

Life is a Garden – June 15, 2022

We know: thorns on a rose. Weeds in a garden. It's life. Good & bad.

Successful musicians practice often. Success requires repetition.

Athletes: Drills. Practice. Exercise right, eat right. Not a one time thing. Spiritually, we must do the same. **Pull the weeds & feed the seeds.** Often!

Matthew 13:3-12– “Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. **4** As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. **5** Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. **6** But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. **7** Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. **8** Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! **9** Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”

10 His disciples came and asked him, “Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?” **11** He replied, “You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. **12** To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them.”

- God's word is **Seed 4 Soul**. Nourishment. H.S. gives understanding.
- We need this seed ... to not be overcome in life, to handle challenges, to live productive lives & produce love, joy, peace, gentleness.
- **Starvation**: extended period of time w/o food or very limited intake. Nutritionists - 450–800 cal is not healthy or sustainable in long term. Starving the body poses many health risks. Spiritual risks, too.
- **We need fertile hearts to receive God's nourishment.**

Pull the weeds & feed the seeds Spiritual gifts v worldly distracts

The 4 Examples of Jesus:

1 – Seed on the Footpath. – Path: hard surface. Hard hearts. Never get it!

- Experienced pain in life, built up a toughness.
- Don't need God, don't need anyone. Can't be weak.
- This heart will never live a blessed life... blessings all self-made.
 - *Blessings: special favor, mercy ... undeserved, unexpected.*
 - Blessings don't come from within. Come from above.
 - The **Hard heart** never looks up. Except maybe to curse.
 - A hardened heart lives in a dark, negative place.

Ephesians 4:18 – “Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.”

2 – Shallow, rocky soil. There's soil, but rock is just below the surface.

Seed sprouts but plants wilt under hot sun; w/o deep roots, they die.

- This heart wants to know God, is open to Him, but . . . life happens.
- This is the **Shallow Christian Immature.**
 - Wants God, but expects only roses, no thorns.
 - Misunderstands that bad things happen to Godly people.
 - See every problem is God's punishment, abandonment.
 - Genie in a Bottle faith: Pray everything away.
 - **1 Cor. 3:1-2** - “Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly —mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.”
- Shallow Christians have no impact ... no witness ... **produce no crop!**
 - Baby faith never matures ... focus is on problems, not victory

3 – Choked out Seed. It's there, it was planted, but you can hardly tell.

- Ever meet someone who says they're Christian, you're surprised?

- Choked out Christian is easy to spot:
 - Have Bible, doesn't read it. Just tell me.
 - Gives God time when nothing else to do.
 - **Garden Christian**: to church when lilies, poinsettias bloom.
 - More of an observer, than worshiper. Hears message, but...
- **Choked out Christians are busy... doing what they want**
 - **Serve self, not God.**
 - They'll even work hard for others; but... can't earn heaven.
- **Matt. 15:25-26** – “If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?”
 - Choked out Christians **produce no crop** for God.

4 – Fertile Soil ... Produces a Crop.

- This starts with an open heart. Seed can take root.
 - Seed is tended to ... nourished – so it grows & matures.
 - Weeds are pulled ... God's refining process is at work.
- Plants Shine** ... rise above. Are lifted up, point to God.
- This person produces a crop. Influence people. Impact.

Closing: You're going to know people in all 4 categories. Where are you?

Hard heart? Shallow Christian? Choked out Christian? Productive?

If you want to be Productive - Here is what it takes:

1 – Acknowledge need for God – give Him fertile soil.

2 – Be aware that weeds happen in your Garden. Don't quit.

3 – Get frequent nourishment, pull out the weeds. You will Shine.

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” – Gal 6:9

Song of the week – “Lord, Feed Your Children” by Michael English & GVB