



The Soil of Awakening
Message Notes, July 29, 2018
Hosea 10:12, Matthew 13

Institutionalization vs Awakening:

- **Institutionalization:** leads to traditions and vested interests that move a church or ministry towards becoming a (self-justifying) worthy organization rather than campaigners in a sacrificial crusade.
- **Awakening:** is being roused from sleep to become fully aware of God's power and sufficiency, His dynamic presence, the vitality of His Word, the beauty of prevailing prayer, the call to repentance, and the commission to be salt and light in our world ... to be awakened to the supremacy and purposes of Christ.
 - Our mission statement embodies the above vision for awakening:
*"To **awaken** ordinary people to extraordinary life in Christ-centered community."*
- Fire is one image of awakening: Fire's tendency is to "go out." It needs continual oxygen/stoking. We, too, need continual stirring to stay "awakened."
 - I Thessalonians 5:17 – "pray without ceasing"
 - Ephesians 5:18 – "be (continually) filled with the Holy Spirit"
 - II Timothy 1:6 – "fan into flames the gift of God within you"
- Staying "awake" is not automatic. Yes, the Holy Spirit is the transforming power in our lives, but we must be attentive to Him and responsive to His stirrings.
- Another good image for awakening relates to soil
Hosea 10:12 captures this metaphor well – "Sow for yourselves righteousness, *reap* the fruit of unfailing love, and *break up* your unplowed (fallow) ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until He comes and showers righteousness on you."
 - God showers our lives and grows in us His righteousness, but we have a part to play – to sow, reap, and plow up the soil of our mind, heart, and will.
- A.W. Tozer expounds on these TWO soils: Fallow and plowed ground:
"Fallow ground rests lazily in the sun, with its hard, protective layer, but in the safety of this 'death' it misses the 'danger' of life for fear of "fruit follows the plow."
 - Life and fruit can only emerge from plowed soil.

Matthew 13:3-23: Jesus' Parable of the 4 Soils:

In this parable, the sower sows the same seed (the incorruptible, life-giving Word of God). The seed doesn't change; *the soils* are different:

1. Path soil – hard soil; the seed never gets in. Representing those with hard, indifferent hearts (like those in Ephesians 4:17-18)

2. Rocky soil – those who receive the truth with enthusiasm, but their soil is rocky with other affections and attentions. They don't nurture the seed in their lives, so it does not take root. When faith gets challenging or costly, they fall away.

3. Thorny soil – like the rocky soil, these are ones who receive the truth and it even grows in their lives, but so do "thorny" things (shallow/worldly pursuits, worry over comfort and riches). These thorny things choke out the fruitful life of "seeking first the kingdom".

4. Good soil - yes, this is who we want to be! Ever recognizing and clearing away rocks and thorns; attending to our soil (our souls), nourishing it with God's Word, prayer, worship, solitude, community, God can grow in us His life, the fruit of His Spirit. This fruit is not just for us, but it spills over to bless others and reveal the kingdom, so God's vineyard grows in homes, in communities, in cities, throughout the world.

- This soil parable is all about the condition of our hearts.
 - unexamined, unaware, dismissive *OR*
 - shallow, not rooted, fickle *OR*
 - divided, cluttered, choked *OR*
 - soft, receptive, surrendered
- We can so easily shift between these hearts – what helps us stay steady; stay awakened!

Again, remembering that GOD gives the life, causes the growth, brings forth the fruit, but what is *our* part in tending the soil of our souls?

1. Repenting (turning from) our selfishness, our bent to rule our own lives, our desire for God to make our lives work in the ways that we desire.

2. Pursuing (turning to) total surrender, dying to self, seeking first His kingdom.

Jeremiah 29:11-13 "you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart ..."

Matthew 7:7-8 "Ask (keep asking), seek (keep seeking), knock (keep knocking), and the door will be opened to you."

Philippians 3:12-14 "Forgetting what lays behind, I strain forward, ... press on toward the goal/prize In Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:10-13 “I have learned to be content in regards to this world -- whatever my circumstances, but I am never content in relation to my Lord – I always joyfully long for more of Him.” – [The “secret” Paul has learned in his journey with Jesus.]

- If we want to be good soil; if we want to stay awakened; if we want to experience extraordinary life, we must *seek, ask, knock, press on, long for*
 - He is the bread of life; He is the living water.
- To borrow truth from the agricultural world: if you want weeds, do nothing! But if you want a fruitful crop, it will require time, attention and energy.

Reflective Questions:

1. Which soil (heart condition) best depicts the state of your soul these days?
 - If you are “path soil” – how can you turn your attention to the Lord so he can help you examine your heart?
 - If “rocky soil” – what are the rocks in your life that block your roots of faith from growing deeper?
 - If “thorny soil” – what thorns are choking the life of God in you?
2. What’s one tangible way you can begin attending to your soil (soul)?
 - Repenting – confessing a sin? seeking help with an addictive struggle? making amends with someone? begin the challenging process of forgiving someone?
 - Pursuing - making time for scripture? taking time for prayer? sowing worship/thanksgiving into your day? investing time in meaningful community with others? considering ways to fast? Creating margin for solitude and silence?
3. Of all the scriptures referenced above, which one is most meaningful to you? Why? Perhaps spend more time with it – reflecting further, listening more deeply for God’s words to you, journaling your thoughts, maybe even memorizing this.