

### Cobblestone Faith

We have all experienced times when reading the Bible or listening to a sermon where nothing made sense. We obediently read the Word or listened to the preaching, so why did we not receive benefit? Jesus answers this by telling us that unless the Holy Spirit opens our understanding, we will never benefit from the Word, “... *By hearing ye shall hear; and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive*” (Matt 13:14). It is the condition, or the receptiveness, of the heart that matters.

Jesus’ parable of the sower helps to shed light on this issue of the heart. In this parable, the sower casts seeds on various types of land, most of which were fallow ground. This immediately suggests that we, too, should give no heed to who we share the word with. In the parable, the sower is a spirit-filled believer, the seed is the living word of God and the ground is the heart of man. The four conditions of heart presented by Jesus are briefly addressed:

Wayside: Some seeds “...*fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up*” (Matt 13:4). The wayside speaks of a heart that hears the Word but is not prepared to receive it. The ground in this kind of heart is firmly compacted soil, good for walking on but not for planting. When one is so content with this life as to blindly follow the pathway of others, there is no desire to prepare soil to receive seed; it would be too disruptive to cultivate the well-traveled route that is currently providing easy going. Besides, others that travel the same pathway would strongly object to any change in the roadway’s surface. The Word of God cannot penetrate this hard surface and any seed that happens to fall upon it is easily removed by Satan.

Stones: Other seeds fell on stony soil and “...*they sprung up...*” (Matt 13:5). Unlike the previous heart which could not care less, this heart always enjoys hearing something new. The stones represent the many understandings that have been attained from various sources over time. Stone after stone have been added to this once rock-free soil. The new seed that fell on this now stony heart is gladly received, as have been the other understandings, but the resulting plants that begin to grow from the new seeds do not last very long. Stony

hearts are ever learning but never coming to the truth, “*For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing*” (Acts 17:21). These hearts are easily offended by Scriptural preaching that does not agree with their own cobblestone understanding. Truth may flourish for a while but has little chance of surviving in an environment that has many conflicting understandings.

Thorns: Other seeds fell among thorns and started to grow. This heart, like the stony heart, has self-induced impediments to receiving the good seed. Rather than having false understandings building up over time, this heart is firmly attached to ever-increasing interests outside of living faith. What once started out as innocent diversions now have become faith-choking covets. The cares of life, for example, might be so dear to this heart that any newly germinated faith gets overpowered by the much stronger need to succeed in life, “*the thorns sprung up, and choked them*” (Matt 13:7). Jesus warns, “*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*” (Matt 16:26). We should love God above all things, “*seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*” (Matt 6:33), otherwise our faith will lose out.

Good Ground: Finally, some seed “...*fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold*” (Matt 13:8). This kind of heart not only hears the Word but also is able to understand it. This receptive condition comes about only by hearing the Gospel and believing it – “...*Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee*” (Matthew 9:2). What is more, this condition of heart must be vigilantly maintained! The soil in this heart is constantly tilled and weeded; not by self but by the Holy Spirit. And this can only happen through prayerful attention to the Word. Becoming lazy in our pursuit of the prize—the crown of life—and letting others do our thinking is one sure way to fall back into one of the previous conditions of heart.

So whenever you read the Bible or go to church, do so with intent; petition the Lord to grant to you a receptive heart to receive His Word. Scripture tells us that to those

who are in faith and who continue to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to them more understanding will be given to strengthen their existing faith. But, on the other hand, to those who have a diminishing desire to grow in faith, God will take away what little faith that exists, *“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath”* (Matt 13:12).

Earnestly pray to our heavenly Father that you will not get caught up with cobbling together your own faith. Also, pray that your faith will forever remain based solely on the Rock and His Word as found only in the Bible.

God’s Peace,

*Charles Korhonen*

TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH  
P.O. Box 531  
Houghton, MI 49931

#### Online Broadcasts

From our webpage: <http://www.tapiolachurch.org/> you will see the mixlr live audio – we will be 'on the air' during our church services.

#### Winter Schedule

Sunday Service 11:00am. Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9:45am

Wednesday night Bible Study 7pm

Feb 07	Ken Storm	Holy Communion
Feb 14	Chad Kuivanen	
Feb 21	Ken Storm	
Feb 28	Chuck Korhonen	Potluck meal following