The Lord's Message: The Harvest, Preparing the Soil
Date: November 1, 2026
Where: Tilghman Methodist Church
Scripture Reference: Luke 8:4-15

We are starting a new sermon series entitled, "The Harvest". We have seen the farmers busy at work harvesting the crops. However, they had to prepare for the harvest a year ahead of time. The ways in which they prepared the Harvest was to first prepare the soil, then the seed, remove weeds, and last harvest the crop.

Harvesting the crops for food is important. But there is a more important harvest that every Christian needs to participate in, which is the Harvest of Souls. Jesus states this very clearly in **Matthew 9:35-38.** Now, you might be thinking how can I help in the Harvest of Souls? Glad you asked because that is what this sermon series is all about.

Let us pray.

Anyone who has ever farmed fields, or has a garden, knows that there are good soils and bad soils. Many times, these soils are found in the same field or garden. The farmer's job is to take the soil and improve it so that it will be fruitful. Some soil takes a lot of work in order for that to happen. In Jesus' day, the farmer did not have the use of modern equipment to break up hard soil or to remove rocks. They did not have modern fertilizers to make crops grow, even on bad soil. They also did not have modern planting equipment.

The farmers in Jesus' day, might have had a scratch plow pulled by oxen, or hoes and shovels. The scratch plow was made out of wood and was forked at the end where either iron or bronze metal tips would be fastened. It would simply scratch the surface of the ground for the seeds to fall into. The farmers would wait until after it rained to go out and sow the seeds by hand. They would carry a large leather pouch and grab a handful of seeds and with a sweeping motion would broadcast the seeds across the ground.

Jesus was observing the farmers going about planting the crops. He used this as an illustration to show people's hearts preparing to hear the Gospel Message.

Let me explain this in more detail. We have four kinds of soil: hard soil, rocky soil, thorny and weedy soil, and good soil. In verse 5, the farmer sows the seed on the hard soil and the birds come and eat it. In verse 6, the farmer sows the seed on the rocky soil. It takes root. A plant grows, but then dies because there was not enough moisture in the ground, because the rocks do not hold moisture. In verse 7, the farmer sows the seed in thorny or weedy soil. The thorns and weeds choke out the young plants and they die. The farmer has had three failures. It does not look like the farmer is going to have a good crop. In verse 8, we come to the good soil. The farmer sows the seed in the good soil. We are told that it yields a crop more than a hundred times what was sown.

Jesus explains the meaning of this parable in verse 11. The seed is the Word of God. It is the Gospel Message, the Good News.

In verse 12, Jesus goes on to explain that the seeds which fell on the hard ground were the people that heard the Good News and then the devil came and took the word away from their hearts. The result is that they did not believe and therefore were not saved. Now, you might think that the devil uses demon possession to keep people away from God. The devil rarely uses anything like that. I believe the devil uses something far sinister – distractions. Distractions keep us away from God and trusting in God. One of the greatest distractions in our lives is our smart phones. How many times do you check your email or text messages? The phone is so smart is that it sends a signal to alert you when you have an email or text message. How much time do you spend on social media or playing a game on your phone? Facebook is very clever, because you want to check to Facebook feed to see if someone is celebrating a birthday or anniversary or just to keep in touch with loved ones far away. We used to send birthday or anniversary cards, now we just post our congratulations on Facebook. We used to call on the phone, now we post on Facebook to our loved ones. Every time you update your phone, which seems to be at least once a month, the updates add hundreds of new games to your cell phone to keep you entertained.

Instead of the distractions, we should follow what **Psalm 46:10** says. Instead of spending time on social media, we should spend time in prayer. Instead of consuming our time with games, we should spend our time in the Word, the Bible. I am firmly convinced that the distractions are the devil's greatest weapon against hearing and spending time with God. We need to fight those distractions. I am not preaching just to you; I am also preaching to myself. That is why, I have set aside a half hour each morning to spend time with God.

In verse 13, the rocky or stony ground represents a person's heart who hears the Good News and is filled with joy, but then trials and temptations come along and causes their faith to fail. If a person does not cultivate deep spiritual roots, then their faith is going to fail. This is a warning for every believer. Jesus says in **John 16:33**. Every person is going to face trials and tribulations in this world, but trust in Me, because I have overcome this world. If you are a believer in Jesus, you are not immune from trials and tribulations. Trust me, I know this firsthand. This year, both my aunt and uncle passed away. Another aunt in Missouri is in the hospital from a fall. By the grace of God, I was able to recover from a heart attack. My son is miraculously recovering from injuries suffered in a workplace accident. This is just some of the trials and troubles that my wife, JoAnn, and I are dealing with. Without Jesus and our wonderful friends in the faith supporting and praying for us, we would struggle to get through all of these trials and troubles. Not to diminish in any way what trials and troubles that you are going through.

I know who has brought me through all of this, and that is Jesus and my faith in Him. I do not know how people are able to go through the trials and troubles of this life without Him. I have seen the results: anger, turning to alcohol and/or drugs, distancing oneself from family and friends, and even suicide. We are all going to be faced with trials and troubles, let us dig our roots of faith deep into Jesus.

In verse 14, which represents the thorny soil, we have the distractions of this world that crowd out the spiritual devotion to God. Those distractions are worries. Which result in anxiety, stress and fear about daily survival or future security. The Psalmist says in **Psalm 55:22,** to cast your cares on God.

Other worldly distractions can be riches, the pursuit of wealth and material possessions. The more you have, the more you find that it is not enough. The number one golfer in the world, Scottie Scheffler said this: "What's the point? Winning the golf tournament is great in the moment, but it is not fulfilling. It only lasts a few minutes. To get to live out your dreams is very special but at the end of the day, I'm not here to inspire someone to be the best player in the world. Golf is not the most important thing in my life. My faith and my family are." We should be content with what we have. Paul said it best in **Philippians 4:11-13.**

These worldly distractions keep us from maturing in the faith. They consume our time and energy. They cause faith to burn out quickly. To combat the burn out, we should continue to go to church, read our Bibles and spend time praying to God. Even if we do not feel like doing that. We all struggle with our faith. John Wesley was struggling with his faith. He was given great advice by Peter Bohler, a Moravian missionary, who said to him, "Preach faith till you have it; and then because you have it, you will preach faith." Avoid the worldly distractions and continue to draw near to God.

Lastly in verse 15, we have the good soil. Those that have a good and noble heart. Paul explains what kind of heart this is in **Philippians 4:8.** The person who has a good and noble heart hears the Gospel Message. They actively listen and hold on to it, when hardships come it produces an abundance of spiritual fruit. I remember I went into a hospital to visit one of my parishioners and it was as if a party was going on inside of this man's room. He was always a joyful person. I had known him and his family for a long time. I would often see him and his son at Boy Scout outings. He was always talking about Jesus and how Jesus loved him and everyone else. I was hired by his church to do visitations. He was dealing with a lot of medical issues, but every nurse or doctor that went into his room came out with a smile on their faces. I know that he told them about His Lord and Savior. The abundance of spiritual fruit that he produced during his time in the hospital and later at home can only be measured in eternity.

Let us continue to prepare our hearts to be good and noble, so that we can produce an abundant harvest for Jesus.

Let us continue to listen to God and do what He says. Amen.