

## The Best Time to Plant a Tree

Lessons from the Ranch

Matthew 13:3

Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup>Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. <sup>9</sup>He who has ears, let him hear.”

### I. Introduction: God is a Gardner

- *Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden Genesis 2:8*
- *The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are the garden of his delight. Isaiah 5:7*
- *Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed...Matthew 13:3*

### II. A Farmer’s Story: Soil

- A. Seed types
1. Seed type #1 Path & Birds – No chance – Hard hearted – Can’t get started
    - Doesn’t sink in
  2. Seed type #2 Shallow Soil and No roots – Big show – No grow;
    - Won’t catch on
  3. Seed type #3 Took hold but choked out. What thorny things choke out growth?
    - Can’t hold on
  4. Seed type #4 Good soil = Good growth
- B. What kind of soil is my heart? Is my heart suitable for spiritual growth?

### III. Obstacles to spiritual growth: Self

- A. The problems
1. Our human condition
  2. Stuck in the mud

### IV. Jesus’ answer to our problem: Surrender

1. God’s purpose
2. Regeneration
3. Solution to a problem

### V. Conclusion: Start

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**Monday** – Review your sermon notes from yesterday. We emphasized that the unifying theme of the Bible is God’s *covenant* with us... First through Abraham in the Old Testament, then, Second through Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The prophet Jeremiah looked forward to a new day when God would write His covenant on the hearts of the people so that it could not be broken (Jer. 31:31-34), a prophecy of the new birth referred to by Jesus in John 3:1-8. Jesus termed His death on the cross as the sacrifice instituting the new covenant referred to by Jeremiah (Luke 22:20). The church is seen as the new covenant *community*. That’s why our 01 series of classes is based upon ‘covenants’ that we make with each other and with God. Book into your schedule signing up for one or more of these classes! Throughout human history (and our individual lives) we humans keep breaking the covenant. BUT God always gives us another chance to “get started” in growing our spiritual life. Theologically, this is called “regeneration”. Beginning tomorrow we’ll study this concept extensively.

**Tuesday - “Regeneration”** refers to the radical spiritual change in which God brings an individual from a condition of spiritual defeat and death to a renewed condition of holiness and life. Read Titus 3:5 to see the importance of baptism in this, and John 3:3 or 1 Peter 1:23 to learn about being ‘born again.’ All these metaphors of ‘birth’ imply the importance of further ‘growth.’ Take time this week to explore the spiritual growth opportunities offered this fall!

**Wednesday – Need for Regeneration...** Have you ever felt “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1)? No matter where you are spiritually today, God promises a new future and radical change in our very character through ‘regeneration.’ When Paul described those in Christ as a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17 NIV), he was referring to the act of regeneration. In Ephesians 2:10 Paul referred to Christians as God’s “workmanship” made for the purpose of good works. Sometimes the idea of receiving new life is used as a description of regeneration (compare John 5:21; 7:38; 10:10; John 10:28). In 1 Peter 2:2, the apostle described followers of Jesus as “newborn babes.” Whether the figure used involves birth, life, creation, or flowing rivers, the Bible is presenting a new experience of life which is enriching, comprehensive, and thoroughly renewed in holy love.

**Thursday -- Sources of Regeneration...** Throughout Scripture the source of regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit. Both Scripture (Rom. 3:10-23) and human experience indicate that people lack the power and will to reform. God works upon the human disposition by the use of truth (Jas. 1:18). This truth is the message of salvation which we find in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The role of the Holy Spirit is to take this truth and commend it to the understanding of each hearer (John 16:8-11). Regeneration occurs when the Holy Spirit takes the truth of the gospel message and allows the individual both to understand it and to commit oneself to it. There is a divine initiative through the Holy Spirit. There is a human responsibility in the response to the Spirit’s urging.

**Friday -- Result of Regeneration** Ephesians 4:17-32 makes the result of regeneration apparent. Paul first discussed the nature of the spiritual change in a believer. In regeneration each believer has put off the old way of life, become clothed with a new way of life, and is in the process of having one’s mind renewed in its thinking, reasoning, and willing. Because of this experience Paul urged each believer to practice truth, control anger, demonstrate kindness, and submit to the control of the Holy Spirit. The fact of regeneration formed the basis for giving an appeal to live a new life. The experience of regeneration does not leave an individual content and passive in efforts at Christian growth. Old powers of evil have been broken. The possibility of victory in the constant struggle with sin has become certain. The 01 series of classes is to bring us to this spiritual point...together as “one body”!