

Among the Thorns (Parable of the Sower--Part 3 of 4)

(subtitle: Guard and Weed).

Luke 8:4-15 (New American Standard Bible)

<sup>4</sup>When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: <sup>5</sup>“The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. <sup>6</sup>Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

<sup>7</sup>**Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.** <sup>8</sup>Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.” As He said these things, He would call out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

<sup>9</sup>His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant. <sup>10</sup>And He said, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that *SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND.*

<sup>11</sup>“Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.

<sup>12</sup>Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. <sup>13</sup>Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.

<sup>14</sup>**The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.** <sup>15</sup>But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

## Introduction

This morning, we will continue our series on the parable of the sower (part 3 of 4). Jesus says, when it comes down to salvation, there are four types of people. Depending on the fruits in their lives after they hear God’s Word, He calls them “those *beside the road*, those on the rocky soil, **those among the thorns**, and those in the good soil.”

In the last two Sundays, we covered the first and the second type of people “those beside the road” and “those on the rocky soil.” Today, we are going to examine the third type of people: “among the thorns” (v. 14).

## Content

**Recap of the previous weeks:** Three parties are engaged in our salvation business: God, We, and the devil. God offers salvation through His Word. We, accepting the Word of God, get saved through faith and obedience. Our enemy, the devil, attempts to thwart our salvation by snatching away God's Word, or through **temptation, affliction, and persecution (T.A.P.)**. It is crucial for us to be rooted in God's Word and in Holy Spirit to be fruitful in our lives.

Today, we are going to pay attention to the type of heart condition which Jesus calls "Among the Thorns." I believe many of us find ourselves in this category. Jesus explains who they are in verses 7 and 14 in today's text.

<sup>7</sup> *Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns **grew up with it and choked it out.*** <sup>14</sup> *The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are **choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.*** Let me explain to you these two verses a little further.

v. 7: Thorns **grew up with it** (the seed). Coexistence of wheat and tares (Matthew 13:25). Good and bad until the Final Day of Judgment. Same goes with the Word of God. In our heart. Alongside with God's Word, we have worries, riches, and pleasures that constantly invade our hearts.

Once they enter our hearts, they stay in there, and grow up together with God's Word. Left uncared by us, they will choke the life out of God's Word and leave us unfruitful in our walk with God.

v. 7: **Choked it out** (συμπνιγω). The problem with cares, the love of money, and lusts is this: they are detrimental to the Word of God sown in our heart. They kill the seed in us. How do they kill God's Word in us? By choking the life out. Little by little, day by day, they take the breath away from God's Word. Jesus identifies the thorns in verse 14.

v. 14: **choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.** The three thorns in our heart. The three chokers of God's Word: worries, riches, and pleasures of this life. Let's check them out one by one.

**Worries:** Although we know that worries are no good, we still worry. About so many things in life. From basic necessities to children, from own health to the global problems. We keep worrying. To the point where the worrying becomes a habit. Soon, we become a professional worrier. The real issue is this: our habit of worrying turns into a stronghold that gives our enemy a foothold (Ephesians 4:26-27).

What does Jesus say about worrying? He calls it useless (Luke 12:25-26). He calls it distrust in God, therefore, a sin. Do not worry about your life (Luke 12:22). Do not worry.

Jesus commands repeatedly (Matthew 6:31, 6:33). It is harmful to our spirit, soul, and even body. Antidote: Matthew 6:33 (Seek God's kingdom and His righteousness first, all the things we need shall be added unto us). Trust in God. *The very hairs of your head are all numbered by God* (Matthew 10:30).

**Riches:** the Gospel of Mark is more specific than Luke on 'riches': *19 but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful* (Mark 4:19).

Riches deceive us. E.g. A certain man once offered me the pastor a half of his lottery winning to church if he wins. He asked me if I would take it. My answer was no. I wondered what his true motive for buying lotteries was. Wasn't he using God for his own gain? Don't be fooled.

The love of money lures us into a snare of the devil. *For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil* (1 Timothy 6:10). Although money itself is neutral, it can create in us the illusion of happiness: *The more money you have, the happier you become*. Don't get me wrong. Money surely helps. It makes us happy and makes our life convenient. However, if we pursue it as our life goal, rather than a means for survival, it corrupts our character, ruins our work ethic (gambling), and destroys our relationships with family and friends. The fundamental problem of riches is this: it rids of the longing for the Lord and decreases the dependence on the Lord. E.g. The Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21). Learn to share with others. Learn to be content.

**Pleasures (ἡδονῶν) of this life:** Pleasures do not sound bad here, right? English words 'hedonism,' or 'hedonistic' come from the Greek word 'hedone' (ἡδονή). 'Hedone' means 'sensual and self-indulgent' pleasure. Prayers for such pleasures God rejects (James 4:3). Such pleasures battle inside of us (James 4:1). Such pleasures wage war against our own soul (1 Peter 2:11). E.g. "Revel in daytime" (2 Peter 2:13).

E.g. Many Christians fall into pornography and stay trapped there for years. Their spiritual fruit is choked up to death.

**Guard and Weed.** I am offering this morning two strategies against thorns that block our salvation. Vigilance and Diligence are required to remove thorns from our heart.

First, guard your heart: Let no bad guys come through. v. 14. **coming in** (Πορευομενοι):

These three chokers (killers) of God's Word, that is, anxiety, the desire for wealth, and lusts, they keep on coming into our heart. They keep marching into our heart (Mark 4:19—Εισπορευομενοι). They never stop marching into your heart. Once they come in, they stay there and grow together with God's Word. Like the weeds. Soon, they will choke the

life out of God's Word and leave your life unfruitful. Practice Philippians 4:6-7. The peace of God will guard (keep) your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Guard your heart.

Next, weed out the bad guys from your heart. Any gardener would testify to the importance of weeding. To keep the garden strong and healthy, daily weeding is necessary. Likewise, we must weed out worries, the deceitfulness of riches, and desires of the flesh. From our heart. Daily. By trusting Jesus that He is with us, protects us, and provides our needs. By being thankful and content with what we have for our basic lifestyle. By keeping God's command to be moderate and sensible in our pleasure life.

## **Conclusion**

I used to feel that I belong to this category "among the thorns." I always felt stuck with the thorns in my heart that stun my spiritual growth. That is, despite the fact that I hear and read the Word of God and let it be sown in my heart and grow, God's Word never gets mature enough to bear fruit. Its fruition always gets choked by worries, the desire for riches, and lusts in me. Remember these three always work against your salvation from **within**. Temptation, affliction, and persecution work against you from **without**.

Let us be vigilant on those three killers of God's Word. Let us be diligent in keeping them out and weeding them out from our hearts by trusting the Lord, being content, and moderate in our pleasures.

We will conclude our series next week. Amen.