

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

(subtitle: Guard and Weed).

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

⁴ When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: ⁵ “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. ⁶ Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

⁷ **Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.** ⁸ 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.”

⁹ His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant. ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ “Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.

¹² 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. ¹³ 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.

¹⁴ **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.** ¹⁵ 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 continue our series on **The Parable of the Sower** — part three of four.

In this parable, Jesus teaches that **when it comes to salvation, there are four kinds of hearts.** All four hear the Word of God, but the condition of the heart determines how the Word is received and the eternal life thereafter.

Jesus describes them as:

- The seed on **beside the road** — the hardened heart.
- The seed **on rocky soil** — the shallow heart.
- The seed **among the thorns** — the crowded heart.
- The seed **in good soil** — the fruitful heart.

Over the last two Sundays we studied the first two. The seed beside the road represents the **hardened heart**. The Word never enters, because Satan snatches it away before faith can form. The rocky soil represents the **shallow heart**. The Word is received with joy, but it has no root. When temptation, affliction, and persecution come, the faith withers.

Today we come to the **third type of heart — the thorny soil**.

Listen to Jesus' explanation in Luke 8:7 and 14: *“Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.”*

“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.”

Unlike the hardened heart, the thorny heart **does receive the Word**. Unlike the shallow heart, the Word **begins to grow**. But something else grows alongside it.

And slowly, quietly, relentlessly — **the thorns choke it. There will be no fruit.**

The Nature of the Thorny Heart

The thorny soil represents a **crowded heart**. God's Word is there. But it is not alone. Other things grow beside it. Worries grow. Riches grow. Pleasures grow.

Like weeds in a garden, these things grow faster and stronger than the good plant. Anyone who gardens understands this. You never plant weeds. Yet every year they appear. And if you leave them alone, they will quickly overrun your garden.

The same thing happens in the human heart. Jesus says the thorns **“choke”** the plant. The word ‘choke’ means **to suffocate**.

The plant does not die immediately. It dies slowly. The thorns block the sunlight. They steal the nutrients. They take the moisture from the soil.

Little by little, the plant loses strength until it can no longer bear fruit.

This is what happens spiritually. The Word of God is present. But something else takes over the heart. And eventually, the Word becomes **unfruitful**.

Jesus identifies **three thorns** in verse 14. Three things that choke the Word of God:

- Worries
- Riches
- Pleasures of this life

Let us consider them one by one.

The First Thorn — Worry

The first thorn Jesus mentions is **worry**.

Although we know worrying is harmful, we still do it constantly. We worry about our daily needs. We worry about our children. We worry about our health. We worry about the future. We worry about the problems of the world. If we are not careful, worry becomes a habit. Some people almost become **professional worriers** — warriors of worry.

But Jesus says worry is **useless**. In Luke 12:25 He asks: “Which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” Worry accomplishes nothing. More than that, Jesus teaches that worry reflects **a lack of trust in God**. That is why He repeatedly commands: “Do not worry” (Matthew 6:31).

Instead, Jesus gives us the antidote in Matthew 6:33: “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Fill your heart with the things of God. Trust that your heavenly Father knows and provides your needs.

Jesus reminds us: “The very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matthew 10:30). God knows you. God sees you. God cares for you and provides your needs. Therefore, do not let worry choke the Word of God in your heart. Trust in God.

The Second Thorn — Riches

The second thorn is **riches**.

Mark's Gospel gives even more detail. Mark 4:19 calls it **“the deceitfulness of riches.”** Riches deceive us. They whisper a dangerous lie: “You will be happier if you have more.” Money itself is not evil. Money can provide comfort and convenience. But the love of money is eternally dangerous.

First Timothy 6:10 warns us: “The love of money is a root of all sorts of evil.” When wealth becomes our goal, it begins to reshape our hearts. It corrupts our character. It distorts our priorities. It weakens our dependence on God.

Jesus warned about this in the parable of **the rich fool** in Luke 12. That man stored up wealth for himself but was not rich toward God. His barns were full. But his soul was empty.

The danger of riches is not simply having money. The danger is that wealth slowly replaces **our longing for God**. That is why Scripture teaches us to practice **contentment** and **generosity**. Learn to share with others. Learn to be content with what God has provided.

The Third Thorn — Pleasures of This Life

The third thorn is **pleasures of this life**.

The Greek word used for ‘pleasure’ is *hedone*, the root of the English word **hedonism**. ‘Hedone’ means ‘sensual and self-indulgent’ pleasure. It is the pleasure that becomes **self-indulgent and controlling**.

Scripture repeatedly warns about this kind of pleasure. James 4:3 says that selfish pleasures corrupt our prayers. James 4:1 says they cause conflict within us. First Peter 2:11 says these desires **wage war against the soul**.

Pleasure itself is not evil. God created many good things for us to enjoy. “In Your right hand there are **pleasures** forever” (Psalm 16:11). But when pleasure becomes **self-centered and excessive**, it begins to choke spiritual life.

Many believers today struggle with this. Entertainment becomes endless. Distraction becomes constant. Some become trapped in sinful pleasures such as pornography that slowly suffocate their spiritual life.

And little by little, the fruit of the Spirit disappears.

Guard and Weed

What should we do about these thorns?

This morning, I want to offer **two simple strategies**. Guard your heart. Weed your heart. Both require vigilance and diligence.

First: Guard Your Heart

These thorns are constantly trying to enter our hearts. Worries march in. Desires for wealth march in. Pleasures march in. They do not stop. That is why Scripture repeatedly tells us:

Guard your heart.

Philippians 4:6–7 says: “⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Prayer protects the heart. Trust in God protects the heart. When we bring our anxieties to God, His peace stands guard over our hearts. Just as a city places guards at its gates, we must guard the entrance of our hearts. Do not allow every thought, desire, and influence to enter freely. Guard your heart.

Second: Weed Your Heart

Guarding is not enough. We must also **weed the garden**. Any gardener knows that weeds must be removed regularly. If you ignore them, they spread quickly and take over the garden.

The same is true of the heart. Worries must be pulled out. The love of money must be removed. Sinful pleasures must be uprooted. And this must be done **daily**. We do it by trusting Christ. We do it by practicing contentment. We do it by living a life of moderation and self-control.

Just as a gardener carefully removes weeds to protect the plants, we must carefully remove the things that choke the Word of God in us. No gardener weeds once a year.

Weeding is a daily task. E.g., My friend Joe methodically removed dandelions from his yard every day. You can do it too.

Conclusion

In the past, whenever I read this parable, I often felt that I belonged to this category — **the thorny soil**. I heard the Word of God. I read Scripture. I desired to grow. Yet I also saw the thorns. Worry. Desire for wealth. Pleasures that distract my heart. These enemies work **from within**.

Last week we saw the enemies that attack from outside — temptation, affliction, and persecution.

But the thorns are different. They grow **inside the heart**. And if we ignore them, they will choke the Word of God. So let us remain vigilant. Guard your heart. Weed your heart.

Remove the worries. Remove the deceitfulness of riches. Remove the pleasures that distract the soul. And let the Word of God grow freely within you.

Next week we will look at the final soil — **the good soil**, the heart that bears fruit with perseverance.

Amen.