

The Parable of the Soils

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[0 : 0 0] The scripture reading comes from the book of Matthew, chapter 13. Please follow along on the bulletin or your own Bible. Starting in verse 1, we read, That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.

And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying, A sower went out to sow, and as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path.

And the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil. And immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil.

But when the sun rose, they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.

Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain. Some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.

[1 : 1 5] Then the disciples came and said to him, Why do you speak to them in parables? And he answered them, To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.

But to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

This is why I speak to them in parables. Because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Indeed, in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, You will indeed hear, but never understand. And you will indeed see, but never perceive.

For the people's heart has grown dull. And with their ears, they can barely hear. And their eyes they have closed. Lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears.

[2 : 1 8] And understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.

For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see, and did not see it. And to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy. Yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and then tribulation or persecution arises.

On account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

[3 : 2 9] As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word, and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.

This is the word of God. Thank you so much, Betty. Let me just again say, what an exciting thing to be eleven years in.

You know, this is the first day where we've actually had ten, ten, in the date, and we started on ten, ten, ten. So if you want to know how old watermark is, just always remember it's ten, ten, ten.

So it's just a great thing, and as great as we're going to be looking at the parable of the sower, which is a lot about the faithfulness of God, just to say God has been so faithful to us.

Actually, who was here, was anyone here right like 2010? Is it any? Okay, let's have a round of applause. Woo! That's great.

[4 : 33] Well, those of us who are newer, you can go and actually chat to the old veterans and find out what it was like back in the old days. But let me just pray for us, and as we get into God's word now.

Father, you are faithful. Lord, I thank you even as we look back over 11 years of our time as watermark, you've taken us through many seasons, many journeys, many ups, many downs, and yet you have been faithful.

You have been faithful. Because you are always faithful. And your word is true, and your word is powerful. Lord, I just thank you for the way that the gospel is at work in so many of our hearts and so many of our lives, and I just see the fruitfulness in people over this time.

Lord, we want to give you all the glory, because that's nothing to do with us. And so, Father, I pray even this morning, as we come and speak your word, and Lord, we pray that actually we would continue to be people who have hearts which are soft to you, where we are a church of good soil, where we're a church that really bears fruit, because your word is going so deep into our lives, Lord, whatever season we're in.

And I pray for those of us here right now who are just in a tough season, I pray, Lord, that your word would come and comfort and strengthen them. I pray for those of us who are in a wandering season, I pray that your word would come and challenge us, and would draw us back to yourself.

[6 : 03] And I pray for those of us who are just in a good season, Lord, I pray that we would be filled with thankfulness for your gracious goodness and kindness to us, both individually and as a church.

So, Lord, please speak to us this morning, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Great. So, we've been looking at the book of Matthew, and talking a lot about some of the responses to Jesus that have been coming through this book.

And I was chatting to a cafe owner just this last week, and she said to me, I think Jesus just kind of appears to people in different ways. She said, I think in China, it's like he appears in Ganyam.

I think in India, it's maybe like Shiva. She said, as long as he makes you feel better, and he makes you like a good person, Jesus can be who you want him to be. And I thought, that's really interesting.

Because, if you said that to your boss, like, hey, I'll just take you how I want to take you, and what you say how I want to take it, I think you're going to get fired pretty quickly.

[7 : 12] Because even though it's trying to sound very tolerant, what she's actually saying is, I don't want to take Jesus for who he says he is.

I don't want to live under his authority. And so, the book of Matthew is actually calling us to responses, and not just to kind of go, oh, let me just kind of park you on one side.

But actually, it's saying Jesus is the authoritative king, who is bringing in his kingdom, and he's calling people to follow him, as the only way to God. And he's saying, through his miracles, through his healings, and even through the way that he loves people, and cares for people, he's saying, listen, come to me, but you don't, but take me for who I say I am.

Because you can reject the claims of who I am, or you can accept them, but you can't say, I accept Jesus, but I want to take you on my terms. That's not an option. And this is what Matthew has been bringing to us, all over these number of weeks.

And we've come now to chapter 13, which is actually a shift in the book of Matthew. And it's, Jesus tells seven parables, in the chapter 13.

[8 : 30] And we don't tend to use parables a lot these days, but a parable is a story, or illustration, or illustration, which is providing a mirror on reality.

Okay? It's using everyday imagery to bring a window into your heart, and what God and his purposes are like. You know, I had someone recently ask me, why didn't all the first century Jews follow Jesus?

It's a good question, if he was so great. And in this chapter, Jesus is using the parables, and he's going to use this first parable, the parable of the sower, to begin to explain why people are not all responding to him and following him.

He's using this parable to interpret every, actually, other parable that he's going to tell us. Okay? Coming up. Because this parable both explains people's responses, but it also predicts how Jesus will continue to polarize people between those who, all the way to the cross, to the early church, and even today, to what are you going to do with him?

Because you can't just park him on the side. You can accept him or reject him, but take him for who he is. And so, we're going to look today, and if you've got your bulletin, please kind of follow through with the parable.

[9 : 52] This is a very famous one. And we're going to look at three different things. We're going to look at varieties of soil. We're going to look at testing the soil. And then we're going to look at how are we responding to this. Okay?

So that's where we're going. And so, the parable is an agricultural one. Okay? Very fitting for Hong Kong. You know, it's about four soils.

The path, the rocky soil, the thorny soil, the good soil, where this farmer is going out, scattering his seed. And the fact that only one of these soils, the good soils, in the end, bears long-term fruit.

And because this parable, I think actually, many of us are familiar with it, but in Hong Kong, if Jesus was here, I don't think he'd say exactly the same today. I think he might use something like this.

I think he might say, there was an investor who was putting seed capital into a series of startups. And the first set of companies he invested in went bankrupt within a short time.

[10 : 52] And then the second started really well until COVID hit. And then they collapsed as the owners just kind of cut their losses and ran. And then the third seemed a good investment for a while, but there were underlying structural issues, mismanagement, poor investments, which eventually surfaced and the cash reserves just drained away until it collapsed.

But the final set of startups had good management. They persevered through several economic crises and eventually produced a healthy profit. Even the weakest performer was far more profitable than the market could have predicted.

That's the parable of the sower. And what is Jesus actually talking about? Okay, these companies, these soils, and I'll use soils from now on, but you get the picture.

He's talking about the soils, he's talking about the hearts of people. And into which the seed of the gospel is sown, the message of Jesus is put into our hearts and he's talking about what is the key issue?

When you see friends and family who are not responding to the gospel, the issue, just like with Jesus, the issue isn't the sower because he's generous, generously scattering his seed.

[12 : 22] The issue isn't the seed because the seed, the gospel message, is powerful. It's always powerful. He's saying the issue is the soil of people's hearts.

And you know, this parable actually shouldn't be called the parable of the sower. It should be called the parable of the soils because that's what Jesus is talking about. And so Jesus' explanation for this in verses 18 to 23 actually in context matches on to the very people he has been engaging with over this time.

So let's kind of walk through these just a little bit. You see, the first soil is like the Pharisees who have grown hostile to Jesus.

so hostile to him that Jesus can't any longer preach in their synagogues. He's actually got to go out to the seaside in the open air because the hostility is so great.

These were the religious people. And the point is that they, like we, can hear sermon after sermon. They can be engaging in God's word.

[13 : 34] You can even tell us the main points back verbatim from what was said. But actually in your mind be thinking, I hope my spouse hears this. Or this is for somebody else.

And somewhere between the benediction and the car park, Satan comes and snatches the word away from you. And it's just kind of bounced off your heart like a hard path.

That's the first soil. The second soil really are like the crowds who are around Jesus. You know, a couple of chapters earlier in Matthew, some of these, the crowd have come up to Jesus and says, Jesus, we really want to follow you.

And it sounds amazing. It looks great. But Jesus says to them, foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. In other words, are you prepared for the cost of what's coming up?

Because in other words, Jesus has thousands of people coming to him, crowds of people, and we would get dazzled by the numbers. We'd think his ministry was super successful, but Jesus doesn't get dazzled by them.

[14 : 42] In fact, in John 2, he says this, he says, many believed in him, but he didn't entrust himself to them, for he knew what was in a man. You see, what he's saying is actually, the people who are coming to him in the crowds are coming just to get something from him.

It's kind of Santa Claus Jesus. They want some inspiration from him. They want him to fix a problem in their lives. They want a healing. They want something from him, but they don't actually want him. And I hear many people actually go, you know, we had this amazing Alpha Course Christianity Explored, and a hundred people came to faith, and it was amazing, or some others say, hey, this person, they prayed the sinner's prayer, and now they're a believer, and it's amazing.

And I want to go, when I hear that, I want to go, yes, let's celebrate. There's more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over a hundred righteous. That's true.

But I also want to go, let's see. Let's pray that actually they get rooted in deep soil, not just superficial soil. Let's pray they're not users of Jesus, but they're lovers of Jesus.

Let's pray they love Jesus in the long haul, because that's what Jesus is talking about with the second soil. That's the rocky soil.

[16 : 06] Then the third soil, the thorny soil, actually, by the way, the rocky soil, what happens is then when things just, the pressure starts hitting, the things that they really wanted start getting on the line because you're following Jesus.

What they choose to do is say, hey, I prefer my career rather than actually really the cost of following Jesus. I prefer actually just to have a comfortable life rather than actually really facing the challenges of following him.

And so they back down because they've got no roots. That's the second soil. The third soil, the thorny soil, are people like Judas, who is actually one of the disciples.

He's right there. He's super involved in church. He's doing all the stuff. He's doing mission trips with Jesus. He even gets personally served communion by Jesus.

That's so close to Jesus. But his heart is thorny, gripped by money and greed or by worries or by ambition for his own self.

[17 : 16] You know, he steals from the communal purse of Jesus and he betrays Jesus because of greed. And the point is that actually the idols in our hearts which in one sense are always there can take time for them to come up and the thorns can just choke them in time and choke the seed.

They're a dangerous group. But then the fourth, the fourth ones are the true disciples. They're actually not just the twelve.

There are a whole load of followers who are around Jesus as well that Mark 4 tells us. And they are not perfect superstar Christians. Okay? Jesus has to go to them. How is it that you don't understand what I'm talking about?

He goes, oh you guys of little faith at times. Jesus does get a little frustrated with them. But even though they haven't got it all together, they are those who actually do respond to Jesus.

They do want Jesus. They want to be with him. They keep coming back in repentance to him again and again and again. And he says, in the long haul what happens?

[18 : 27] There is this harvest that is born in their lives. There's a harvest that's born in their lives. And so the point of this is quite simple. Just as the skin of an apple may look beautiful on the outside but it be rotten on the inside.

So a Christian is not one who simply professes faith in Christ. That's not someone who's simply active in church. It's not someone who simply accepts the doctrine. It's one who in their hearts wants Christ above all and who will need to persevere in faith in the long haul.

That's what a Christian is. And that's the point. That's the varieties of soil that Jesus says every single one of us will fit into. How are we doing?

Good. Second point. Testing of the soil. Because right in between this parable and then the explanation Matthew puts this little bit in between where he kind of steps back and has the disciples asking a question to Jesus of why do you actually speak in parables?

And what he's doing is he's actually coming to show us and like how do you know given this parable how do you know what kind of soil you are? That's the point of this. And the disciples are going hey can't you just kind of speak to us like really directly we're a bit dumb okay we're a bit stupid but like give it to us clearly please and we need to kind of figure this out and come and ask you.

[20 : 02] And some people have argued well Jesus tells parables because he just likes to kind of illustrate things just like you know like a stand up comedian takes everyday life to kind of make it kind of relevant but that's not why Jesus says he's bringing these parables not making it totally easy spoon feeding them in terms of giving them the main point.

Here's what he says he says to you the disciples has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven that's God's deepest heart and God's ways in the gospel but to them the Pharisees the crowds the others it has not been given to them to the one who has like you disciples who've understood something about me and my kingdom more will be given you're going to get to know me even more it's not just head knowledge it's heart knowledge and my ways and you'll have an abundance of knowing me but from he who does not have those who don't want me those who are not willing to engage me even what he has will be taken away that is why I speak to them in parables what's he talking about here's a couple of things that Jesus is doing in his teaching technique here the first thing he's doing is that parables are ways to reveal your heart okay

Michael Green says this parables revealed truth to those who are hungry and concealed it from those who are too lazy to look for it or too blinded by hatred and prejudice to discern it in other words what he's saying is they're a filter system giving you enough information to draw you to Jesus if you're interested but not passively spoon feeding you so you can just sit on your sofa and go oh that's great you see it's a bit like this it's a bit like if I go listen I know the key to your entire future so meet me a cafe at 8pm and I'll tell you if your heart is hungry and you're opening yeah I want that what are you going to do you'll be there you'll cancel your appointments you'll say I've got to be there tell me like that and as you go there and then you hear the message so you'll be satisfied and you'll keep coming back for more that's a good soil coming to

Jesus but if you just kind of you want Jesus on your own terms like the rocky soil you'll go oh that sounds great I want to go I'll be there but then it's like raining outside and there's a lot of traffic on the roads and you're like oh and you'll kind of die you'll just back out at the last minute that's the rocky soil but then the thorny soil will go okay now just tell me right now what it is because I've got a job interview later and I'm super busy at the moment so could you just kind of fit me in like right now and the path will say hey I know what I'm doing with my life thanks I actually I don't need from you right now and so just like the airport immigration you know filters you into different lanes when you hear the word your own response and your heart will filter you into where your heart really lies in relation to

Jesus they reveal your heart the second thing they do is they reveal your destiny because here Jesus quotes Isaiah 6 this is verse 14 and 15 and he quotes Isaiah 6 where God commissions Isaiah to keep calling the people to repent but he says every time that you hear you'll hear but you'll never understand you'll see but you'll never perceive they're so deaf that actually you'll say stuff to them but it just kind of goes in one ear and out the other and actually it says here this people's heart has grown dull literally the words are in Greek their hearts have grown fat and their ears listen heavily and their eyes are closing like husbands with their wives sometimes you know actually the image is of a doctor who knows that his long term patient let's call him Frank doesn't listen to him but for the 20th time he tells him listen

[24 : 41] Frank your cholesterol level is so high that unless you stop eating three Big Macs a day you're going to have a heart attack listen to me and the guy's going yeah yeah yeah yeah anything else doctor and he just kind of carries on and the doctor knows because he cares for him that he's going to keep telling him but every single time that he speaks to him Frank's heart is both literally and metaphorically hardening you see and as he does it his fate is being sealed you see the doctor knows one day he's going to get a call Frank's in hospital this time I don't think he's going to make it that's what verse 15 is all about lest they should see with their ears eyes hear with their ears understand with their heart and turn and I would heal them that is God's desire because Jesus is the great physician of our hearts who every time he speaks to us is sowing seed into our lives of the gospel he's offering it to you and he's saying listen

I want you to turn back to me why because I want to heal you I want to bring you life this is what I'm about and Jesus could just go hey you guys you just such a waste of time let me not even have an appointment with you not even speak to you but he doesn't because he's so gracious he's so patient that he keeps coming again and again to each one of us saying will you hear me you know Jesus can soften the hardest of hearts he's sovereign in salvation but we also have to choose how to respond to him and God's sovereignty doesn't override our responsibility to respond I don't get how it works but that's what scripture teaches us so Jesus is not just actually speaking a parable to us that's what he spoke to them but actually he's speaking his word to us today and you know his word always requires active reflection to take it from here down to here you can't just actually say oh

I've just heard it now I can just go off and carry on with my life it always requires some kind of action to respond to it you see every time you hear a sermon about Jesus every time you read your Bible every time a believer speaks God's word into your life in some way it's actually a sorting a filtering moment like in the immigration lanes because here Jesus says blessed are you who hear if you're a Christian when you hear the gospel message when you hear God's word I don't know do you see that as a privilege the longer you're in church you can just get so familiar with it that you miss the privilege because he says it's this grace because even the greatest prophets like Moses and Isaiah and Jeremiah they didn't hear what you guys hear they didn't know the full extent of the mercies of God that are found in Christ because they didn't know Jesus at that point but we do and so every

Sunday during the week we get a chance to hear of the incredible love of God for us who takes stubborn deaf unrepentant unteachable people and he keeps chasing you and me down every single day to the point that he would even bring his ultimate word which is Jesus to us because that's how much he wants us to get the message of his love for us his death for us speaks the loudest message of his grace of his good purposes to draw you to himself he's not a kill joy he's not there to ruin your life he's there to heal us and restore us and it's grace but you know it's also not just a privilege and grace to hear God's word it's also dangerous I don't know if you've thought of this because if you've been in church for a while and this is challenging

I find this challenging you can actually end up going yeah yeah I know that Jesus stuff eyes glaze over let me just check my Instagram or you hear God say hey you need to forgive that person or stop sleeping with your girlfriend or apologize to your spouse or cut out all of that activity and spend time with me and we do nothing and we just carry on busily chasing after our own desires and we go hey it's just a season I'm in once I get through this then you know then I'll listen but you know every day that you refuse to turn to Christ and allow him to heal you your altar is a hardening that's challenging isn't that it's a responsibility to hear God's word well and so then with the varieties of soil we've looked at and the testing of soil that

[30:16] God brings as he speaks his word to you the final thing is how do we respond to this how should we respond and I've got two things that I think we should respond with the first is we need to take a hearing test Jesus says he who has ears let him hear like what is actually God saying to you at the moment in your life and how are you responding to him you know when I was young I had to have I had the hearing test and my ears were blocked and I had to have like a special like operation to help my ears come unblocked some of us are in that situation some of us you don't realize the danger you're in you know God is calling you to surrender in an area of your life but you're going yeah yeah just another day you come to church regularly but you actually don't want to hear and God says he appeals to you today if you hear my voice don't harden your hearts don't tune out of my voice today because do you know what if you tune out today tomorrow you will be so deaf that you won't even hear me so repent whatever I'm calling you to do like stop right now and you've got to take it seriously because you don't want to get a heart attack some of us you may be seekers maybe you wouldn't call yourself a

Christian and the message that Jesus wants to speak to you today is not that Jesus is here just to give you a bit of peace just to give you a bit of wisdom just to give you a few things to kind of fix your life he can do all of that Jesus doesn't want you to take him on your terms because he's the one who loves you the most but he's also the one who demands the highest allegiance in your heart and that's how you'll enjoy him so that my encouragement to you is to look into the claims of Christ let him be the God of your life I encourage you to join the explore course on the 25th of October to actually ask questions and actually take the opportunity as someone who's hungry for more to go and seek to satisfy your hunger with who Jesus really is but for some of us the danger isn't just that we're the first soil or maybe even the second soil the danger is the third soil that many of us get choked and distracted you know in in in Mark six it says even Jesus closest disciples so people who are actually the fourth soil at one point they didn't understand him because their hearts were hardened in other words what it's saying is it's possible for someone to be a true follower of Jesus but have seasons where actually you may be more like the path or more like the rocky soil or more like the thorny soil than the good soil and so you may have worries about your work you may have worries about your kids about whether you're going to be single all of your life you may have desires in your heart for promotion for getting into that school for financial security to be light to be in control to be whatever it is that you're chasing after they can be really good things but if they begin to choke you what you'll see is when you come to church on Sunday when you come to your CG when you spend time with your other believers you should be thinking what is it that I really want at this moment like this morning what do you want do you actually want

Jesus for who Jesus says he is or do you want to just go through the motions so you can get back to doing the things that you're actually really interested in you know his challenges me like do we make space to hear Jesus maybe coming a few minutes early on Sunday I know Kevin mentioned that before or even just every day in your week or is your heart so busy and so crowded so rushing from one thing to the next thing to build your own empire that actually you just love Jesus just to tweet his word to you because that'd be so much like amidst your busy schedule that's all you can cope with but actually he comes to you and says take a hearing test how are you hearing me do you want me that's the first thing this is challenging right it's challenging but the second thing of actually how should we respond is this don't just take a hearing test also aim and have a vision for the long haul you know grain was sown in the autumn and then it was harvested in the early summer of the next year in other words in between there would be these seasons of plowing there would be rains there would be storms there would be waiting there would be all kinds of seasons that went in between before the harvest arrived you know

I listened to a great podcast which talked about just the different stages of life and they talked about how the person in their 50s and 60s is actually bearing the fruit of what they did in their 20s and 30s that's scary because now if you're not a believer in your 20s or 30s you know God redeems and he can yield a harvest at any stage he's amazing like that but it's true that if you're in your 20s now you're discovering yourself you're trying to try out stuff trying to find what you're good at what you're not good at but here's what I've seen in Watermark over the last 10 or 11 years I've seen that those people who in their 20s and in their 30s but their 20s who actually knew how to put deep roots into God through regular scripture reading through prayer through confession through actually bringing people into their lives to help them walk with Christ those are people who I've seen in general be able to weather and get through the 30s and the 40s well but those who didn't do that who didn't have the roots but were super active super busy in church they really struggled in getting choked in their 30s and their 40s because you know when you're in your 30s those of you who are in your 30s and I think it goes into your 40s

I'm in my 40s and I still feel this but there's so many responsibilities there's busyness there's screaming kids there's promotions and extra meetings and even if you were on fire in your 20s just when you get to your 30s you have to have new creativity because the rhythms you had back then you just can't do the same and you just got to be intentional at getting other people in your life and getting God's word in your life so that you're going to be someone who walks through this busy crazy season to get to the place where you're going to have a harvest in your life that others will experience and bear fruit in their lives so how are we doing with that if you're in your 30s if you're in your 20s how are we doing if you're in your 40s or your 50s or your 60s or your 70s I'm not sure we've got anyone in your 80s no one in your 80s yet Leo don't put up your hand you're not in your 80s yet who have you got actively alongside you to help you to pursue

[38 : 17] Jesus to help you get God's word into your marriage into your parenting into your work because sometimes we can just have friends who are chasing all kind of other ambitions and they pull us away but Jesus wants to come to us today he's speaking to each one of us he's not speaking to condemn us he's not speaking to shame us and if you're going oh I've just wasted a whole lot of time in my 20s and 30s today is the start of a new day God's word always bears fruit when we respond to it he's not coming to disillusion you he's not coming to say like beat you up but he's coming to say will you respond to me today because I want and I hope you want as well if God gets me to 70 if God gets me to 80 I want to be like some guys that

I know who have this legacy of just faithfulness fruitfulness they're not spectacular they've made plenty of mistakes but you know what I've seen in their lives I've seen this that they have discovered that they are more sinful than they thought they were when they were 20 but they've discovered that Jesus is more beautiful and a more gracious saviour to them now in their 70s or 80s than they ever thought was possible and they've seen that he's so faithful through every single season that there is no regrets with him and he has been and is and will be enough for you in every single season of your life whatever you're going through right now so what is he saying to you and how are you responding to him this is the parable of the soils

I want you to take a minute and actually if you've got your bulletin with you I want to do something that maybe we I'm not sure whether we've done it much before but I want you to actually take a minute and if you've got a pen and if you haven't got a pen I'd like you to raise your hand I don't know Karen have we got some pens around if you haven't I'd actually like you to take a minute just you and Jesus to actually write down what is God saying to me right now in the season that I'm in do I know what he's saying to me I want you to write it down because that clarifies it for you and then I want you to think how am I responding to this his word is grace to us it's not condemnation it's to heal us how are we responding to it and I want you to write that down and just take some time to pray I'm going to ask the band just to kind of come up and play we're going to take communion in a minute but before we do that

I want us to just really take this time for you to pray and you to just reflect Jesus doesn't want you to go away from here light the path so just come before God what are you saying to me right now what are you speaking to me in my life how am I hearing you am I setting my stall for the long haul of what you've called me to or am I chasing after temporary things and let God just minister to you yeah drink you

Thank you.

[42 : 57] Maybe you want to think, what are the things that actually choke me or distract me? What do I have to surrender to Jesus right now?

Amen. Jesus says those who seek me will find me.

It's not hard to find. But he wants your heart. Jesus says those who seek me will find me.

Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go.

Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go.

[45 : 00] Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go.

Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. but at communion we discover that actually the one who speaks to us is the one who is the great physician the one who comes to people no matter where their hearts have been and comes again with an offer of forgiveness of grace of healing of life of strength of energy of relationship with him communion is a time for people who who maybe you know that you're one of the first three soils but your heart wants to be that fourth soil your heart that's willing to say

God I yeah the things that have been choking me Lord I want to lay them down forgive me I want you more than anything else change my heart that's a prayer God loves to answer communion is a place for those who know that only because of Jesus can they stand not because they've been great but because he is great so if you know that actually your heart is just not in a place with with God and you just need to take longer to deal with him don't take communion now to just take more time to really wrestle where you are with God if you're not a believer again we ask you not to take it because this is a meal table which expresses the welcome of the king but also expresses our desire that we would be welcomed by him that we would be his and so when you're ready and you've just taken time to process

I encourage you to come up and take the elements and then go back to your seats and then we will take them all together but do this as a sign of saying Jesus yeah I want you and Jesus thank you thank you that you never stop loving us so and Thank you.

Thank you.

[49 : 51] Thank you.

Thank you. The amazing thing about communion is that actually this is a word that God speaks to us.

It's a visual word. It's a word that says, because of what I've done, what you have done is not the determining factor of the fruitfulness of your life.

It's a word to you saying, I am enough for you.

The body of Christ broken for you. And Jesus, even though at that meal table, he had Judas there.

[51 : 47] He had a whole load of disciples who were messy. And yet he looked at each one of them and he still said, this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you.

I keep coming with my word of forgiveness, no matter where you've been. The blood of Jesus shed for us. Father, I thank you that when you speak a word, you speak a better word than the blood of Abel, which condemns.

You speak a better word than the word of everybody else around us, which always makes us feel like we're not enough or we've got to work harder or we've got to try harder. But when your word comes to us, it is a word of grace that calls us to the one who is enough for us.

I pray, Father, for our hearts, that we would see that, not just in our heads, but in the very trenches of our lives this week. That we would see and have ears that see that both you are who you say you are, and we are willing to surrender to you.

And you are good and gracious, so we joyfully obey you and live for you. Give us the courage and the strength to do that this week, knowing that you never give up on us, and you are the one whose word in our lives will bear abundant fruit.

[53 : 14] Thank you for your kindness to us. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.