



James 4:4 Pt 3 and Matthew 13:1-9
Christians, the World and Thorns

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:1-4)

*That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach.³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: *"A sower went out to sow.⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil,⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."* (Matthew 13:1-9)*

The focus is still on James 4:4. Today, we will glean some perspective from the Parable of the Sower. Specifically, the "thorny ground" first mentioned in Matthew 13:7. Bishop McLeod taught this when we walked through the Gospel of Mark a few years ago. For context, we will briefly review the Parable of the Sower.

There are four types of ground the sower sowed seeds into

1. *The Path*

- a. There were walking paths in and around the fields in the region (think of it like a dirt road).
- b. This ground was too hard for the seed to penetrate. This resulted in it becoming birdfeed.

2. *Rocky Ground*

- a. A layer of bedrock was near the surface which resulted in shallow soil. The shallowness of soil prohibited a healthy root system.
- b. When the temperature heated up, the plant withered away.

3. *Thorny Ground*

- a. Healthy ground that also housed weed seeds.
- b. Weeds thrived in the ground and didn't allow the young plant sowed to receive nourishment and/or light to survive.

4. *Good Ground*

- a. Produced (and kept producing) the desired fruit.
- b. Produced varying amounts of fruit.

What was Jesus teaching?

Seeds symbolize the message of the Kingdom (The Gospel). (V19)

1. *The Path (V 19)*

Those who hear the Gospel but don't allow the message to penetrate their hearts. This allows time for Satan to steal the seeds

2. *Rocky Ground (V 20-21)*

Those who hear the Gospel and emotionally or impulsively “receive” the message with joy. They “grow” quickly but their commitment is shallow. This shallow commitment is tossed to the side when trials or persecution comes.

3. *Thorny Ground (V 22)*

Those who hear the Gospel and receive it in what appears to be good ground. However, before they show evidence (fruit) of the seed being planted in good ground, worries, riches, and the pleasures of life choke the seed to death.

4. *Good Ground (V 23)*

Those who hear the Gospel and receive it in understanding. They produce fruit in varying degrees.

Thorny Ground and James 4:4

In his letter, James tells his audience that:

- Friendship with the world is enmity with God.
- Whoever wishes to be friends with the world makes themselves God’s enemy.

It behooves us to remember that James is writing to Christians (James 1). This helps us to avoid swinging to the opposite extreme of assuming that Christians cannot have areas of life where we align ourselves (with or without knowledge) with the enemy of Christ.

Characteristics of Thorns

The Thorns mentioned here are simply “prickly weeds”. Just as it is today, weeds were the bane of every gardener 2000 years ago too. ☺

- They deprive plants of nourishment.
- They entangle with and choke plants hindering fruit maturation.
- In other words, thorns provided absolutely no benefit to plants.

A successful gardener must be vigilant in the war on weeds. It isn’t enough to simply plant a seed and let it fend for itself. The soil must be tended to on an often and consistent basis to help bring about the maturation of fruit.

What’s the big deal?

“What’s the big deal? Aren’t we saved by grace through faith?”

- We wholeheartedly affirm that salvation is indeed based on the finished work of Christ (John 19:30).
- We also wholeheartedly affirm that salvation will be accompanied by works (fruit) (James 2:17).

The big deal is that we who are the recipients of God’s amazing grace should not align ourselves with the enemy of our Lord.

- *Now honor the LORD, the God of your ancestors, and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives." (Ezra 10:11)*
- *Do not be conformed to this world... (Romans 12:2)*
- *As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. (1 Peter 1:14)*

- *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. (1 John 2:15)*

Cares of the World

An anxious over concern/worry about things needed/wanted in life. Jesus addressed this earlier in Matthew 6:25-33

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

1. Don’t be anxious (worry) about the basic necessities of life (food, drink, clothing, etc.).
2. Life is more than these things.
3. He is fully aware that you need these things and can be trusted to provide them.
4. He is NOT saying that we should not be concerned or plan for our needs. That is plain foolishness. He is saying that we should completely trust Him to meet our needs.
5. Worry divides our thoughts and causes us to lose focus on the most important thing...Eternity!

Deceitfulness of Riches

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (1 Tim 6:10)

1. Riches are NOT evil. The love of riches is!
2. Riches are evil when our hope rest in them instead of Christ!

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. (1 Tim 6:17)

3. Riches are evil when we allow our love for it to block us from obeying Christ.

But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. 24 Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! (Luke 18:23-24)

Plain Points

1. Thorns greatly hinder the believer’s maturation and fruit production.
2. Believers must be actively aware of the presence of thorns. Passivity will most certainly lead to being overrun with thorns. Being overrun will lead to disorientation and a feeling of hopelessness and a lack of assurance of one’s salvation.
3. Thorns are “native” to the soil of our hearts. While modern psychology says different, we affirm the doctrine of Original Sin. Man is born sinful and with a sinful nature.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. (Psalm 51:5)

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Eph 2:2-3)

Let us Examine Ourselves

- Are there areas of life where the cares of this world and or the deceitfulness of riches occupy your minds so there is no time for the things of God?
- If you are poor, are you anxious or worrying about your basic needs?
- If you are not poor, are you anxious or worried about how to get more or storing up your wealth?
- If you are poor or not poor, are you worried about “keeping up with the Jones”?”
- Do you justify a certain vocation or business/employer because of the financial gain?
- Are you too busy to practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer, reading, and fellowship?
- Have you ever said to yourself, “I’m too busy to make disciples?”
- Are you spending too much time “entertaining” yourself? (Sports, Television, Music, Social Media, Movies)

Encouragement & Warning

For those truly born again (as evidenced by fruit)

- The cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches is an empty counterfeit to the provision and satisfaction found in Christ alone.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God... (Psalm 42:2a)

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. (John 6:35)

- Repent where you need to repent (as the Holy Spirit convicts you).
 - Become/stay alert for thorns. Make yourself open to fellow brothers and sisters to hold you accountable.
 - Rejoice in the gospel!
 - Move forward and bear fruit!

For those who are not born again (as evidenced by the lack of fruit)

- The righteous wrath of God will consume you if you die without turning from your sin towards God (repent) and trusting in the sacrifice of Christ to save you.

Amen.