

Mark - the Sower, the Seed & the Soil 2

by J. Glyn Owen

The parable of the sower, the seed, and the soils teaches us that the condition of our hearts determines whether the Word of God will germinate and bear fruit.

Duration: 51:43

Scripture: Jeremiah 4:3, Matthew 6:33, Mark 4:1-20, John 2:5, Revelation 3:14-17

Topics: "Parable"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of taking the words of Jesus seriously, even if it may cause some discomfort. He draws a parallel to the book of Jeremiah, where the people of Judah were called to repent and turn back to God. The preacher highlights how our hearts and minds are often consumed by worldly distractions, preventing us from focusing on eternal and spiritual matters. He also mentions that the desire for wealth is a common distraction, leading to temptation and harmful desires. The sermon concludes with an exhortation to respond to the word of God with action and obedience.

Transcript

For the benefit of those who are visiting us today, may I say that in our morning diet at the present time, we are meditating in the Gospel recorded by Saint Mark, though we have read this morning from Matthew. And we have come in the Gospel according to Saint Mark to the, what we usually refer to as the Parable of the Sower, which I have referred to as the Sower, the Seed, and the Soils, because the emphasis in this parable is as much on the soils as upon the sower, perhaps even more so. Now, we began this last Lord's Day morning, but we did not conclude.

We saw then that so much depends in the sowing of the seed of the Word of God, so much depends upon the quality of the soil into which the seed falls. We learned two things particularly. The top soil must be broken up.

That's the implication of the statement that some seed fell by the wayside on the pathway, the well-trodden pathway that divided two fields, the one from the other. The seed that fell on that pathway fell on hard soil. It hadn't been broken up.

In consequence, the birds of the air came and took the seed away before it was able to germinate. Exactly that kind of thing can take place in our lives. Our lives can be so hardened by the affairs of this life that the seed of the Word of God simply falls upon us superficially, as it were.

It hardly gets time to sink into the soil of our hearts before the devil comes and takes it away and nothing more is heard of it. So that there are people who can move through a service such as this through their devotions from day to day and the Word of God just does not penetrate the skin. It has no effect whatsoever.

The devil takes it away. But then we saw also another type described by our Lord in this parable. He speaks of it as the seed falling upon rocky soil.

We described that in terms of the geographical structure of Palestine, where very often you have a slab of limestone rock just a couple of inches below the surface. In this case, the seed sown had sufficient soil to germinate rather quickly. So you say almost immediately, well this is successful, this is bringing some fruit.

But when the sun rises, when the heat is up, the whole thing withers away because there's no possibility for rootage. The Word has only been received superficially and it can't get down into the depths of the soul. That's what Jesus is saying in that picture.

In your heart and mine by nature there is a rock, a forbidding rock, which reacts against the Word of God and the ministry of the Spirit and says so far but no further. Now I trust that all of us know ourselves to that extent today. That rock has got to be broken.

If the work of grace is to proceed in our souls and we are to become really Christian, the seed has got to get down beyond that rock and through it so that the roots of the Word get into our conscious life and our subconscious life and there bring forth fruit. Now this morning we turn to the third. The form-ridden soil.

Let me read to you the relevant verses here. If you have Mark open before you, Mark 4. First of all will you please notice verse 7. Some fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it and it yielded no fruit. And then our Lord explains the significance of that in verses 18 and 19.

These are they which are sown among thorns such as hear the word and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word and it becometh unfruitful. Here then is our subject this morning. The form-ridden soil.

Now at least 22 Hebrew and Greek words are used in the Bible to describe the thorny prickly plants so well known to all men and they're rather indiscriminately used by the translators of our Bible. When I tell you that there are 50 genera and some 200 species of thorny plants in Palestine and Syria you will understand that we simply cannot dogmatize as to the nature of the thorns or the thorny bushes whose roots are described as being embedded in the soil envisaged by our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we must not rashly conclude that the sower in this case was a fool.

The sower did not come to a field where thorn bushes were growing up and thriving and began to sow his seed in that kind of field. He wasn't as foolish as that. That's not what we have here.

What we have here is something different. Evidently the field itself had been cleared superficially before the sower came to sow the seed there. The thorn bushes or the thistle bushes whatever they were, they had been cut down.

But the point is that the roots were still in the soil, you see. If you went into this particular field you would see that it's been cleared. You can't see anything on the surface, on the face of things.

But what you don't see is that the roots of the thistles and the thorns and thorn bushes described here are all still there in the soil. So that when the sower comes ultimately to sow a seed, even though the soil is soft to receive it and there is no rare layer of rock underneath, there is a major problem here. When the seed begins to germinate it finds that it has to fight for its life under the soil, underground.

Because you see there is this alien plant or there are these alien plants already in possession of the soil. Their roots are there. They've been there for years.

And because they've been there for years that the soil belongs to them. They take in the sunshine and they take in the moisture and they take what the soil itself can give them. And of course even though the seed brings forth fruit apparently that fruit can never come to anything.

It is strangled. Now my friends this is a very challenging Word of God. And I suggest to you that if you don't mean to be challenged this morning as I have been challenged in preparing this, get some wadding and cotton wool and put it in your ears.

You can't play with this passage of Scripture. You can't toy with it. This is something that's going to hurt some of us if not all of us.

The application of these words you see is not left to us. It's here. Our Lord gives us the key.

He tells us what He means. This is why it's going to hurt. If you and I are going to take our Lord Jesus Christ seriously we're going to get a bit wounded now.

These words remind us in the first place if we know our own Testament of an image which has been used many a time by the prophets. Those of you familiar with the book of the Prophet Jeremiah for example will surely remember these words when he calls the people of Judah to repent because of the fact that they wandered from the Lord, broken his statutes and commandments and so forth. And even though they're going on doing the same old religious exercises their hearts are far from God.

And he uses these terms in Jeremiah 4 and verse 3. He says break up your fallow ground, sow not among thorns. So the image is not new. The Prophet is there representing his Lord calling for repentance.

And he describes it in these graphic terms. He is implying that the soil of Judah's heart, now mark you Judah represented the people of God. The heart of Judah had at one time been soft and receptive to the Word of God.

But now that same heart, the heart of that people Judah of old has again become as if it had never been plowed, never been broken. It has become like fallow ground never plowed. And says the Prophet look it's useless sowing seed upon soil like that.

First of all he says you break up the fallow ground, break the soil of your own hearts, send the plow through it, turn it upside down, get rid of the stones, check it and clean it and purge it, then receive the Word. Now in preparing the soil of the human heart for the seed of the Word of God to flourish in it, it is not only necessary to break up the underlying hardness, the rock, it is necessary to deal with the weeds of the years that are embedded in our nature. There are certain things says our Lord in this parable that are so entrenched in the nature of man that even though you cut them down superficially, cut the ends off as it were, cut the bloom off as it were, the roots stay on.

And when the Word of God is received there is a battle that goes on, a battle which is veritably a battle for the life of the Word and its progress. Now unfortunately we don't need to guess then what this means. Jesus says that there are three species of thorns which generally combine in the human heart to strangle the Word of God when it is sown there.

Even before it comes to birth, before the Word has brought forth salvation in our soul, before the Word has made us into new creatures, there are these undergrowths in our nature that strangle it and choke it so that it doesn't come to anything. Now you may well say, what on earth are these things? What are these pernicious weeds in our human nature that are so militantly aggressive and destructive? Will the Son of God tell us? Will He tell us clearly? My friends, I have to tell you that He will. The question is not whether the Lord Jesus will tell us clearly, the question is whether you and I will hear and listen and obey.

Millions upon millions of good men and women have not. Now listen to verses 18 and 19 again. Others are the ones sown among thorns.

Who are they? They are those who hear the Word. They hear all right and the hearing means receiving in some sense. They hear the Word but the cares of the world, literally of this world, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things enter in and choke the Word and it proves unfruitful.

As Luke says, it just does not come to the maturity required of it. It falls short. Now let us take a look then at these three related species of thorns or thistles which are native to the soil of men's hearts, your heart and mine.

Now some of us may want the explanation as to why the Word of God that we hear and we read does not bear forth more fruit in our lives. Now it may be found right here, right here. There are three species and here they are.

Our Lord speaks of them in the first place as, I don't know what translation you've got, I think the best one is the New English Bible here, worldly cares. The King James Version and the RSV say the cares of this world. Well that's just as good.

Or the New International Version, the worries of this life. I prefer the other, the cares of this world or of this life or literally of this age. Now originally the word for cares or worries signified not just concern, not just what we sometimes speak of as a burden, but a kind of burden that distracts us from the object that we had or should have in mind.

So you see the word care means something that's so much on my heart or something that's so much in my mind or something that is upon me is such a burden that I can't go on the way I was going. I'm distracted and I turn aside and I go up another alley somewhere in another direction. That's what it means.

And then it needs to be qualified in this way, the cares of which the Lord Jesus speaks in this parable are the cares of this age, this age. Now that qualifies it. You see there are cares that are somehow distinctly and exclusively related to a given time, a given age, a given epoch in history, this age rather than the age beyond.

What Jesus is saying is that whereas the good seed of the gospel awakens in us an awareness of and an interest in eternal things, there is also and already in our natures a deeply embedded weed of sturdy proportions that keeps our thoughts and our desires locked in an earthward and purely temporal direction.

I remember as a boy going to school and there was one object of pity that I saw almost every day as I went to school. There was a dear lady, she must have been then, time I'm thinking about, on in her 80s.

She had this crippling paralysis and she was bent over, poor soul, that she could never look up. She was so bent, her face was just seeing the ground all the time. You medical people will know what that is, never mind about the medical term.

The tragedy of it never seemed to leave me. She couldn't look up. Men and women there is something like that in your hearts and mind by nature.

The Word of God calls us to look upwards, to think of things that are eternal and spiritual, and somehow or other when the Word lifts our chins up, down they go. The drag, the pull of earth and time and sense and flesh, it is so great that our minds and our hearts become locked within this world and this age. Now this does not mean necessarily that people are absorbed with the worst things of this age.

Some people are of course, with us most sordid things of this age. But you remember when our Lord deals with the same subject from a different point of view and in a different context in the Sermon on the Mount, from which we read this morning, he refers to three of the things that distract in this age, this time, at this period in our lives. And there was nothing sordid about them.

What are the things that the unconverted pagan Gentiles think about? Well here they are, says Jesus, what should we eat? And what should we drink? And what should we put on? Here is the Trinity around which the pagan life is lived, eating, drinking, wearing, putting on a show. Now there's nothing necessarily evil about all this, they're necessary. You've got to dress, you've got to eat, you've got to drink, so have we all.

You see, but the whole thing is this, that we can become so absorbed with these things, which are quite innocuous in themselves, and have a right place, that even these can lock our minds and thoughts and hearts away from the great eternal realities. The point of that reference then is that a legitimate concern for life's necessities may all too easily degenerate into an illegitimate anxiety for such things, so that the result is a crippling of the soul in its spiritual birth pan. We cannot allow the Word to do its work and to bring us to have faith in a God who is our Father and trust Him.

We can't, we don't get to that point. Real faith in God is never begotten, because it's choked. The Word is choked before it comes to birth.

Now that's the first. Worldly cares, worldly cares. My friend, is this your problem today? Could it be that though you've received the Word, and you'll receive the Word apparently, ostensibly, gladly this morning, you good people, you don't fight with a preacher? And you will read your Bible tomorrow morning, and you will read it and you'll say, I agree with it from cover to cover.

This is the Word of God, this is the Bible, this is the book of God. I accept it all. But despite that acceptance, there is somehow or other a choking of the Word, so that it doesn't come to maturity.

And it can sometimes be these overwinning anxieties that divert us. They come upon us like a burden, and then we can't walk straight, and we can't look upwards into the eternities, and we can't see the vast canopy of eternity against which we should be living all the time. And here we are in the little rut of the present.

Now come with me to the second species that our Lord refers to. The New International Version and the KJV speak of it as the deceitfulness of wealth, or of riches. The RASV has changed it somewhat, I'm not sure why.

The delight of riches. Another translation speaks of it as the lure of riches. But the New International Version and the KJV are really literal here.

The deceitfulness of riches or of wealth, the deceitfulness. Now the word translated deceitfulness is applied to different things in the New Testament. We speak for example, Paul speaks in 2 Thessalonians 2.10 of the deceitfulness of unrighteousness.

The epistle to the Hebrew speaks of the deceitfulness of sin. You see sin appears glamorous and attractive, and there's something in it after all. People get something out of it.

And so it deceives us. It says look at those people, they get somewhere. They're far happier than the Christians.

And this is the deception of sin. It has this deceptive element. Sin hides its consequences, its evil consequences from men.

Sin doesn't advertise that sin when it is finished brings forth death. It doesn't do that. It's deceitful.

Now Jesus uses exactly the same word here concerning riches. Riches are very deceitful. And I suppose that the main thought that he has in mind here is that they are deceitful in the sense that they promise what they can't deliver.

And yet you see there is a native weed in the human soul that predisposes us to believe that wealth is the most important thing in this life. So that we get sidetracked and spend more time and energy and enterprise in quest for gold than we do for God. It's true, it's true.

And to crown everything of course, the more we get in terms of riches, the more we want. It breeds an appetite for itself. And a man is never satisfied with material things.

He always wants more, more, more, more, more. You've never met a rich man who says now I've got enough, I don't want any more. It's peculiar.

There is something crazy about it. It feeds upon itself and the desire is for more and more and more. You can never see the end of it.

Now I must say a word here to the effect that riches in themselves are not condemned in the Bible. Let us get this quite clear. Riches are not inherently even according to scripture.

So that we meet in the Bible a number of people who hold quite considerable wealth in their given situations and circumstances. Right away from Abram in the Old Testament to David and Solomon and right through to the New Testament. There are one or two illustrations, not many in the New.

And there is one man concerning whom our Lord said, for example, I've not seen as great faith. No, not even in Israel. And he was a very rich man.

Even so, this is the challenging thing, even so, even though riches are not inherently wrong, wealth has peculiar temptations for men. It can play ducks and drakes with us. So that we encounter such statements in scripture as these, and these are only samples.

Listen to Jesus. One of the most staggering words he ever said. How hard is it for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God? And then immediately afterwards, he says, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Now that's Jesus. That's not me. Now you can see the camel.

The camel is so big with his hump and his whatnot. You see, and you see the eye of a needle. It's so terribly small.

It's as impossible, he says, for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God as it is for a camel to become small enough to enter the narrow, wicked gate into the kingdom of God. Well, said the disciples, who then can be saved? And Jesus said this. He says, with men, it is absolutely impossible.

But with God, all things are possible. It is possible, but it is only possible because God is the God of the impossible. That's the only basis upon which a rich man can be saved.

It's because of the sheer, absolute, total sovereignty and omnipotence of an almighty God, says Jesus. It's as serious as that. Paul has a very striking passage.

In 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 9 and 10. That really frightened me when I was preparing for this morning. I thought I'd have to change my sermon.

Says Paul, people who want to get rich, and you see, all of us do. You do, I do. Now this is the point, you see.

We're not talking about somebody somewhere else this morning. This doesn't matter how much you've got. We all have in our hearts this sneaking feeling that riches are going to solve all our problems.

People who want to get rich fall into temptation and the traps, says Paul. I'm quoting from the NIV. And enter many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

And he's writing to Timothy. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. But now notice then, whereas money or wealth in and of itself is not harmful or evil per se, riches deceive.

That is what our Lord is talking about in this parable. The deceitfulness of riches. You see, riches can make fools of us.

And they can make fools of us all too easily. And to complicate matters, it can do it in quite, it can do it quite irrespective of whether we've got riches or whether we haven't. Now this to me is one of the most challenging things.

It doesn't really matter whether I've got a lot or whether I've got a little. My attitude to riches can cripple me for life and rob me of spiritual wealth. You see, riches deceive the poor or the comparatively poor.

Riches deceive the poor when a man is persuaded that the basic tragedy of his or her life is the absence of riches. And so he or she spends his days either in self-pity, I haven't got more riches, things are not

better with me, my bank balance is all that small or it's nonexistent or I'm in the red. And so a person is groveling for gold and worshipping gold by the measure of heart with which a person seeks it.

Now that's not the rich man, that's the poor man, in order to get it. And you see, the view of gold, the view of wealth is such, if I can only get this, if I can only get this, now all will be well. But it isn't well.

A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he has, says Jesus. Riches cannot deliver what they promise and we are foolish enough to be deceived by them. On the other hand, riches deceive their possessors all too easily.

They do so when they make a man complacent, smug, proud, self-satisfied. When they make a man think that because he's got riches he's better than somebody else. Or when almost without his realizing it, and this is the point of the parable, almost without his realizing it, the man who is spending his soul and his mind absorbed in the quest of riches, finds that he is doing so, and all the time this absorption with gold rather than God causes the Word to choke.

And even though he sit under the ministry of the Word with the regularity of a saint, and read the Word with the regularity of a disciple, the Word that comes in, it just doesn't come to full fruition. There are latent energies in the soul that never come to birth for God. And there are gifts that God has given that are never used for God, because the Word does not purge and sanctify.

Men and women, this is a very serious word. That's why you see, you may have thought it's very hard of Jesus, talking about that rich farmer in Luke 12, and he says to him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, and whose then shall those things be? He had been fooled. That's the point.

Riches deceive. Riches make you look a fool at last, unless you handle them according to the Word and the Spirit of God, and use them aright to His glory, and see yourself as the servant of the Lord, utterly at His disposal with your person and your possessions. Thus, you see, the carking, anxious quest of the poor for riches, as if they were the main answer to his life's problems, or their possession life's main goal, as well as the illusions of the rich man who thinks that having riches he possesses life's highest prize, both of these testify to the deceitfulness of riches.

Now, I remember when I was a young Christian, I thought that it was only the rich that could be hoodwinked in this way. I'm quite convinced in my own heart that the bulk of people who are hoodwinked by riches and fall into this trap are not rich at all. But they are those who set such a prize upon wealth that they seek it, though they never get it, and they worship it even though they haven't got it.

In other words, their philosophy is such, this is the one thing I must get. I'll spend my whole time and energy and influence to get wealth. And you may be a poor man doing exactly that.

So it's not the measure of wealth that you have, it's the motive of the soul, and it's the spirit in which you hold what you have, and whereby you look upon it all. Now, says our Lord, that kind of thing chokes the word, strangles it at birth. It doesn't come to full fruition.

The soul does not blossom forth as it ought, and the energies of the soul are not won over to the service of God, and a life is spent not to his glory, but to something less. Now, one of the saddest illustrations of this kind of thing, of course, is given us in the New Testament in the form of one church, the church at Laodicea. You remember how our Lord addressed that church? And since I'm addressing a church this morning, I want to read these words, and I pray that you will, with me, listen to what our Lord said.

To the angel of the church in Laodicea, write the words of the Amen, the faithful, and the true witness, the beginning of God's creation. I know your works. You are neither hot nor cold.

Would that you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. You make me sick.

That's what he's saying. For you say, now here it comes, you say, this is what the church was saying. Now, I don't suppose that the minister of the church or the elders of the church or the leaders of the church or even the members ever said this in so many words.

I'm sure they didn't stand up and announce it like this. This is what they're thinking, and this is what they're saying in their hearts. You say, I am rich.

I have prospered. I have need of nothing. Now, there it is.

There's the deceitfulness of riches. Not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. You say that you are rich, and this is what you're like if you could only see yourself, says the Lord to the church.

You're pitiable, poor, blind, wretched, naked. Therefore, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire that you may be rich. And he goes on.

And you remember how the passage ends. He says, behold, I stand at the door and knock. As a matter of fact, says the Lord to this rich church, I'm outside.

Gold is inside. Plush inside. And I, the Lord of all riches, I'm outside, and I'm standing at the door asking for acceptance.

My dear people, don't let's play with fire. I trust that the Lord will save us as a church from anything of this kind to the end of our days. Notice what does the damage.

It's not riches, but the deceitfulness of riches. They've deceived us to the point where we're unaware of the fact that allowing them to be and to do what they do and what they are, the effect of the Word of God in our souls and upon our hearts and lives is such that the word is choked and it does not come to fruit. One word about the last.

I'm sorry I've dealt so long with the second. What is the third weed? Well, it's very, very much related and really one doesn't need to say much about it. The desires for other things.

Lusts for other things, says the KJV. Well, you see, the word for lust simply means desire. When it becomes a lust, it's a lust.

It's a desire that is out of control. That's what the lust is. It's a desire without control.

It's a horse without a rider. It's a car without a driver. You see, no one's in control.

Desire out of control. And we have a lot of that today. Lusts or desires are not necessarily to be understood in the limited sense of sexual desire and perversion, but in the more general sense of longing for innumerable things other than for God and for his will in our lives and through our life.

Lust is a craving. It's a passionate desire. And here you notice what frustrates the word and its fruit bearing is an inordinate desire for things that are not consistent with or helpful to the progress of the Word of God.

That's all. The desire for things, the desire for things. What are they? Anything greater than for God.

You see, by definition, if God is not the greatest and the most desirable object of my life, he is not my God. This is why, you see, we Christians live a lie so very, very often. By definition, God is the most desirable being.

And especially in the minds of those who have come to their senses by the Word and the Spirit and profess to be born again. God is the one and only to whom worship and service is due. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

All right. If I hunker more after other things, whatever they are, however legitimate they may be, if I hunker so much after them that I want them more than I want God, you see, something's gone wrong. And however much of the Word I hear or read or read about, it's going to be choked in my soul and I'm not going to mature and the Word will not come to fruit.

Here, then, is a heart which is so overcrowded with native concerns, misconceptions, and desires that the seed of the Word is choked ere it comes to anything real. The person represented here, therefore, is one in whose heart the gospel may have given assent to the truth of the message, even acquiesced in some measure to the new standards required of a believer or a disciple, and may even have the affections touched. But the whole process stops there.

You know, it's the picture of someone that's intending to go on a journey. You've got all the bags packed, you've got everything you need, and you've got the map, you've got your destination, you've got everything fixed, but the car doesn't start. And if you want me to change it somewhat, it's the picture of somebody going on a boat, a sailing boat, everything, the tackles intact, everything's ready, you've got all the luggage, all the food on board for the day or the week, as the case may be, and you're sitting there and you're catching the winds in your sails, but the anchor is so embedded in the seabed, you can't leave.

You're anchored to harbor. Whatever our response to the Word of God, these weeds form an anchor and we are on the move. Now you will understand why I said this is a very challenging word.

And you see, this is the call, and I come to the end with this, the call and summons of our Lord's Word here is this. In preparing the seed of our hearts for the maturing of the Word of God within us, and it's coming to full fruit, we've got to act, we've got to work, we've got to labor, we've got to do something. We've got to let the Word of God, first of all, break the superficial layer.

Well, that's been done. The topsoil has got to be broken up. All right, that's done.

The rock underneath has got to be broken. All right. Let's assume the bed is done.

What then? Well, now we've got to get after the roots of these weeds, these thorns, these thistles, and we've got to be drastic with them. And there are some things, you know, in our lives we've just simply got to throw them overboard and say goodbye to them, and turf them out. Now, this can only be do by the grace of God.

And this can only be, I'm sorry, this can only be done by the grace of God. There are two things, you see, that have a balance about them here in Scripture. In some places of Scripture, the Bible tells me to do that.

It commands us to do things. To put away evil thoughts and so forth. Put this away.

Put that away. Wrecking the old man dead. Crucify the flesh and so forth and so forth.

In other places, I am given an understanding that I can only do it insofar as God is at work within me. The point is this. Can I put it to you in terms of a picture? I'm told somewhere that there is a species of oak trees.

Is it the pin oak? Now, somebody will contradict me, I'm sure. I think it is the pin oak. I don't know much about trees.

But if it isn't, it's another one. I believe it's the pin oak that never loses its leaves in autumn. Never.

Even though they die. They wilt in the autumn and they die. But the leaves are still on the trees until the springtime comes.

And then when spring comes and there is new life in the soil and that new life is given to the roots and to the trees, as the new life comes in, the old leaves fall off. Do you remember Paul writing to the Corinthians, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. It is God who is at work within you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

That's what I'm getting at. We must work with God so that when by the Spirit and by the Word He creates a desire in us to get rid of these things, we must act on it. You see, in one sense, every time we read the Word and every time we come to church and hear a sermon, it's a moment of crisis.

Now there are some people in the Christian church and the evangelical world that don't like any kind of decision. I think I know the theology that underlies that. But I tell you, it can be a menacing thing.

And it can have a shackling effect upon the spiritual life. You and I must respond to the Word of God every time we read it, every time we hear it. Otherwise, what we've heard will not profit us.

It has to be received and applied. In other words, there must be decision. There must be action.

And the tragedy in my life, I know, so often is this that we can read and we can behold a whole panoramic vision of the truth of God, but then we don't do what it tells us. My dear friends, I bid you as we conclude this morning, I bid you do what the Lord is telling you to do. Mary, the mother of our Lord, told those in the wedding at Cana of Galilee of old, Whatsoever he saith to you, referring to the Lord Jesus, do it.

Lest the Word of God, in all its purity, coming into our minds and into our hearts, is choked so that our lives are scarcely a shadow of what they ought to be and might be, with obedience, glad and ready to the Word and will of God. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, your Word has this cutting edge to it that it breaks through all the complexes and all the superficialities which we can put up.

And we ask this morning that we may not be among the deceived. We pray, O Lord, that these weeds which we allow to thrive in the undergrowth of our lives, we may be able to deal with radically and realistically in the imagery of this parable, so that the seed sown falls into good soil and there brings forth

thirtyfold, sixtyfold, even a hundredfold. And yours is the glory.

Father, hear us to your praise. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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