

How's Your Soil

READING
Matthew 13

My wife and I rent our home, so we don't have any long term control about the garden. We pretty much inherit a new garden each time we move. When we moved here there was a quite overgrown courtyard. Recently we decided to try planting a few things there, chilli, tomato, pumpkin. All easy to grow stuff.

Of course we were very excited to see the first little tomatoes growing, and recently we got our first pumpkin which survived the local wildlife, (mostly kangaroos and rabbits).

But then we went to visit some of our friends. They showed us their vegetable garden. Our tomato plants that we were so proud of were absolutely dwarfed by their massive plants. Our crop of four little tomatoes was just embarrassing next to their crop of fifty big juicy ones. Our solitary pumpkin on a spindly vine about 2 meters long was kind of a no show compared to their twenty big pumpkins on a vine that filled the entire area of more than ten square meters.

So what's the difference? Why was their garden so productive and ours was so bad? We look after ours, we water it every day if it hasn't rained. We give it as much loving care as they do. We bought good quality seedlings.

The difference is the soil. Ours is dry hard clay. It's never been treated with anything. Seriously, in summer it's almost like rock. We put a thin layer of plant material on the top to help it along. But our friends got good quality top soil. Rich soil that smells like it's alive. They added manure and fertiliser. They dug it all through. They spent a lot of effort preparing the soil first. And the difference in the crop is, as you have seen, staggering.

Yeshua mentioned something similar in the parable of the sower. The same quality seed was scattered by the same sower, but there were four quite different outcomes. And each time the difference was because of the quality of the soil the seed landed in.

When the soil was beaten down into a path with constant traffic, to the point that it was so hard and dry that the rain runs off it... the seed had no chance. It didn't even germinate. The birds ate it.

When the soil was rocky... the seed tried to grow, but it couldn't survive the heat of the day. It had no root, it had no water. It withered and died.

When the soil was full of weeds... the seed also started out OK, but it was soon choked out by the weeds and it also died off.

But when the soil was good. Well prepared. Ploughed. Rock free. Manured and fertilised. The seed flourished and yielded a massive crop. Thirty, sixty, even a hundred times what was sown.

So, how about you? What kind of soil have you got?

Yeshua said that the seed in the parable was the message of God. What kind of soil is the message of God landing in when you hear it?

Are you so downtrodden by the traffic of the world that you don't even hear the message? Do you hear it, but you dismiss it so fast that it was wasted on you? Do you refuse to acknowledge that it even came from God?

Seriously, when you think about it... You, a mere man have received a personal message from God. The God. Creator of the universe. And you stick your fingers in your ears and make noises with your tongue to pretend that you never even heard it. You're an idiot.

Is your soil full of rocks? Do you have any soil at all? Do you think you're doing well because at least there is some soil between your rocks, so you're better than those people who are just a downtrodden path.

You're kidding yourself. Your soil is so bad that it's worse than a path. You're pretending you have soil when you don't. At least seed on a path can be picked up and resown elsewhere. With you it's completely wasted. It starts to grow but you are so shallow that it can't take root. You give up as soon as times get tough.

If only you were willing to accept some pain and suffering. God could turn those rocks into soil. He could push those roots through the cracks in the rocks to the soil below and your life would flourish. But you are a coward. Afraid of even a little discomfort.

Are you choked out with weeds? Yeshua said the weeds are the worries of life. The love of money, or power. Worries about your career, or your image. Thinking that you need to be one of the cool crowd, and that stopping to listen to what God is saying will prevent you from doing that.

Yeshua said that you cannot serve both God and money. Cannot. Don't even try. You need to choose. Choose wisely.

Hopefully your soil is alive. It isn't fun when God brings the plough to rip through your heart in preparation. But if you have the courage and faith for it, this is when your soil will be made good. It isn't pleasant when you feel like a pile of manure has been dumped on your life. But turning to God when things like that happen is how you turn dirt into life giving soil.

If you have good soil, then you have probably been through some tough times. But you did it by relying on God and trusting him that he knows best. Trusting that he loves you.

If your soil is bad, then the message of God will have little impact on your life. That is not what you want.

Ask God to prepare your soil. Ask him to bring rain, and manure, and the plough. Offer your heart to him so he can prepare the soil. And then when his message comes to you it will burst into life.

It will flourish and prosper and produce a crop, thirty, sixty, even a hundred times as much as was sown.

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