



New Year 2017

New Habits for the New Year!

Matthew 13:3-9

Message #1 of 1 – S720

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Sunday Morning Service – New Year's Day

Pastor Rick Lancaster

New Habits for the New Year

Matthew 13:3-9

Opening Comments

- New Year's is always an interesting time of year.
- It seems to bring with it a renewed sense of hope and expectation for some people.
- For other people it brings a sense of frustration over things that were undone during the previous year.
- New Year's Day is a lot like a birthday to me. It is often a time to reflect on the things of my life.
- We will usually use a different word than goals to describe this evaluation and goal-setting that we do; we call it making resolutions.

Definition: Resolution: a firm decision to do or not to do something.

- We are not going to get into what resolutions people make and why they don't keep them
- I've chosen to share this message on New Year's Day, but the reality of these truths are timeless
- Instead of making resolutions, I would like to encourage you about developing habits
- Habits that will prepare you to respond to God's Word and His love in a way that will lead you to a year to be happy about
- Let's pray now and then get into our text
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **New Habits for the New Year**
- Turn in your Bible to **Matthew 13**.
- Here in Matthew 13 we have the parable of the sower and the seed.
- A parable is an illustration taken from the natural world to explain a supernatural truth
- In this parable we have a picture of different kinds of ground and what happens when seeds are introduced into that ground.
- The sower is God and the seed is the Word of God, or the truths of the Bible, the ground is our heart

- Let's go ahead and read through this parable.
- **Matthew 13:3-9**
- You will note that there are four types of ground referred to but only one of them was able to bear fruit.
- It is important for us to understand the different kinds of ground and understand why they don't produce growth.
- This is important because a good life, a happy life is only found in the life that is producing good fruit, the only one God blesses
- The first type of ground – **By the Wayside**
- Thankfully this is one of the parables that Jesus explained for us
- **Matthew 13:18-19**
- The wayside is the heart of someone that has done nothing to prepare themselves for the Word of God to be planted within them.
- The wayside is the part of the field that is beside the fertile ground.
- It is where the pathway would be.
- The carts and animals and people would travel on this part and caused it to be compacted and hard.
- Jesus says it is those that do not understand the word that are the ground by the wayside.
- What prevents us from understanding the Word?
- There are lots of things that harden the soil of our hearts. The big one is faith.
- Unbelief hardens the heart so that the seed of God's Word cannot take root.
- This ground can also be hard because it has been trampled upon so much that it is compacted down.
- These people are the ones that have been hurt or offended that have allowed roots of bitterness, resentment, and anger to grow in their heart.
- Grief, frustration, and fear have much the same effect to harden the ground of your heart.
- Faith in God and forgiveness are the tools that break up the hard ground By the Wayside
- The second type of ground – **Stony Places**

- **Matthew 13:5-6**
- One of things I have noticed in the fields around here where people are growing things is piles of rocks in or around the fields
- **Matthew 13:20-21**
- This is the superficial Christian.
- The stones that make up the stony places are: apathy, indifference, ignorance, selfishness, self-centeredness, and pride.
- These stones are also any of the various sins that will hold us in bondage; sexual immorality, drugs & alcohol, pornography, and lying just to name a few.
- For the word of God to take good root in your life those stones must be moved out of the field of your life.
- Repentance is the tools that deals with the **Stony Heart**
- In verse 7 to see our next type of ground – **Among Thorns**
- ‘Thorns’ is another way of saying weeds.
- Have you ever noticed that you don’t need to do anything to cause weeds to grow? Why is that?
- Weeds are what would grow there naturally.
- **Matthew 13:22**
- The thorns and weeds are the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. Turn to **Matthew 6**.
- The cares of the world are all of the things that consume our thoughts about this life and this world.
- **Matthew 6:25-34**
- When you care too much about the cares of the world, you are allowing weeds and thorns to grow in your field.
- The tool we use to deal with weeds in our life is contentment
- Be satisfied, happy, and thankful with what God has already given you
- Fourth type of ground – **Good Ground**
- Of the four types of ground, only the good ground produces anything good.
- And the good that is produced is in large quantities.

- For every seed that is planted, a crop of 100, 60, or thirty times as much is harvested.
- For us to have happy, productive lives, our hearts must be good ground for the Word of God
- **Matthew 13:23**
- Jesus says two things are indicators of hearts that are good ground
- Two things that cause a heart to produce abundantly; Hear and understand the Word
- If we desire to live better and happier lives, we know we need to change something about our lives
- That's why we make resolutions
- To make any kind of lasting change in our lives we need to change the way we think **Romans 12:2**

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- To grow in holiness, which is the path to a happier, more productive life, we need to hear and understand the Word of God
- To hear = listening with intent
- To understand = to accept as truth and choosing to apply it to your life
- Most of you here are believers
- That means your heart is of the fourth type – good ground
- The question is, is all of your heart good ground? **Matthew 22:37-38** 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' **This is the first and great commandment.**
- It is God's goal in your life to produce as much good as possible
- To do that He needs you to allow Him to work in other parts of the field of your heart
- A good farmer is intentionally trying to prepare of all of his land to produce as much as possible
- I would like to share with you four habits that you can learn and practice that will expand the good ground of your heart
- These four habits will lead to a better, happier, and more productive life
- First – **Break up the Hard Ground with Forgiveness**

- If you are like most people there are parts of your heart that have been trampled by others
- People have offended you, or betrayed you, or abandoned you
- The only tool that God has given us to break up the hardness that the sins of others causes us is forgiveness
- We learn how to use that tool by understanding how much God has forgiven us of our own sins **Ephesians 4:32**

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

- I am called to forgive others to the same degree that I have been forgiven
- Make it a habit to remind yourself how much God has forgiven you and then search out the hard parts of your heart and forgive others
- Second habit – **Get rid of the Stones with Repentance**
- If I do any kind of digging in your yard, I always find stones
- When I find them, I have a few options
- I can rebury them, but when I dig again they will still be there
- Or I can just ignore them, but then we are stepping on them or running over them with the mower
- The best option is to pick them out and get rid of them
- Stones in the life of a believer are sins – things that we do or think that God disapprove of, are contrary to His Word
- The tool we have to get rid of sins is repentance
- To repent is to confess it to God, and turn away from it, to make a choice not to do it again
- Any stones or sins we allow in our life will prevent good from coming to or from our lives – it is best to get rid of them
- Make a habit of asking God to show you where the stones are in your heart, and then repent
- Our third habit for the new year – **Pull out the weeds in your life with Contentment**
- We live in a world that is always tempting us to want more than we have or need
- Every time we give into those temptations we are allowing a weed to grow in our heart that will choke out the good that God is trying to do

- Our tool for dealing with that is contentment = be satisfied with what God has provided
- Too often we focus on what God hasn't given us, and forget about all that He has given us
- A quick examination of what you are praying for will reveal that
- A habit that will make your heart more good is to begin your day or prayers by thanking God for all He has given you
- When was the last time you thanked God that you are alive, that you have a home, clothes, food, family, friends
- We have a lot more to be thankful than we usually acknowledge to God in our prayers
- And then ask God for what you need, but at the same time teach you heart to be satisfied with what you already have **Philippians 4:11-13**
Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
- This is not easy to do, but through Christ you can
- Our fourth habit – **Make your heart Good Ground with the Word of God**
- Your heart cannot become good ground that God can use to bring good into your life and through your life without regular exposure to the Word of God
- Make it a habit of reading the Bible
- Not just to read, but to change **Hebrews 4:12**
For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
- Make a habit of letting God's Word turn over the soil of your heart
- It will reveal the hard spots, the stony places, and the weeds that are there
- If you make a habit of these things the area of your heart that is producing good fruit will expand, and god will bring more good into your life

- And little by little, the hard ground will be broken up, the stony places will be cleared, and the weeds will be pulled out, making more room for God's good in your life
- We wish each other a Happy New Year
- But wishing something does not make it happen
- If we want something to happen – we need to do something
- And if we want something good to happen, we need to do something good
- Develop these four habits and 2017 will be a good year
- Amen? – Let's Pray