

**Read: Matthew 13:1-9,18-23**

## What's the soil of my heart?

### **Matthew 13:1-9**

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

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

"A farmer went out to sow his seed...."

That's how Jesus began a story he told. It was on a really busy day. Crowds wanted to listen to him talk. As he looked around at the people, he noticed people coming and going. Imagine if during a worship service, some people arrived halfway into the service, while others got up before the sermon and left. Some people seemed excited to hear Jesus, but later made excuses why his message would never work for them. Why didn't everyone else realize how wonderful Jesus and his message really were?

Does it ever seem as if God's Word is not working? Maybe you have a friend or family member who is no longer a Christian, or perhaps they never were. You continue to pray for them. You even get the courage to invite them to church. But no matter what you do, they don't seem to want to have anything to do with Jesus. You might think, "What's wrong? Why doesn't God's Word work for them?"

If you have ever had this experience, you are not alone. When Jesus preached, his message got mixed responses. His disciples were surprised that so many people seemed to reject God's Word. So Jesus told them a story. "A farmer went out to sow his seed... ."

He said that God's Word is like the seed that a farmer throws out onto a field. Some of the seed will fall on the path, the rocks, or among the weeds where it won't grow like it could. And just like that seed, sometimes God's Word doesn't grow well. But there will be a person who hears God's message of love and forgiveness. It gets planted in their heart and begins to grow and change their lives for eternity.

Jesus told this story to teach us to expect mixed responses to his message. The perfect seed of God's Word will meet different soils. Don't be surprised when some people reject Jesus, at least for a time. Instead, understand and trust that Jesus died to take away our sins. Instead, rejoice that God's Word of forgiveness and love has taken root in your life and produces a harvest in you.!

*The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.*

### **Questions for the Younger Children**

- Fill in the blanks that tell the story from today's devotion: "A \_\_\_\_\_ (farmer) went out to \_\_\_\_ (sow) his seed."
- What was the seed the farmer was sowing in the field? Do you know anyone who needs to hear the message of Jesus?

### **Questions for Elementary Age Children**

- Go outside and look at the different plants in your yard. (Or find some images on Google.) Discuss how those different plants started in your yard and continue to grow.
- Jesus said sharing our faith is like planting those different crops or flowers. Some of them grow well and some don't. How might this help us when some people don't want to hear the message of Jesus?

### **Questions for Middle School and Above**

- Describe a time when you tried to share your faith with someone and you were rejected.
- How does today's devotion help you cope with rejection?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Lord God, make our hearts good soil for your gospel seed. May we grow in faith in Jesus. Give me opportunities to share your message wherever I go today. Lead me to trust that you will use it for good. Amen.