

## **THE STATE OF THE WORLD ADDRESS**

### **Matthew 13: 1-9; 18-23**

This week millions of Americans watched as President Obama gave the State of the Union Address. In it we heard the President's view of how things are going in America and how he wishes they will go in the future. Well, I certainly don't want to upstage the President, but today I want to give you a State of the World Address. For you see, the state of the world is a topic of much greater importance than the state of the union. It's more important because it involves the welfare of not just the 312 million people in America, but of the 7 billion people in the whole world.

Now, many more people skipped Mr. Obama's message than those who heard it last Tuesday night, but this is a message you can't afford to skip. First of all, because this is Jesus' assessment of the world, not mine. But also because it has to do not with economics, nor education, but with eternity. And its primary concern is not peace among nations, but peace with God. So turn with me, please, to Matthew 13 and let's begin to take a look at Jesus' State of the World Address at Matt. 13: 1-9, 18-23.

Jesus gives His State of the World Address in the form of a parable about a sower and his seed. Now, much of the time Jesus taught by parables, and a parable is fiction that teaches spiritual truth. And Jesus explained in vs. 11-15 that He taught by parables to reveal truth to those who really wanted to know it, but to hide it from those who didn't. But if you truly wish to understand the parable of the sower today, you can be sure that Jesus wants you to understand it. For vs. 9 says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear". And in vs. 18 He said, "Therefore hear the parable of the sower". So let's dive in and begin to understand this important truth.

Jesus said that the sower sowed his seed on four types of soil. The sower could be any follower of Christ, the seed is the Word of God (Luke 8:11), and each type of soil represents a different type of receptivity to the Word of God. The first type of soil where the seed landed was the wayside; the path where people walked day by day. The second was rocky ground, the third was thorny ground, and the fourth was good ground. And the truth that Jesus is teaching is that every single human being is represented by one of these types of soil. And in the next few minutes we are going to take a look at each type of soil, and I want you to try to determine which one describes you.

But before we begin we need to understand something else first. Look at vs. 19. In the first part of the verse Jesus further defines the Word of God as “the word of the kingdom”. Look at it. “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom...” But what, specifically, is the word of the kingdom? Well, you could also call the word of the kingdom the agenda of God. So please listen as I explain to you the agenda of God.

God is the ruler of a righteous kingdom. Part of that kingdom is here on earth. It is spiritual and it is invisible. God’s kingdom on earth has no homeland, no human president or chancellor, no congress or parliament, and it has no army. Its citizens live in almost every country of the world, so they actually hold dual citizenships, one in their physical country and one in the Kingdom of God.

But though the Kingdom of God has no president, it does have a King, and His name is Jesus. And all the members of the Kingdom of God are committed followers of King Jesus. And while they do their best to be good citizens of their earthly country, their first allegiance is to Jesus and the Kingdom of God. And that is because the Kingdom of God is an **eternal kingdom**. And they know that one day when their body dies they will immediately pass

into the glorious, literal Kingdom of God, which the Bible calls Heaven. And there they will live with Jesus and all the rest of the citizens of the kingdom forevermore. And the agenda of God is to advance His kingdom to the furthest corners of the earth, to every tribe, tongue, and nation, by sowing the Word of God. And one day the King of God's kingdom, Jesus Christ, will literally come to the earth again, complete God's agenda, and then rule over this world-wide kingdom forevermore.

But, as God works to establish His Kingdom He has an adversary who has his own kingdom and his own agenda. He is "the wicked one" in vs. 19. His name is Satan, the devil, and his kingdom is the kingdom of darkness. Now, do you remember God's agenda? It is to advance His kingdom to the ends of the earth by sowing the Word of God. But Satan's agenda is to steal the Word of God out of the hearts of everyone he possibly can and thus defeat the agenda of God. And here is the reason why.

When every person in the world was born, at the same time they were also born into Satan's kingdom. You were born into Satan's kingdom and I was born into Satan's kingdom. And the Bible describes all those in Satan's kingdom as children of wrath, that is, destined for the eternal wrath of God right along with Satan. Not good. And the devil does not want anyone receiving the seed of God's Word, because he knows that receiving the Word of God is the only hope for anyone to escape his kingdom and escape God's wrath. For the Bible says that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord comes by hearing what God says in His Word about sin, about the judgment of sin, about repentance from sin, and about Jesus Christ dying on the cross for the sins of the world. And as long as people do not hear the Word of God, the devil knows that they will remain in his kingdom.

So from the Garden of Eden there has been a colossal, unseen cosmic battle going on between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. God has had, and continues to have His messengers who sow the seed of His Word. And Satan is constantly at work to insure that the seed never takes root.

Now, let's briefly examine each type of soil on which the sower sows his seed. The first type of soil that the seed fell upon was the wayside. But the seeds are gone just as quickly as they fall on the wayside, because the birds swoop down right behind the sower and snatch them up. And so it is with the people represented by the wayside. They hear the Word of God, but it goes in one ear and out the other just as fast. Because these people are totally stonewalled to anything that has to do with God.

Some of these wayside hearers are atheists. They may be angry atheists, which we've seen emerge in recent years. Men like Christopher Hitchens, who wrote the book entitled God is not Great, and whose mission in life is to destroy faith in God in as many lives as they can. Or they may be passive atheists, who just want to be left alone by Christians to live their secular, sinful lifestyle with no guilt and no fear of accountability to a Higher Power.

And the people of the wayside are also the hedonists of the world. These people may acknowledge that there is a God, but they're just like the atheists in that God is not on their radar whatsoever. They would never go to church except for a wedding or a funeral. They have no regards whatsoever for what the Bible says about sin. They bow to the gods of money, sports, sex, drugs, and alcohol. Their attitude is like that of the rich fool in Luke 12 who said, "...I will say to my soul, 'Soul.....take your ease; eat, drink and be merry'". They might listen politely to you share your faith in Christ or they might not. But if they did listen, they wouldn't remember what you said five minutes later.

Friends, let me tell you, there are teeming millions of Americans who live by the wayside. And the devil keeps them in darkness by planting his own seeds, which are always lies, for Jesus said that the devil has no truth in him (Jn. 8:44). The devil lies to some of the wayside people about the **origin of life**. “There can’t be a God Who created the heavens and the earth several thousand years ago. Your ancestors came from a big bang and crawled up out of the ocean billions of years ago”. And they believe the devil, and they reject any notion of God. The devil lies to others about the **tragedies of life**. “How can God be good when there is so much injustice and pain and suffering in the world? If there is a God, He is either not good or too weak to defeat evil”. And they believe the devil, and they too reject any notion of God.

It just could be that the wayside describes you today. You have totally rejected God’s Word because you don’t have all the answers to the mysteries in the Bible, or in life itself. And if this is your case, then please listen for just a moment. First of all, whether you acknowledge God in your life or not, you are still accountable to Him. The Bible says, “So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12). And for the sake of your own eternal soul, you need to be right with God. And secondly, praise God, the God to whom we are accountable can be known! Jesus Christ said to His disciples, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). And if you really want to know whether or not God exists and know the truth about Him, then just sincerely ask God to reveal Himself to you, and then learn all you can about Christ. For the Bible says, “For the entire fullness of God’s nature dwells bodily in Christ (Col. 2:9, HCSB).

But in addition to the wayside, Jesus said that when the sower went out to sow some seed fell on stony ground. Now, the stony ground in Palestine is not how most of us would picture it –

stones that are mixed with good soil. It is a thin layer of soil that covers huge sections of limestone slab. The soil above the slab could be very rich and productive, but seeds still cannot grow and thrive, for the soil has no depth. And when the roots of a plant begin to grow downward to establish it and find nourishment, they are cut off by the rock, and the plant withers and dies.

And Jesus says that the hearts of many are just like rocky soil. They hear the Word of God and they embrace it immediately. They will most likely get baptized and become extremely active in a church. They'll read their Bible every day and tell others how great it is to be a Christian. But watch this. What they embrace is not actually the Word, it is the benefits that accompany the Word. Now, make no doubt about it, the word of the kingdom is good news. In fact, that's what Jesus Himself calls it. For the word "gospel" in the Greek means "good news", and in Matt. 24:14 Jesus says that the gospel of the kingdom, that is, the good news of the kingdom, must be preached in all the world and then the end would come. And the good news is, you can be forgiven of all of your sins. You can miss hell and go to heaven! You can have God's protecting hand on you 24/7. You can pray and God will hear and answer your prayers. Goodness, who **wouldn't** want all of that? And when many hear the good news of the kingdom of God they cry, "Yes, Jesus! I want to follow you! I want to be a part of Your kingdom".

But here's the rub. To be a part of Jesus' kingdom, you must make a total commitment to follow the King. Jesus said in Luke 14:33, "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple". Being a Christ-follower, which is being a Christian, means signing your life away to Jesus, making Jesus Christ the ruler of your life. In Mark 10:18 Simon Peter said to Jesus, "See, we have left all and followed You". And they had. Now listen to Jesus' reply to Peter:

“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, **with persecutions**—and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mk. 10:29-30).

Did you hear what Jesus said? He said that if you make a total commitment to follow Him you will be repaid a hundred times over in houses, lands, and family. And He is not saying that you’ll automatically become rich, but that you’ll have a spiritual family that will have houses and lands that will be yours should you have need. And that’s the way God would have us to live as the family of God. What’s mine is yours if you really need it worse than me.

But notice what else Jesus said. He said that when you truly follow Him you not only will increase in houses, lands, and family, but these will come with persecutions. Look at it again in v. 30. Underline it. Friends, **persecution comes with the territory of being a true Christian**. Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:20, “If they persecute Me they will also persecute you”. But here’s what many people who come to Jesus want to do. They want to sit down at the table in the kingdom of God and say, “Jesus, please pass me the peace”. Not the peas, but the peace. “And Jesus, I’d love to have some prosperity, and I’d really like to have some of that patience, too. But I think I’ll pass on the persecution”.

But friends, it just doesn’t work that way. Listen to what Charles Spurgeon said, “We must share with God’s people in darkness as well as in sunshine. When we hear them spoken of

with contempt and ridicule for being Christians, we must come boldly forward and say, 'So am I'. But the rocky soil people will not do that. Look again at v. Matt. 13:21. Rocky soil people have not put their roots down in Jesus. They only put them down in the blessings that Jesus gives. And when persecution comes for their faith, Jesus is not there to give them strength and they say, "I didn't sign up for this", and they bail.

Let me give you some real life scenarios. As an adult, the conversation in the break room at work moves to the stupidity of Christians for really believing that homosexuality is a sin. And when you are a rocky ground person you can't take the persecution and you'll bail. You won't say a word. Or at home your unsaved wife gives you a hard time about your newly professed faith. She calls you "holier than thou" and when you mess up she scoffs at you for being a hypocrite. And if you are a rocky ground person you bail. You quit church and go back to your old life.

As a student you are riding around with your friends and someone suddenly pulls out a joint and offers you a drag. You say, "No, thanks", and then they say, "Why, do you think you're too good?" But instead of saying, "I'm not too good. But I'm a Christian", you'll bail and say, "Well, I guess one drag won't hurt". Or your history teacher makes the statement, "If all of the great religions of the world are practiced sincerely they will lead to God. Do any of you have any thoughts on that?" And you know he is not right. But you can't stand the thoughts of being called a Jesus freak, and you bail. You don't say a word.

Am I saying that true Christians never mess up in these situations? Not at all. Peter sure messed up, didn't he, denying Christ three times. But Peter came back stronger than ever before, because Peter's roots were firmly rooted in Jesus. And Peter withered, but he was connected to the life of Jesus and he

could not die! But the rocky ground people get excited about Jesus, flourish for a while, but when persecution comes they die and they never come back, unless somewhere down the line they give themselves fully to Jesus and are saved.

But there is a third type of soil on which the seeds of the Word fell, and this was the thorny ground. Let's read about them again in vs. 22. Friends, life can be tough, can't it? Young families struggle to make ends meet. Then the kids get a little older and there's homework to deal with every day, and soccer practice and piano practice and field trips and you-name-it to take them to. And then they get a little older and the stress of dealing with hormones and dating and curfews weighs heavy. And sometimes the marriage just can't take it, and the home splinters. And then there's college expenses to deal with, and then the pain of a child's bad choice of a mate. And then health begins to fail. Job was right. Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. But life can not only be **tough**, but life can also be **tempting**. We live in a culture of excess, a culture of extravagance. If we see it we've got to have it, and we've got to have it now. And we get it, no matter how deep in debt we have to go.

Friends, I have just scratched the surface of the thorny ground. The thorny ground is the **tough things** of life, the things that get us down, that choke out our commitment to follow Jesus. We've just got too many problems to deal with to have time to serve God. Let the problem-free folks do that. But the thorny ground is also the **tempting things** of life. The lust of the eyes, James calls them. Cars, campers, clothes. Entertainment centers and swimming pools. And for us poor folks just a new TV or unlimited texting would do. But all of these things have one thing in common. They all choke out our hunger for God. Thorny ground.

I have seen it over and over in my ministry, and some of you have seen it, too. People come and profess Jesus as Lord and Savior and burn brightly for Him for a short time. Never miss a service. And then you won't see them occasionally, and then they are out just a little more occasionally, and then you see them only occasionally, and then you never see them at all. The tough things and the tempting things were just too much for them to overcome.

But friends, here's the common ground of the people of the stony ground and the thorny ground. None of them have ever come to Jesus in true brokenness over their sin. None of them ever had true remorse that they were separated from a holy God. None of them ever cried out to God in true repentance, desiring God to take away their sin and make them pure and holy. And none of them desired salvation more than anything else in all of the world and was willing to forsake all to follow Christ.

You are in church today, and that is good. You are here because God brought you here. I want to ask you, did He bring you here today to tell you that you are stony ground? That you've dropped out on God in the midst of persecution because you have no real root in Jesus Christ? Or did God bring you here today to tell you that you are thorny ground? That you fell away from God when the tough things came or the tempting things came, because you had no real root in Jesus Christ? Friends, I beg you, don't be deceived! Salvation is more than a walk down the aisle and a hand shake with a preacher. It is more than a dunk in the baptistery. Nowhere in the Bible do we read that true salvation is anything less than a committed, daily walk with Jesus Christ for a lifetime. Jesus said two times in the book of Matthew, "He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22; 24:13). This is not a **works-based** salvation. It is a **works-proof** salvation. We

are saved by faith in Jesus, and the evidence is our continued walk in His ways.

Now, let us quickly take a look at the last type of soil on which the sower sowed his seed. Jesus calls it the good ground. The good ground is a heart that has been broken up and tilled and warmed by the Holy Spirit. The good ground hears the Word of the Kingdom and wants more than just the blessings of the kingdom. More than anything else, the good ground wants the King! The good ground wants Jesus, it wants Jesus' cleansing from sin and Jesus' continual presence. And the good ground hears the Word about Jesus and cries, "Oh, Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, come into my life and be My King. Save me and rule in my heart and never leave me."

And Jesus said that if you are good ground there will be no doubt about it. The sun will not scorch you and cause you to die. The thorns will not choke you and cause you to fall away. But you will remain a follower of Christ day after day, year after year, and you will bear fruit. Your life will be a reflection of His life. And others will see it, and God will be glorified, and you will be a part of God's great army that advances His kingdom to the ends of the earth.

So that's God's State of the World Address. There are four types of people in the world. Some are blatant Christ rejecters. Others are false Christians swept away by persecution. Others are false Christians swept away by tough and tempting things. And others are the real deal, following Christ no matter what, to the end. Christ in their heart, fruit in their hands, heaven as their home. Which type are you?