

95-03-05Mark

For the understanding of parables, we saw how parables are constructed, how they differ from other forms of communication, how they differ from allegories or other comparisons that might be made. We saw that parables are designed to address a specific point. There may be many points of comparison in the parable.

The sower is Jesus Christ, the seed is the word, the field in this parable is the hearts of hearers, the hearts of people who are hearing that message of the word. There are many points of comparison, but there's one point that's being made. There's one issue that's being addressed.

What is the point of sowing seed? What is the point of going forth and sowing seed? It is ultimately to produce a crop, isn't it? That's why farmers plow the soil. That's why they broadcast the seed, they till, they weed, they fertilize, they water, they irrigate, they labor over a field. The purpose, the main purpose is to produce a crop.

As we look at this parable of the sower and the seed and the soils, it's important to remember that this has a purpose. The purpose is to produce a crop. So one of the more helpful things in looking at this parable is to understand exactly what that crop is.

Now, there has been a lot of interpretation in this regard. A lot of people see a lot of different things in this parable. As one of those people, I'll tell you what I see.

Don't assume that I am discounting and discarding all other interpretations, but this is what I see as I look into this parable and into Jesus' words as he addresses this specific situation. This fruit that is born is the fruit of the Spirit. It is the word that is being sown, and it is producing a crop thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold in the good ground.

Now, as we review this parable this morning, I think you'll see why I hold that view. Another popular view is that this is multiplication of believers, and that as the gospel is spread, there are more plants and there are more believers in the world, and I think that that is certainly a valid principle. I don't think that that is Jesus' point in this parable, and here's the reason.

We are in the first phase of Jesus' earthly ministry. This is early on. This is before he has been publicly rejected by both the people and the religious leadership in Israel.

He is preaching in this phase of his ministry the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of the kingdom. If you studied the life of Christ and the ministry of Jesus Christ in the past, you may be aware that in all of the gospel accounts, the ministry of Jesus Christ breaks into two phases. The early phase is the presentation of the gospel of the kingdom to Israel.

I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Jesus says. After the manifest rejection of Israel, Jesus changes his message, and he begins to preach the gospel of salvation. He begins

to talk about the fact that he must die and be buried and rise again the third day.

He begins to work with his disciples and prepare them to spread the gospel throughout all the world. But he is in his first phase of his ministry here, and he is talking to Israel about the future of Israel, about the kingdom of God, the Israel of God. And as such, we know that Israel represents and ideally would be the people of God.

Israel should be those who have the law and the promises and the testimonies, who have the relationship with God that prepares them to receive the fulfillment of God's promises which come in that kingdom. And this is why as you study, whether in Matthew or in Luke or in John, study the extended teaching passages of Jesus, what do we see? He's not preaching the gospel primarily, is he? He's primarily teaching truth. Blessed are the meek, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are the poor in spirit.

He's talking to believers. He doesn't set these things up as a criteria for salvation. It isn't necessary to pluck out your eye or cut off your hand for salvation.

These are teachings for believers. These are teachings for those who already have a relationship with God. And as we look at the parables recorded in Matthew 13 and some of them that are recorded here in Mark, these are kingdom teachings.

These are teachings from Jesus Christ the Messiah, the King of the kingdom, to the citizens of the kingdom. These are teachings to and for believers primarily. Now, they have application just as Old Testament scripture was addressed to Israel, but it has principles and application that we can use.

These things have application as we preach the gospel, as we evangelize. It is certainly true that the same word of truth that brings us to salvation also brings us to maturity and brings us to function in the plan of God. But this is important because what has happened in much of our interpretation of scripture is we look at it and we say this is talking about the gospel and this is talking to unbelievers and we skim over it and we run over to the epistles to find words that apply to believers and we miss teaching that Jesus Christ intended for us because we label it as an evangelism passage or as a spread the gospel passage.

And we'll see that this morning as we review this parable of the soils. Now, there are how many different kinds of soil in this parable? This is a trick question, so be careful. How many different kinds of soil are spoken of in this parable? Six.

Six kinds of soil here. We have the hard packed ground. We have the stony ground.

We have the ground full of thorns. Then we have the 30-fold, 60-fold, and 100-fold good ground. I told you it was a trick question.

I apologize for that. But there are six types of soil that are mentioned here. Now, Jesus focuses

on the first three types, doesn't he? That's where he expands his discussion.

Let's talk about that first type of soil, the soil by the wayside. This is the first of the three unproductive soils. Three unproductive soils, three productive soils.

The first of the unproductive soils is the soil by the wayside. The seed falls on this soil and the birds of the air come and devour it. Jesus says down in verse 15, these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown.

When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. Now, what do we know about this soil? First of all, the soil that is planted with seed and produces a crop, that's a field. That's a piece of the surface of the planet that we have set aside to grow crops.

We use the surface of the ground for lots of different things, don't we? We use it to put a foundation down and build a house. We use it to smooth out and pave and put roads on. We use the surface for different purposes.

This ground is supposed to be soil that produces a crop. It's supposed to be a field where grain crops are grown. But this ground is very close to ground that is used for a different purpose.

It's used for travel, the wayside, the place where carts and oxen and travelers move along. That ground shouldn't be soft and well plowed and moist. It should be hard and dry and firm so that traffic can pass by.

It's ground that is used for a completely different purpose. There are people in this world who have different purposes. We as believers have a purpose.

God wants us to bear fruit and that our fruit should remain. Our purpose is separate and distinct from unbelievers in this world, from people who have no relationship with God. We are in the world and we are told that although we are in the world, we should not be of the world.

But notice this ground. This soil is right next to the wayside. It's nearby.

It shares the characteristics of the soil that is in the wayside. Like the wayside, this soil, which is supposed to be planted with seed, is hard packed. Instead of being moist and broken up and ready to receive the seed, it is hard packed and firm.

The seed lays right on top. There's no reception of the seed. There's no nurturing and an environment that will cause that seed to germinate and sprout and grow.

So symbolically here, this soil by the wayside represents believers whose thinking corresponds with that of the world. We talk about being worldly. We talk about being backsliders or having fallen away from the faith, having gone into apostasy or whatever.

Whatever term you choose to use, these are believers who are supposed to be receiving the seed and nurturing it and helping it to grow and produce fruit and instead look just like the soil of the roadway. God's word does not penetrate and God's word does not remain in this kind of soil. It does not penetrate and it does not remain.

Satan frequents this area. This is where Satan hangs out. Satan doesn't get out in the middle of the field.

He's up on the road. He's on the highway and byway where the travelers are. And because this soil is near that road, it's near to Satan and Satan is available to pick up that seed and take it away.

In our thinking, we have to be careful. If we adopt a worldly point of view, if we look at things from a human perspective, we adopt human solutions for our problems. We have a human set of priorities.

What is a human set of priorities? What does the world think of? Where does security lie in the world? Well, you've got to have financial security. You've got to have something in the bank. You've got to plan ahead.

You've got to put something aside against a rainy day. You don't know what catastrophe might befall you. And if disaster strikes, money in the bank is what's going to get you through.

The world says you've got to be numerous. You've got to have plenty of people. You've got to have lots of workers.

You've got to have lots of human strength. What does the Bible say? Cursed is the man who puts his trust in man, who makes flesh his strength. And it's a wonderful thing to have workers and it's a wonderful thing to have numbers.

But is that what we depend on? Is that our priority? Are we thinking like the world? If we don't have enough people, the job won't get done. Those of you that have been following our study on Sunday nights with Saul have seen how many times he numbers the army. Every fifth verse, Saul is sitting down and numbering the people because that's what he's relying on.

Israel asked for a king just like the other nations, and that's exactly what they got. Saul thinks just like a king of the nations. He puts his trust in numbers, in the size and strength of his army.

When the army dwindles and fades away, he's afraid to attack. He sits under a tree and his son, Jonathan, takes his armor bearer and says, The Lord can save by many or by few. Let's go and see what opportunity the Lord will bring us.

And Jonathan and his armor bearer personally dispatch the first 20 of the Philistines. And then God comes in and dispatches the rest. So there's a contrast, isn't there, between the thinking of

the world and the thinking that corresponds to God's word.

If we are near that roadway, if we're near that byway where Satan lives and dwells, the word that comes to our soul won't stay. It won't penetrate and it won't remain. Satan will snatch it away.

He'll substitute his thinking, his priorities, his ideas, and we will be just like that soil that forms the wayside. We are in the world, but we cannot afford to think like the world. Thinking like unbelievers results in living like unbelievers.

There's no evidence of the life of God. There is no production. There is no blessing in our lives.

And I'm sure you, like I, may be acquainted with believers who are completely invisible. They are not identifiable as believers in Jesus Christ. Even though we know that they have affirmed their faith in Jesus Christ, their life, their priorities, their decisions, their actions, their thinking, their conduct, their speech are indistinguishable from that of unbelievers.

We cannot afford to fall into that category. We can't be the soil by the wayside. Now, let me digress here briefly to talk about this parable as it is recorded in the other Gospels.

We are approaching this parable and interpreting it from the standpoint that this soil represents different kinds of believers. The primary reason why some people take these unproductive types of soil as unbelievers is found in Luke chapter 8. And if you'll turn there, I would like to address this so that we're clear as we go forward on what this soil represents. In Luke chapter 8, verse 12, Jesus is talking here in Luke's account about the soil and interpreting the parable.

He says, Those by the wayside, those by the side of the road, are the ones who hear. Then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. Now, here's a difficulty for our approach.

If this is talking about salvation, if this seed is the gospel and Satan is snatching away the gospel, otherwise they would believe and be saved. And because of this, we have had difficulty because we say, Well, Jesus says they would believe and be saved, so the seed represents the gospel. But now we have difficulties when we get down and the seed is planted and springs up, but then the sun comes and it withers and we say, Well, maybe that was a false profession of faith.

But we kind of run into a snag. Let me offer you something by way of a solution for this difficulty. This is the gospel of Luke.

The word here used for save is sozo. Sozo in Greek is the word translated save, deliver, to rescue, to heal. All of these uses are found for this word.

Now, we in English, when we see the word saved, we immediately think of what? We think of eternal salvation. We think of rescue from the lake of fire, don't we? If I say the word salvation, we as believers immediately think of eternal salvation. Now, if I'm out in the business world and I fix

someone's computer at a critical point and they say, Oh, you're our salvation.

They're not using that word in the same sense, are they? Well, in Greek, the word *sozo* had a wide variety of meanings. And this is demonstrated throughout the New Testament. But what I want to do is point out just a handful of passages in the gospel of Luke where *sozo* is used.

And I'll let you draw the conclusion. Turn back a few pages to Luke chapter 6, verse 9. This is a Sabbath day. And Jesus is addressing the man with the withered hand.

We've covered this in the gospel of Mark. Jesus says, I will ask you one thing. Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil? To save life or to destroy? The man with the withered hand is standing before Jesus.

The Pharisees are in the crowd hoping to find something to accuse him with, something to bring him up on charges so that they can take his life. And Jesus contrasts their attitude and his own. He says, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good to heal this man's withered hand or to do evil? To find an occasion for accusation against the Lord Jesus Christ.

To save life or to kill. And so Jesus equates this phrase save life with healing this man with the withered hand. He isn't talking about the man's salvation.

The Pharisees in the crowd are not trying to take him to hell and Jesus is trying to take him to heaven. This is a physical life that's being discussed. But it's even clearer if you'll turn over to chapter 8, the same chapter where we have verse 12, talking about those by the wayside.

But go down a few verses to chapter 8, verse 36. Luke 8, 36. This is the demon-possessed man over across the lake.

He's clothed and in his right mind. And the people who had seen this take place, had seen the demons leave and go into the herd of swine, go back and tell the people in the village. They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed.

Now this word for healed in verse 36 is *sozo*. The elimination of those demons from that man is called deliverance, is called saved, to be delivered. Skip down a few more verses to verse 48 of chapter 8 of Luke.

Now we have the woman with the issue of blood for 12 years and she comes up behind Jesus in the crowd and she touches the hem of his garment. And in verse 48 he says, Daughter, be of good cheer. Your faith has made you well.

Your faith has saved you in the Greek, *sozo*. Your faith has healed you of this issue of blood problem. It is the word *sozo*.

Go down two more verses to verse 50. Now we're with Jairus the synagogue ruler and his little

daughter who is at death's door. And the servants come up and say don't bother the master anymore.

She has died. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him saying, Do not be afraid. Only believe and she will be sozo.

She will be saved. She will be delivered. Now if we're going to take sozo as salvation in every case, we run into some problems here because the faith of Jairus can result in his daughter's salvation.

So this is clearly here not talking about eternal salvation, but talking about deliverance from her disease, deliverance from death. The woman with the issue of blood, delivered from that issue of blood. In chapter 9, verse 24, Jesus says, If anyone desires to come after me, in verse 23, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Now let me ask you something. As a condition of eternal salvation, to be saved from the lake of fire, is it necessary to deny yourself and take up your cross? Is that a condition of salvation? By grace you have been saved through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. Denying oneself is not required for salvation.

Taking up a cross is not required for eternal salvation. Following Christ is not necessary for eternal salvation. Faith in his work on the cross is what is required.

So Jesus here is not talking about eternal salvation. He says, if anyone desires to come after me, to be a disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it.

Sozo. Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it, will deliver it. This is the meaning of our life as believers.

Is our life going to count? Will we be disciples? Will we be followers of Jesus Christ? If we try to make something of our life in our own human energy, in our own human strength, we will lose it. What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world? And loses his own soul. That's an interesting passage, by the way, because salvation is not in view there either.

But here, in particular, whoever desires to follow Jesus Christ must lose his own life. And by denying himself, taking up his cross, and following Christ, he saves his life. He redeems his life.

He delivers his life. He redeems the time from the evil days and makes his life valuable. Look down in, we'll go over to chapter 17 of Luke.

I'm just using examples in Luke because it's Luke that we find. Luke is the only passage that records Jesus saying that otherwise they might believe and be saved. Luke chapter 17, verse 19.

There were ten lepers on the road. They called out to Jesus. Cleanse us.

Deliver us. He does so. One turns back and falls at his feet giving him thanks.

This leper was a Samaritan. Jesus says, weren't there ten lepers cleansed? Where are the other nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner? And he said to him, arise, go your way. Your faith has delivered you.

Your faith has made you well. And this is the word sozo. Deliverance from the issue of blood.

Deliverance from demons. Deliverance from leprosy. We turn on down to chapter 23, verse 35 here in Luke.

Now Jesus is on the cross. And you recall these mocking words that are cast up to him by people in the crowd where they say sneering. He saved others.

Let him save himself if he is the Christ, the chosen of God. He delivered others. Let him deliver himself.

He sozoed others. Let him sozo himself. And you can bet that these people in the crowd have no understanding of eternal salvation or they wouldn't be saying these words.

They're referring to the healings, to the deliverances that Jesus has performed on behalf of his followers in the past. And they say, well, he delivered others. Let him deliver himself.

Let him deliver himself from the cross, from this crucifixion, from this mocking and humiliation. Two verses later in verse 37, the soldiers also mock him and say, if you are the king of the Jews, sozo yourself. Deliver yourself.

Save yourself. Save your physical life. Deliver yourself from this crucifixion.

Two verses later, one of the criminals who was hanged blasphemed him saying, if you are the Christ, save yourself and us. Deliver yourself and us. Sozo.

So I think we've established just here from the Gospel of Luke that this word was commonly used in Greek for things other than eternal salvation. We know that we are exhorted to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. And that has caused people some problems because they say, well, salvation is not by works.

How can we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling? But this is another use of a noun form of sozo to say your deliverance. Your deliverance in time. Save your life by being a follower of Jesus Christ.

Make your life count for something. Deliver it from the dark days of evil in which we are found when we first come to Christ. Deliver your life.

Make it count for something. Be delivered from pressure. Be delivered from adversity.

Be delivered from trial and tribulation. We find this over in James, chapter 5, verses 19 and 20. You may recall at the close of the book of James, what does it say? It says, when one wanders from the truth, he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will deliver a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Remember that? If you correct someone who is wandering from the truth. Now, to wander from the truth, they had to have been in it. This is believers exhorting fellow believers to encourage one another to love and good works.

Here is a believer who is in the truth and wanders from the faith. And James says, when one wanders from the truth, he who turns that sinner from the error of his way will deliver, will sozo, a soul from death. Now, does this mean that we have restored to him his eternal salvation? Surely not.

This is deliverance in time. This is deliverance of one's life and the meaning and the purpose of one's life. And I would offer to you the thought, at least, the possibility here that in Luke, chapter 8, when Jesus says in verse 12, those by the wayside are the ones who hear.

But the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they, having believed, should be delivered. Now, this is a tricky thing. Those of you that are enthusiasts of the Greek, I can talk to you about this at length at another time.

But one of these words is definite and the other one is a possibility. And the way it comes across in English is just backwards. When you read this in English, it says, lest they might believe and be delivered.

And the question is whether or not they will believe. But in Greek, the word believe is an aorist participle. It has already happened.

He's saying, lest they, having believed, might be delivered. The question is whether or not they're going to be delivered, not whether or not they're going to believe. And here he says, the devil takes away the word, lest if that word is there and they should make it the object of their faith, they might be delivered.

They might make their life count for something. They might be turned from the error of their ways. And the devil doesn't want that word to sit there and remain and possibly become the object of their faith.

So that is the answer that I have for Luke 8, verse 12, with regard to this parable being interpreted as dealing with believers or as dealing with unbelievers. So now back in Mark 4, let's continue with this hardening. If this is in fact true, if our evidence is correct and our dividing of the

word of truth is accurate, and we are talking about believers, we know from our discussion last week that when we're interpreting parables, parables don't teach new truth, do they? Parables illustrate truth that is taught elsewhere in Scripture.

So we should, if everything we've said to this point is accurate, then we should be able to find other places in Scripture that talk about that hard-packed soil dealing with believers. And of course, the first passage that comes to our mind is back in Psalm 95, which is quoted in Hebrews chapter 3. Don't harden your hearts as in the days of the Meribah. The psalmist is encouraging Israel.

Remember back in the wilderness, those Israelites that came out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb and were on their way to the promised land? What happened? They grumbled, they complained, they lost their faith. They didn't believe that God would deliver. Why has God brought us out here just to die in the wilderness? He says, don't harden your hearts like they did.

They were believers. They were in the wilderness and they hardened their hearts and they did not believe. The author of Hebrews clarifies this for us in chapter 3 in the first part of chapter 4. We see that that word did not do them any good.

Why? It was not mixed with faith in them that heard it. That seed laid right on top of that hard-packed soil and wasn't the object of faith and was carried away. They had no faith and that's why they died in the wilderness and never entered the promised land.

How many people of that generation entered the promised land? Another question to test the level of detail of our knowledge. How many people from the Exodus generation actually entered the land of Canaan? Two. Caleb and Joshua.

Moses saw the land far off from the top of the mountain but did not enter. Caleb and Joshua were the two that entered the land. Why? Because they were men of faith.

They were the men who went in and said, It's a good land. It doesn't matter that the people are tall and numerous. It doesn't matter that the odds are stacked against us.

This is the land of promise. God can deliver by many or by few. Zechariah chapter 7 verses 8 through 14 is another example of this.

If you'd like to turn there, you can. I'll read this to you briefly. Zechariah chapter 7 verses 8 through 14.

The word of the Lord came to Zechariah saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion, everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother.

But in verse 11, they refused to heed. They shrugged their shoulders and stopped up their ears

so that they could not hear. Yes, they made their hearts like flint.

Refusing to hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the Lord of hosts. We're not talking about salvation here.

This is the people of God. The law and the prophets were given to the nation of Israel to believers to teach them, to instruct them in their worship life and their daily life with one another. Just as we have our New Testament scriptures to teach and inform us as to how to live.

But they stopped up their ears. They made their hearts like flint and the word could not penetrate. And God's wrath came as a result.

In Ephesians chapter 2 and following, really the whole book of Ephesians is a great discourse on this. In Ephesians 2, Paul says, You who were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked according to the course of this world. That's the wayside.

The course of this world. Dead in trespasses and sin. Completely unproductive.

Nothing there to glorify God. We once walked that way according to the course of this world. According to the prince of the power of the air.

The birds of the air come and snatch away that seed by the wayside. The spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. And as you go on there to Ephesians chapter 4 verse 13.

What is the goal? Our goal is to come to the unity of the faith. And the knowledge of the son of God. For that seed to sink into our souls and grow.

To a perfect man. To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So that we are no longer children tossed to and fro.

Carried about with every wind of doctrine. By the trickery of men. In the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.

All of those deceptions that are substitutes for the word of truth in our soul. We are to speak the truth in love. So that we may grow up in all things into him who is the head Christ.

The entire rest of this chapter in Ephesians chapter 4. Contrasts the way of the world. The wayside with the life that a believer should live. And you'll notice that Paul puts commands in here.

He says put off the old man. Put on the new man. This is not an automatic thing.

This didn't happen as an automatic result of our salvation. It's something we have to pursue. We have to decide to do this.

It's a choice. And if we fail to do this. If we fail to value the word of God.

If we fail to let it penetrate us. And change us. We are like that soil in the wayside.

And we will share. And be partakers of that wrath that comes upon the sons of disobedience. Paul says in verse 22 put off concerning your former conduct.

The old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lust. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. How can we not be that hard packed ground? How can we not partake of that wayside environment where the devil hangs out? It is by seeking the renewing of our mind.

We have to value that seed. We have to treasure it. We have to be waiting for it.

And ready for it. To receive it. And to take it on board.

And let it sink deep inside us. To put its roots all through us. To break up the hard spots.

And to find that hospitable environment that will nurture it. And cause it to grow and produce fruit in us. That is our task.

That is our calling. That is our opportunity. Many of us as believers don't do that.

We don't consider the word important enough to be a priority. We don't make sure that we are there when the sower is scattering the seed. We don't make it one of the most important things in our life.

To nourish our souls. How do we expect to be productive if the seed is not scattered in our soul? Where do we think the production of the fruit of the Spirit is going to come from? Can we generate it in our own strength? In our own energy? Can the soil simply strain itself and produce crops? 30-fold, 60-fold and 100-fold. It has to come from the seed.

The supernatural life that is in that seed. We sometimes scratch our heads and we say, I am trying to live a good life and so forth. I have been a Christian for many years and yet I don't seem to have a sense of God's will for my life.

I don't seem to really have a strong indication of His guidance. I don't really see myself changing and growing. We know that growth means change.

If we are not changing, if there is not a difference in our soul this year from last year, this month from last month, if we are not changing, we are not growing. And if we are not growing, something is wrong. Something is wrong if we are not growing.

And if we are growing, we are changing. We should have more patience today than we have ever had in our life. There should be more love flooding through our souls today than there ever has been in our life.

Greater peace, greater joy, greater patience and long-suffering and gentleness and self-control. A greater communion with God our Father and with the Lord Jesus Christ. A greater sense of the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Today should be the pinnacle of our career as Christians. We should be at a new high today. I suspect for many of us that is not the case.

And if it is not the case, we had better wake up and ask ourselves why. Time is ticking away. The second hand goes around the clock again and again and again.

And our earthly life, which is measured by those seconds and minutes, is rapidly approaching its end. What are we going to do with that time that remains? We want it to be productive. We want to deliver our lives.

Make our lives count for something in God's plan. How do we do that? We have got to receive the seed. The life is in the seed.

The power is in the seed. The future plant and the future production are all contained in that seed. We have got to not just hear it and let it sit on the surface.

We have got to let it penetrate. We have got to meditate on it, make it a priority. That is the way to redeem the time.

That is the way to deliver our lives. We will look next time at the stony soil. We are going to spend a little bit of time on this parable of the soil, the parable of the sower and the seed.

Hopefully we will finish it up next week. But it is important because this sets the tone for what Jesus will teach in the rest of the Gospel of Mark. It is what he will emphasize in the remaining time in this first half of his ministry.

But at this point we are going to draw our study to a close and approach another wonderful facet of worship that we engage in every other month. And that is the Lord's Table. We as believers endeavor to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

That is our goal. That is our calling. Jesus said, By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another.