

July 12, 2026

Sermon Manuscript



Matthew 13:1-23

¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

¹⁰ The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

¹¹ He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. ¹² Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

¹⁴ In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:
“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

¹⁵ For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.”*

¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷ For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

¹⁸ “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.

²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time.

When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

**Isaiah 6:9,10 (see Septuagint)*

Isaiah 55

¹ “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. ³ Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. ⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples. ⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor.”

⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. ⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

⁸ “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. ⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. ¹² You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. ¹³ Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord’s renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever.”

Keep Buying & Eating (Mt 13:1-23, Isa 55)

The good news revealed in our scriptures today is that Jesus always has more of His salvation to lead us into: more of His grace and truth and peace and joy. And all this will be ours as we continue to buy and eat from Him, at least that’s what He calls it in our Isaiah passage today. But turning first to today’s gospel passage, it marks the beginning of a

section of Jesus' parables in Matthew's Gospel, parables He tells about the Kingdom of God. Following the Parable of the Sowers we read today, Jesus follows in Matthew 13 by telling the Parable of the Mustard Seed, followed by the Parable of the Yeast, the Parable of the Hidden Treasure, the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price, and the Parable of the Net. And I want to speak a bit today as to why Jesus *chose* to teach in parables, which Jesus addresses with His disciples in the middle of our passage. But first let's begin with this Parable of the Sower parable that Jesus tells at the beginning of our passage and then explains at the end. I want to show how it reveals the good news that Jesus always has more of His salvation to lead us into. Even more of His grace and truth and peace and joy will be ours so long as we continue to buy and eat from Him.

Verse 2 says Jesus gets into a boat to speak to the large crowd remaining on the shore. We all know how well sound travels over water, so speaking from a boat like this was a way for Jesus to be heard by more people. Then, Jesus tells this parable about a farmer scattering seed on four different types of soil, or terrain. Some seed falls in rocky places, other seed in shallow soil, other seed lands among thorns, but it is only the seed that falls upon what Jesus calls "good soil" - it is only that seed - that produces any crop. This is probably one of Jesus' more famous parables; those who have grown up in the Church have surely heard it more times than you could count. And yet, for Christians, I think we can often hear this parable as Jesus being primarily about conversion - as if the seed should be primarily understood as the good news about Jesus initially being proclaimed to people so they might turn to Christ - and therefore as not really relevant to us if we're already Christians, already in relationship with Christ.

But the salvation Jesus offers is not something we fully acquire in a single decision.¹ And that's a good thing, because it is so much more. The salvation Jesus offers us is instead a lifelong journey of coming to know God better and learning to live our lives according to His ways, which are higher than the ways of living any of us were born into.² This is to say that Jesus will *always* be scattering the seeds of His truth in our direction, truths for each of us about Him and life with Him that we have yet to grasp. In verse 19 He explains that the seed represents "the message about (His) kingdom", and the kingdom - the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God - is the name Jesus gave for the life He intends for us in our time on earth: with Him and in His truth. There are always ways we are not presently living in that truth. In fact, this is the primary aim of those kairos groups we have: it's one way to learn to pay attention to where God is at work, calling us to step forward into more of His kingdom life. The good news that Jesus always has more of His salvation to lead us into. Even more of His grace and truth and peace and joy will be ours so long as we continue to buy and eat from Him. And so, throughout our lives we can expect Jesus to be scattering seeds in our direction: calling us to follow and live even more fully in His better way. The question is whether we desire this, whether we're *open* to it; do we expect these new revelations and leading to be part of a life following Jesus and are we ready to receive it? The question is what kind of soil are we? And, to be honest, this

¹ If anything demonstrates this, it is the parable of the sower itself.

² And, by the way, Jesus called this salvation life many things: in Matthew He tended to call it "the kingdom of heaven," as we see in verse 11; in Mark & Luke he called it "the kingdom of God"; and John's gospel recounts Him calling it "eternal life".

may vary: the type of soil we're living as - that is, our receptivity to Jesus' leadings - may vary from day to day or week to week, from this season of life to that, and so on.

When I was away in Alabama last week - just being in a different place and in a different rhythm, I find that God can use those times to shake me out of my status quo. And, of course, I had this passage in the back of my mind, knowing I'd be preaching on it when I got back. So, I found myself reflecting on what sorta soil I was at the moment. Was I living like God has more of Himself He wants me to know and more of His salvation He wants to lead me into? Or have I been preoccupied with the worries of life and trying to control things in my own strength?

Well, I wasn't thrilled about what seemed to be the answer. But the response wasn't to condemn myself for it. Condemning ourselves is never a remedy; and the Lord doesn't condemn us. Rather He invites us to turn and open ourselves to Him once again, to assume a posture like God soil that wants to receive more seeds of His kingdom in my life. But it does require decision; taking on the posture of good soil does require action: a turning to God, or turning back to Him. This is what our passage from Isaiah 55 is emphasizing today. So I wanna turn your attention there for just a moment.

Last week Deacon Dolores spoke about how even though our lives in this world will be wrought with various struggles, God has invited us into the best life possible through Jesus. And this is the invitation Isaiah 55 begins with: God offering us the care and support and capacities for flourishing that the world cannot provide. Beginning at verse 1, God says,

¹ "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

God is using the metaphor of a delicious feast for the abundance that the world - and its ways that we were born into - can never give us. And this passage *also* makes clear that this gift of life in God - this grace - is the free gift of God to any who desire it. ¹ "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost." The gift God offers of life with Him is free, and yet we do still have to receive it: to turn to Him, to open ourselves to His presence and truth, against and again. His command in verse 2 is still to "buy and eat," which He explains in verse 3 means to give ear and come to him and listen that we may live.

And as we do - and only as we do - will the result he then proclaims at the end the passage become true. In verse 12, He promises that if we *do* continue to buy and eat from him, to give and ear and come to him, that then (quote),

¹² You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. ¹³ Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow.

The good news that Jesus always has more of His salvation to lead us into. Even more of His grace and truth and peace and joy will be ours so long as we continue to buy and eat

from Him. To receive more of the quality of life God wants to give us, we have to want it - to believe there is more God wants to bless us with - enough to live as good soil: eager to receive seed; and not only that, but believing that we need what can only be received from His hand.

This reality - that we have to believe we are in need of whatever more that God has for us and to want to receive it - this seems to be what Jesus is explaining as a primary reason He taught about the kingdom life using parables. And this is the final point I want to make. In the middle of our Matthew passage, in verse 10, Jesus' disciples ask Him why He spoke to people in parables. And Jesus' answer reveals that this is because parables are life giving to those who want more of what Christ has to offer, while parables remain meaningless or confounding to those who do not. In verse 11, He replies that He is giving the secrets of His kingdom life to them - His disciples - but not to the crowd. But implicit in this response is that anyone in that crowd can have the secrets of the kingdom, too: they need only want to receive them enough to be willing to come to Jesus to find out: to respond to His speaking in parables by wanting to know more. In other words, we can be confident that if anyone who heard Jesus tell this parable on the boat and then responded with an openness, a curiosity, a wanting to know more: Jesus would have given them more.

In verse 12, Jesus says, "¹² Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them." You see, He diagnoses that this crowd doesn't really *want* to know more. At least none of them do on that day. So He says in verse 13, "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand... (verse 15:) "¹⁵ For this people's heart has become calloused."

This prompts us to ask: have our hearts become calloused? Have we become satisfied with what we believe we've already received from Him and no longer hunger for more. As a result, Jesus says of that crowd that "they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes." But if we find ourselves in that place, we need only repent, which is to say: turn to Him anew. And if we do, he promises here that we *will* see with our eyes, we *will* hear with our ears and understand with our hearts; if we turn again, He will heal us of our sin and brokenness even more. The good news that Jesus always has more of His salvation to lead us into. Even more of His grace and truth and peace and joy will be ours so long as we continue to buy and eat from Him.

And so, the question this passage and parable asks of each of us today is which kind of soil are we living as: not in the past, but right now, in this week or phase or season of life?

As I was reflecting on myself last week and feeling like I'd sorta drifted into being like soil #3, just letting life's worries and my desire to control things take me away from God's abundance. And yet, all I had to do when I recognized that was turn back to Him, to welcome His presence and whatever truth He had to offer. All I had to do was buy and eat from Him (that's what it looked like).

And that is His invitation to us. As we come to the rail today and eat, that the physical action of our bodies would represent the desire of our hearts to receive what can only be found in Him.