

“Snap Shots ~ GROW” [3.30.08]

One of my passions' is DIRT ~ I love to kick around the yard & attempt to make things look nice!

In 1976 my family built a new home on my dad's childhood farm in E. Tennessee; We were plagued w/red clay as our primary soil.

- After our 1st attempt @ putting in a nice lawn failed, my dad began researching what type of grass would possibly grow in red clay.
 - He eventually settled on Zoysia Grass that he found pictured in Parade Magazine in the Sunday newspaper. The grass that was pictured was a beautiful emerald green;
 - He ordered it and it showed up on the back of a transfer truck; we opened the boxes to find grass that appeared to be completely dead ☹
- It came with a flimsy tool to assist in plugging the grass into the ground; on a hot summer afternoon ~ my dad - - older brother Scott - - and myself set off; cutting off square plugs, digging into the drought ridden red clay w/that useless tool that came along with this new miracle grass
 - About a ½ hour into it; my brother cranked down on the tool and completely snapped our tool in ½ ; my dad was not happy about that particular move ☹
 - For the remainder of the 1.5 acres yet to be done, we plugged it on our hands & knees (absolutely miserable experience)
- In Tucson = blessed to build our 1st home [Couldn't wait to put my yard in]
 - Soil is new game in the desert ~ Kolache is the primary soil [like concrete]
 - Dug 35 holes; knew it was a good or bad hole by running hose water into the hole ~ if water was still standing after 24 hrs; it's not a good sign
 - Beautiful grass was a huge investment = outrageous irrigation bills!

Cultivating fertile soil is always hard work; today's parable tells a similar story.

(R) Luke 8: 4 – 8 or p. 788 in pew Bible

SYMBOLISM literally fills this parable...

- The FARMER represents the preacher
- The SEED represents the word of God
- The SOIL represents the human heart

Now let's allow Jesus to explain the rest of the parable.

(R) Luke 8: 9 – 10

Jesus goes to explain, that there are 4 types of soil = literally 4 types of hearts that would receive the good news of the Gospel.

- I. Explanation of 4 Soil Types
 - A. (R) Luke 8: 11 - 12 = 1st type of soil

- A well traveled footpath / trail
 - The soil had been packed hard like concrete because of constant pedestrian travel; nothing had a chance of growing in it [hopeless situation]!
- [Application]
 - Jesus is saying there are hearts like this well traveled footpath; they actually hear the word of the kingdom, but it does not penetrate @ all
 - These good people come to church only to appease their spouse; they attend because of a sense of duty or tradition.
 - They refuse to listen - - they resist & fight what they hear - - they have a chip on their shoulder & defy someone up front to knock it off.
 - They do not allow nor want God to rule their hearts & minds.

B. (R) Luke 8: 13 = 2nd type of soil

- The rocky soil is not soil w/rocks in it ~ it refers rather to thin layers of soil that cover great sheets of bedrock.
 - “Rocky soil” is shallow soil. It tends to warm quickly providing an environment for rapid growth.
 - B/c the roots do not go deeply enough, the budding plant withers under the sun’s growing intensity.
- [Application]
 - These are well intentioned hearts ~ they receive the word w/joy; often w/enthusiasm. At 1st they love the gospel - - the church - - & the fellowship.
 - They throw themselves into the work of the gospel ~ giving of their time & treasure. BUT “...they don’t have deep roots.”
 - The word (Bible) has never really anchor itself in their hearts; when stress or disappointments come along ~ these good people fall away.

C. (R) Luke 8: 14 = 3rd type of soil

- This soil initially looks good ~ but actually it’s not been weeded; these weeds grow up w/the seed & choke the life out of the seedling.
- [Application]
 - This is actually good soil ~ it’s just not been cultivated.
 - These good people had the very best of intentions - - but somewhere along the line they allowed themselves to get preoccupied.
 - Jesus mentions 3 different kinds of distractions:
 - Worry of the of the world
 - Deceitfulness of riches
 - Desires for other things

D. (R) Luke 8: 15 = 4th type of soil

- Good fertile soil that has been carefully cared for & cultivated.
- [Application]
 - These good hearted people cling tightly to the word of God; when the storms of life inevitable come ~ they persevere & produce great fruit!

Jesus says in every audience - - every church - - every gathering there will be people whose hearts are hard - - shallow - - distracted & good!

[NOTICE]

In the parable when the seed fails to grow ~ it's not the farmer's fault; nor is it the seed's fault! When the seed grows ~ it's not to the farmer's credit or the seed's credit.

The responsibility lies completely upon the listener.

[Question...] What can you do in order to change your heart?

The answer is you can do nothing ~ any more than soil can change its nature. But although you can do nothing, there is ONE who can = the Divine Gardener! God can break up the hard ground - uproot the rocks - & remove the thorns. That is your hope - not you, but the GARDENER!

This is WHY Jesus told this parable ~ pay attention to your hearts; in the beginning when we were created ~ God created every heart out of beautiful material!

It's not too late to cultivate the soil of our heart & recapture God's original purpose of us having fruitful - - joy filled lives!

Here's how to get started...

II. Cultivating our Hearts!

A. 1st ~ BEGIN w/an Honest Evaluation

- It's difficult to escape the heart-directed implications of this parable; each of us represent 1 of the 4 soil types; which soil type are you?

1st soil type = Are you a hard - hearted person?

- Do you come to church in a resistant manner; do you refuse to allow the word to deal with you? [Dangerous condition]
- If so, your prayer must be, "O Lord, soften my hardened heart; make my heart once again pliable and receptive to Your word!"

2nd soil type = is your heart shallow & superficial?

- Is your faith ready to collapse @ the first sign of trouble?
- If so, your prayer must be, "Oh Lord, dig deeply into my soul & plant your word where it will never be uprooted."

3rd soil type = is your heart easily distracted?

- Are you too busy? Too preoccupied? Too wrapped up in this world & its concerns?
- If so, your prayer must be, "Oh Lord, pull out my weeds! Tear them out by the roots & replace them w/your own good seed!"

4th soil type = is your heart good?

- Do you readily receive God's word & quickly obey it?
- If so, your prayer must be, "Father thank you for your supernatural blessings, please protect my heart from getting distracted!"

B. 2nd ~ CREATE Realistic Expectation(s)

- Cultivating fertile soil in our inner person is a long - - slow process
 - [insert] baby chicken analogy

Phillips Brooks once commented...

"We never become truly spiritual by sitting down and wishing to become so. You must undertake something so great that you cannot accomplish it unaided."

- Cultivating a good heart is neither instant nor automatic; it's a gradual – progressive development!
- This concept is counter cultural,
"We live in a world of instant messaging, instant coffee, instant noodles, instant pudding, instant rice, instant potatoes, & even instant abs - Instant relief with pain medications all the way to instant tans!"

Cultivation of good soil takes time...Philippians 1:6 reminds us,

"...& I sure that God, who began the good work w/in you will continue His work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again."

One final word of encouragement ~ any time you invest in planting the seed of God's word w/in yourself or someone else is always...

C. 3rd a worthwhile INVESTMETNT!

- [Lotus seed]
 - Some yrs. ago a lotus seed was germinated after lying dormant for several thousand years in a peat bog. [remarkable durability]
- Just like the seed the farmer sowed in today's parable
 - Be encouraged ~ the seeds of the gospel never go bad; they have a remarkable power to respond to seeds of spiritual life sown years before.
- (R) Isaiah 55: 10 – 11 or p. 560 in pew Bible

God's word will not return empty or void!

Closing story = "Colonel B"