



*The Crowded Heart Soil, Mark 4:18-19*

## The Crowded Heart Soil

- I have a confession to make if you will let me, not a surprise to those who know me
  - I have a distractable, crowded mind, call it ADHD if you want but it is distractable
  - It's like a thousand hyperlinks and I've clicked on every one of them
  - It is not empty like my dad use to say, normally right after the question, "Did you hear me?"

## The Crowded Heart Soil

- So when Jesus makes the statement in **Mark 4:9 NIV**, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”
  - **MSG**, “Are you listening to this? Really listening?”
  - Not simply listening but listening with intent to understand and apply to your personal lives
- Jesus had just told a parable about heart soil
  - Hardened, Rocky, Thorny, and Receptive
  - Normally taught pertaining to salvation but I have discovered these soils can pop up in my life even after salvation

## The Crowded Heart Soil

- As a born-again child of God we have been blessed, graced with the presence of His Holy Spirit in our lives
  - **John 14:16-18 NIV**, 16 I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans.”
  - The Holy Spirit seals us until the actual day of redemption (*Eph. 4:30*) but also plants God’s seeds of truth in your heart soil
  - With the purpose of maturing and produce His harvest in your life and His world

## The Crowded Heart Soil

- As a born-again child of God we have been blessed, graced with the presence of His Holy Spirit in our lives
  - **Galatians 5:22-23 MSG**, But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others (*love*), exuberance about life (*joy*), serenity (*peace*). We develop a willingness to stick with things (*patience*), a sense of compassion in the heart (*kindness*), and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people (*goodness*). We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments (*faithfulness*), not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely (*self-control*).

## The Crowded Heart Soil

- Randy, I really, really, really want these things in my life but I'm just not seeing it
- You need to check your heart soil
  - Have you stomped it down hard from the events in life like Elijah?  
(Mark 4:15)
  - Have you failed to remove the rock sins that prevent strong roots from growing like the disciples when walking with Jesus (Mark 4:16-17)
  - Or is your heart soil crowded with thorny weeds taking your attention away  
(Mark 4:18-19)

## Scripture

- **Mark 4:18-19 NIV**, 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it (*becoming*) unfruitful.
  - The soil was good
  - The seed sown was good
  - But something was happening that choke the seed making it unfruitful or unable of reaching its full potential
  - Jesus called this something, thorns
    - Thorns compete for nutrients, sun, rain while always trying to push out the seed
    - Thorns in our lives compete for our attention, direction, voice of God

## **It's really hard to stay focused in the middle of a thorn patch**

- In front of you is the most excellent, undiscovered, massive, perfectly ripe blackberry patch you just can't ignore
  - You gently work your way in then discover you are stuck literally and figuratively
  - The further you get in the more thorns find your legs and arms
  - Pretty soon all you are thinking about are the thorns as you pray for God to keep the chiggers away, which probably won't happen
  - You are left with scratches all over your arms and legs with bites that sting and itch miserably for three days
  - It's nearly impossible for me to ignore chigger bites, they call to me



## **It's really hard to stay focused in the middle of a thorn patch**

- This is what happens to our spiritual fruit when we allow thorns to grow up alongside the seeds of the Spirit
  - They distract us from focusing on the truth of God in His Word and who we are
  - They distract us by constantly reminding us of the pain from the past, failed decisions, with probably more to come
  - They distract us from seeing what God is doing in our lives now and where He promises to take us
  - They push the voice of God out and all we hear is the pain of the past, the fear of the future with no hope

## It's really hard to stay focused in the middle of a thorn patch

- The Serpent planted a thorn in Eve's life which she allowed to grow into rebellion in **Genesis 3:1 ESV**, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"
- Job's wife planted a thorn in Job's life which is removed
  - **Job 2:9 NIV**, His wife said to him, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!"
    - **Job 2:10 MSG**, Not once through all this did Job sin. He said nothing against God.
    - So this tells me it is possible to grow Spirit fruit in our lives regardless of the circumstances
- Have you allowed thorns to grow up in your spiritual life that started out as just a small patch and now they have taken over?

## Every born-again child of God has thorn seeds just waiting to sprout

- **Ephesians 4:22-24 NIV**, 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires (*thorns*); 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.
- We all have an old way of life, thinking, and responding which is (*not was*) being corrupted by its deceitful thorns
  - Along with it comes our own personal sin struggles that always easily entangle you (***Heb. 12:1***) or choking your spiritual growth

## Every born-again child of God has thorn seeds just waiting to sprout

- Jesus mentions three areas to pay close attention to
  - Worries of this life
  - Deceitfulness of wealth
  - The desires for other things, Luke used to word pleasure
- In and of themselves, none of these are sinful or will choke the work out God is doing in your lives
  - Things can happen that can cause a sense of worry and needs to be addressed
  - We need to pay attention to our finances
  - It is appropriate to try and better ourselves and families

## Every born-again child of God has thorn seeds just waiting to sprout

- Jesus mentions three areas to pay close attention to
- But when they become the thorn in your life a choking of God's voice begins
  - The more you say no to the prompting of the Holy Spirit the harder it is to hear the presence and direction of God in your life
  - Worry can scream at you
  - We can get so caught up making money we can set aside the importance of God, family, and health
  - We can be so distracted by pleasure we lose focus of our primary goal which is bringing glory to God

## **Every born-again child of God has thorn seeds just waiting to sprout**

- Jesus warns us of the areas of our lives to be protected - cares, riches, things, and pleasures
  - We are all susceptible to these same thorns, some areas more than others
  - We are all susceptible of choking the voice of God in our lives

## The only answer to the thorns is to set aside the old nature and put on our new nature in Christ Jesus

- **Philippians 2:5 NIV**, “have the same mindset (*attitude*) as Christ Jesus”
  - Take Jesus seriously, He creates a renewed mind in us
  - And he demands that we exhibit that new mentality so His fruit can bear a harvest in your life
  - If your thinking doesn't change, neither will your day to day

## The only answer to the thorns is to set aside the old nature and put on our new nature in Christ Jesus

- We need to be made new in the attitude of your minds
  - To claim and put on your new place in Christ's Kingdom and family
  - "This is who I am, and I am working to bring that reality into my daily life"
- A true alcoholic can never cut their drinking back to once a week
  - A meth addict can never just consume it every so often
  - "I am only going to worry on Mondays since those are normally rotten days anyway"
  - The same is true with our old nature, it must be set aside permanently and fought daily



## The only answer to the thorns is to set aside the old nature and put on our new nature in Christ Jesus

- The Apostle Peter had a thorn about Gentiles being a part of the Kingdom of God
- The Apostle Paul had a thorn about Christians before salvation
- Jonah had a thorn about the Ninevites
- The Rich Young Ruler had a thorn when it came to his riches
  - **Luke 10:21-22 NIV**, 21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22 At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

## The only answer to the thorns is to set aside the old nature and put on our new nature in Christ Jesus

- How do we do this?
  - Come to Jesus and learn of Him and from Him
  - **Matthew 11:28-29 NIV**, 28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened (*and thorny*), and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
  - **MSG**, Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

## The Crowded Heart Soil

- Allow God's promises and future to capture your imagination rather than the thorns of life
  - Use God's love to cast out fear
  - Always remember His grace and mercy
- King Jehoshaphat and Judah was facing an enemy he knew they could not conquer
  - **2nd Chronicles 20:12 NIV**, "For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."
  - Keep your eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ and listen for His voice in Scripture and in your heart
  - And be ready for obedience to His voice



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