

May 8, 2022

## Working the Soil

By Michael Hickox

# Olney Church of Christ

220 North Van Street  
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[www.olneychurchofchrist.org](http://www.olneychurchofchrist.org)

## Services

### Sunday

Bible Study	9:30 am
A.M. Worship	10:20 am
P.M. Worship	2:00 pm

### Wednesday

Bible Class	7:00 pm
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**Elders:** Mike Gerber, Travis Hall

**Deacons:** John Frost, Dave Goff,  
Roger Sholders

*Visitors are welcome*

*We offer Bible classes for all ages*

*We also offer in-home Bible studies*

We have Bible lessons on the radio  
(92.9 FM) Sundays from 8:00-8:30 a.m.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, He received a variety of reactions to His teaching. In the mist of this, He taught the "Parable of the Sower," which explains the vast differences in how souls respond to the truth our Lord's given.

A key point Jesus made when explaining the parable is that "***the seed is the word of God***" (Luke 8:11). Regardless of what the soil was like, the seed in the parable was consistent. A failure to bear good, lasting fruit was not a reflection of anything defective in the seed.

In like manner, failure to respond to the Word of God as one should doesn't diminish the power and perfection of the truth. What it *does* indicate is a need to "work the soil" (i.e., the heart) so that God's Word yields the positive effects desired in our lives.

An example of this is seen with the first type of ground referenced in our Lord's parable. **Luke 8:5** mentions seed that "***fell along the road, and it was trampled under foot, and the birds of the sky devoured it.***" Jesus explained, "***Those along the road are those who hear, then the devil comes, and takes away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved***" (verse 12).

In other words, those who receive seed "***along the road***" have *hardened* hearts that refuse to accept the truth. While this can happen in a general sense (i.e., rejecting God's Word entirely), it can also

# Working the Soil

(Continued)

apply to any specific teaching He's given. For instance, a Christian may have no trouble accepting the truth about baptism, but harden his or her heart against the truth God's given concerning divorce and remarriage. Receiving God's Word with meekness (**James 1:21**) demands a heart that will accept the *whole counsel* of God.

The second place Jesus references seed falling in His parable is "***on the rocky ground, where it had little soil, and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of soil***" (**Mark 4:5**). His explanation of this (**verses 16-17**) shows that the rocky ground represents hearts that have a *shallow* faith. Those who receive the seed in this ground lack a deep conviction and commitment to God and thus will stumble in the face of trials and temptations.

When Jesus faced trials, He didn't use them as an excuse for doing wrong, but instead committed Himself *wholeheartedly* to the Father's will (**1 Pet. 2:22-23**). We must have this level of devotion instead of having a superficial commitment that only submits to God when things are easy.

A third type of heart represented in the parable is the *distracted* heart. Jesus illustrated this heart with the words, "***Other fell amid the thorns, and the thorns grew with it, and choked it***" (**Luke 8:7**). He explained, "***That which fell among the thorns, these are those who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures***

***of life, and bring no fruit to maturity***" (**verse 14**). In other words, those with this heart have a desire to please God, but are distracted by temporal concerns and thus don't bear all the fruit they should.

The term "***cares***" shows that anxieties over temporal concerns can distract us from bearing the fruit for the Lord we should (cf. **Matt. 6:25-34**). The term "***riches***" shows that while material things are morally neutral in themselves, wrong *attitudes* toward them can hurt us. The term "***pleasures of life***" shows that "innocent" hobbies and pursuits can keep us from pleasing God if we allow them to.

The explanation Jesus gave for the "***thorns***" indicates that He primarily had in mind things that are wholesome in themselves, but can easily consume our lives and hinder us from having the spiritual focus that we should. If the Christian fails to grow, study the Bible, pray, teach, help others, or assemble with saints like we should because his or her time is filled with temporal pursuits, that Christian is letting the "***thorns***" take over.

The one who chooses to prioritize God's will above such pursuits, while letting the Word get deeply rooted in his or heart and giving honest consideration to all of God's teaching, will allow God's Word to produce the good, lasting fruit God expects of us.

May we "work the soil" of our hearts to ensure we have this heart that God is looking for.

## God's Plan for Saving Man

God's Grace	Ephesians 2:8
Christ's Blood	Romans 5:9
The Holy Spirit's Gospel	Romans 1:16
Sinner's Faith	Acts 16:31
Sinner's Repentance	Luke 13:3
Sinner's Confession	Romans 10:10
Sinner's Baptism	1 Peter 3:21
Christian's Work	James 2:24
Christian's Hope	Romans 8:24
Christian's Endurance	Revelation 2:10

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## Words to Consider

***“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and humility, with patience, bearing with one another in love; being eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you also were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all.” – Ephesians 4:1-6 (WEB)***

## Prayer List

Holly G  
Jerry & Sandy S  
Cheryl S  
Norma C  
Raymond B  
Robert C  
Sharon G (Cancer)  
Doans' Grandson, Wilson  
Devin D (Cancer)  
Vicki S (Cancer)  
Susan F (Cancer)  
Christie's Brother, Jerry (Lung Cancer)  
Travis' Co-worker's Daughter, Kacie  
Marci B & Family

## Daily Bible Reading

May 8 – 2 Kings 4-6; Luke 24:36-53  
May 9 – 2 Kings 7-9; John 1:1-28  
May 10 – 2 Kings 10-12; John 1:29-51  
May 11 – 2 Kings 13-14; John 2  
May 12 – 2 Kings 15-16; John 3:1-18  
May 13 – 2 Kings 17-18; John 3:19-36  
May 14 – 2 Kings 19-21; John 4:1-30

***“the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.” – Colossians 1:26 (ESV)***

**Prayer Leaders**

Sunday, May 8, 2022

Bible Study: Steve  
Worship: Darrell  
Evening: Michael

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

Dan H

**Assignments**

Sunday, May 15, 2022

Reading: Travis  
Announcements: Roger  
Table: Mike  
Serve: Mark  
Jeff  
Jim  
John

Wednesday, May 18, 2022

Invitation: Dan D

**Clean Building**

Janice

**Prepare Communion**

Janice

**Upcoming Reminders**

**Wednesday (11<sup>th</sup>) adult class:**

*Ephesians 4:11ff*

**Next Sunday (15<sup>th</sup>) adult class:**

*Older Women Teach Younger Women*

**Anniversaries**

May 30 – Larry & Patsy

**Birthdays**

May 10 – John  
May 23 – Jeanette