when God finds someone who truly wants to follow His plan, a most miraculous result takes place.

That seed grows into a plant, which will produce more seeds that make more plants. On and on it goes. It keeps growing. It keeps spreading.

In church, sometimes a person hears a sermon, comes forward and says, “I want to make Jesus the Lord of my life.” That person prays to receive Jesus and they become like a different person. They are so happy to hear that God has forgiven them of all their sins, that God so loved us that He sent His Son to save us. Jesus came to our world, and died on a cross so that we don’t have to be afraid of being punished someday. We don’t have to worry anymore about the way that our lives will end. This should make us very very happy.

So happy that we want to get baptized, which is the way Jesus wanted our new life to start—like a little plant that needs a lot of water. Baptism is the water that Jesus wants us to receive early on. And then this person gets involved in their church—sometimes grownups call this “getting plugged in” like a vacuum cleaner that works now that it has electricity. When you get plugged in, you start making the church a better place by doing kind things for other people—for Christians and non-yet Christians.

And not only do they serve others, they start making more room for God in their schedules, doing mission trips and helping the church serve the needy in the city. These kinds of people come to church on Sunday excited to hear the sermon and to do what God says. They start reading their Bible on their own.

They do all these things to feed the seed. And they grow—never as fast they want to grow because healthy growth always takes time, but years later, someone meets them on the street, a person that they used to go to school with, and that person says, “Whoa! What happened to you? You seem so different than when I knew you back when! And when that happens, the good plant drops a new seed in some soil, and they tell that person about Jesus, and how he changed them. That’s called being a witness.

And if that old friend still has ears that can hear, they receive the seed—they become a Christian—and the process starts over again.

There are about 3000 people in this room today. Now, just imagine if every person in this room reached just one person for Jesus this year. Just one. That would mean 3,000 new people coming to know the Lord. We would double in size—we'd go from 3000 to 6000.

$$3000 \times 2 = 6000$$

Now imagine, the next year, that each of those 6000 people reached just one person. In two years, we would go from our starting place of 3000, now to a field of 12,000.

$$6000 \times 2 = 12,000$$

The next year, year three, each of those 12,000 reached one person. Look what's happening, we've gone from this room of 3000 to a group of 24,000! In just three years!

$$12,000 \times 2 = 24,000$$

Jesus said that this is the way that the kingdom of God grows—person by person, and what can happen is this: that one seed *produced fruit that increased thirty, sixty, and a hundred times.*"

$$3000 \times 100 = 300,000$$

That's what can happen, when one good soil receives the good seed.

That's why Jesus says, "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen." Most people don't listen to God. Most people think that following Jesus will hold them back from finding happiness, but it's the opposite. When my life is over, the only thing that will matter is this: did I grow into the person that God wanted me to be? Was I open to what God wants to do in my life?

So what does this mean for you? Jesus didn't tell this story just to be interesting. He told it so we would all look in the mirror and ask: what kind of soil am I?

Other questions rise to the surface:

### **The Questions This Story Stirs Up**

**Have I truly let Jesus take root in my life?**

How does that happen? How does a person become a Christian?

The Bible says that the Christian life starts very simple. Some people use the ABCs to explain how a person gives their life back to God.

### **A means admitting that you need God's forgiveness.**

This is called repenting. Turning away from the bad things we've been doing, and admitting that we need Jesus to wash us clean. When we get baptized, it's a way of saying, "God has forgiven me" and I want to live differently because of that.

### **B means believing that Jesus is God's Son—that He died for your sins and rose from the grave.**

Next week, we celebrate Easter, when Jesus came out of his grave alive. Jesus was dead for three days but walked out of the grave and told the disciples to go and tell the world that there's a heaven that can be found by having faith—our time on Earth is preparation for eternity in heaven.

### **C means choosing to trust Jesus and to make Him the leader of your life.**

This is probably the hardest part, because people like to drive their own cars, not let other people drive them. We all like to be in control, but that C means control now belongs to God. He gets to drive and tell us where to go, and it's our job to let Him.

C means we become a disciple of Jesus—a lifelong learner, a person who promises to keep growing till the very end, refusing to become a fuddy-duddy.

So the first question every person, young or old, has to ask is simple: Have I followed the ABCs of salvation? Have I allowed the seed to take root in my heart? Have I given my life to Jesus?

Another question:

### **Has my love for Jesus been crowded out by other things?**

Maybe you became a Christian in the past, but you admit you haven't taken Jesus seriously. You got distracted. This happens to young and old people. Sports, jobs, school, friends, hobbies—these things aren't bad on their own, but like those thorns in the story, they can take over our time and our attention, the seed of God in our hearts gets thirsty and starts to shrivel. The soil gets crowded, and growth begins to slow.

If that's you today, you should admit this to God and show Him you're serious by making Him the priority.

### **As a parent, is my life a good model for my children?**

Children learn by watching the people they admire most. What are your children observing in you? Are they seeing someone who is paying attention to the right things? Do they see someone who has gotten focused on the wrong things Like in this little poem, by Wendell Berry.

#### **The Vacation**

**Once there was a man who filmed his vacation.**

**He went flying down the river in his boat  
with his video camera to his eye, making  
a moving picture of the moving river  
upon which his sleek boat moved swiftly  
toward the end of his vacation. He showed  
his vacation to his camera, which pictured it,  
preserving it forever: the river, the trees,  
the sky, the light, the bow of his rushing boat  
behind which he stood with his camera  
preserving his vacation even as he was having it  
so that after he had had it he would still  
have it. It would be there. With a flick  
of a switch, there it would be. But he  
would not be in it. He would never be in it.**

Could this be true of you? That you're more interested in filming or photographing your kids, than you are in being with them. Are you falling into the habit of being behind the camera of your life vs in the story? God has called us to worry less about our posts on

social media, and to be actively involved in tending the soil of our children's hearts. God cares about whether we feed the seed that He cast in our homes.

Jesus said: "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen." Maybe God is telling you today, Mom or Dad, to stop being that man in the boat with the camera, but to be with with your children, talking to them more than taking pictures of them.

Now, kids I want you to know that we are going to end the sermon today in a special way. I am about to show you what the Lord's Supper is all about.

This is an important part of **worship**.

### *The Lord's Supper*

Kids, I want to talk to you for just a minute, because what we're about to do is really important—and I don't want it to feel confusing or mysterious. Before Jesus went back to heaven, He told His followers to keep doing two things when we worship, until He returns one day.

First, He told us **to baptize people**—when someone decides to follow Jesus, we celebrate by lowering them into the water and bringing them back up. That's called baptism. Being baptized doesn't save a person from their sins—it just a way of announcing to the world that they love Jesus and want their lives to reflect His way of life. It's like a pledge of allegiance. It's a big deal in the Bible—to let yourself be baptized.

Second, He told us to keep taking something called Communion, or The Lord's Supper. This is something Jesus started on the night before He died. **He was sitting at a table with His disciples, sharing a meal.** And during that meal, He did something surprising. He took some bread, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then He took a cup and said, "This is my blood, poured out for you."

Now kids, this can sound a little strange at first. The bread isn't actually His body, and the cup isn't actually His blood. These are symbols that help us remember something very real.

The bread reminds us that **Jesus gave His body on the cross (tasteful image of the cross)**

The cup reminds us that He shed His blood.

And He did all of this for one reason:

Because He loves us. So when we take the Lord's Supper, we are doing two things:

First, we are remembering what Jesus has done for us. Second, we are examining our hearts. We pause and ask, "Is there any sin I need to confess? Is there anyone I need to forgive?" (Like my brother or my sister?)

Because this is a holy moment.

Now, I remember having two questions when I was a kid.

### **Two Questions I Asked as a Kid (in the 1980s!)**

#### **Am I allowed to take the Lord's Supper?**

The Lord's Supper is for people who have decided to follow Jesus—who have asked Him to forgive their sins and come into their life. So some of you kids today can take it because you've given your life to Jesus, you've talked with your parents about this, and you may have even gotten baptized already. Yes, you should take it. And it may be your first time taking it. If so, that's a big deal! And know that we as your church family are excited for you.

If you haven't accepted Jesus as your Savior, I'm going to tell you at the end of the service how you might do that.

#### **Are there times when a Christian should not take the Lord's Supper?**

The Bible says that if you're holding onto bitterness, or you know you need to make something right with someone, you should pause. Not because you're not welcome—but because your heart matters. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is say,

"Lord, help me make this right."

So for some of you, this moment may be less about taking the elements, and more about asking a step toward humility... and forgiveness.. Now, if you are a follower of Jesus, and your heart is ready—

Go ahead and take the bread.