

Matthew 13:53-58 – “Jesus Rejected”

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Intro: Matthew 13 - 3 *He told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.... 18 “So listen to the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches what was sown in his heart; this is the seed sown along the path.* So began Jesus’ Parable of the Soils, His preceptive analysis of the human heart and what it takes to receive Him as the Savior. Tonight, we have a vivid illustration of Jesus’s teaching about the first type of Soil – the condition of heart that is hardened against believing in Him. And this illustration comes from a surprising incident in the life of our Lord – His return to His hometown of Nazareth. Surely if anyone in Israel would have been prepared to welcome the Messiah, don’t you think it would be those who knew Him best? The people He had grown up with. Those He had fellowshiped with. Worshipped with. Worked beside. And yet, as we’ll see tonight, those very people were unprepared to welcome their King. Why? How could they reject the one they knew so well? They rejected Him because their hearts were hardened by pride. Tonight’s lesson will unpack the reason for hardness of heart – that first kind of soil – and lead us to an answer for its cure.

Proposition: To receive God’s healing, we must be humble enough to receive God’s Healer.

Billboard:	(vv.53-57a)	A Rejection
	(v.57b)	A Principle
	(v.58)	A Tragedy

(vv.53-57a) – A Rejection – The Sower came sowing. What kind of hearts would His seed encounter in Nazareth, the Sower’s hometown? One might suppose that He would be welcomed, and His message received with joy, but this was not so: **Matthew 13:53–57 - 53** *Now when Jesus finished these parables, he moved on from there. 54 Then he came to his hometown and began to teach the people in their synagogue. They were astonished and said, “Where did this man get such wisdom and miraculous powers? 55 Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother named Mary? And aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? 56 And aren’t all his sisters here with us? Where did he get all this?” 57 And so they took offense at him.* Notice first that these people who knew Him best heard His Word and recognized its extraordinary nature. They confessed it as wisdom and power given by some superior source: *They were astonished and said, “Where did this man get such wisdom and miraculous powers? Yet, they rejected the Sower and His message. Why? Their questions unveiled their hearts condition, revealing that when they said, “Where did this man get such wisdom” what they really meant was, “Where did THIS man get such wisdom and miraculous powers?” “Seriously?” they seem to be saying. “This man? This man who is the carpenter’s son? Who made our tables and remodeled our houses? This man who all his years among us worked with his hands as a common tradesman? This man who never sat at the feet of a distinguished Rabbi? Who never studied beyond the most basic lessons in Hebrew school? This man whose mother has all those rumors swirling around her conception of the fellow? This man whose brothers and sisters live undistinguished lives right here in our village? Who does he think he is? Where could THIS man get THESE THINGS?”* Note carefully: they did not doubt that He had been GIVEN “these things” – wisdom and miraculous powers. They questioned the SOURCE of those obviously present gifts. Where had they come from? Now, there were only two possible answers in their minds. One possible source was God. God is the beginning of wisdom; God is the source of almighty power. “Did God give JESUS these powers?” they reasoned. This man? This man whom we know so well? This man who is just like us in every way? And they rejected the thought, which left only the other possibility: that His wisdom and powers came not from God, but from a darker source. This suggestion had already been made by others asking the same question the men of Nazareth asked:

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Matthew 12:24 - 24 *But when the Pharisees heard this they said, “He does not cast out demons except by the power of Beelzebul, the ruler of demons!”* Here is that first kind of heart soil in full measure. The evil one comes to sow into the hearts and minds of the hard-hearted the blasphemous lie: “They were offended by Him because they came to the conclusion that He was in complicity with the underworld of evil.”¹ **57** *And so they took offense at him. “Who does he think he is to talk down to us like this?”* they thought (cf. Luke 4). They were “scandalized” by Him the text says in the original language = “Offended and repelled to the point of rejecting His word.”² Note that word, “repelled.” Their fallen heart, their natural intuition, rebelled against the idea that THIS man could possibly be their Savior.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] The hardened heart rejects the thought that Jesus could be its Savior.

[ILLUSTRATION] Remember when we studied the Judgeship of Samuel and Samuel presented Saul to the people as God’s choice to be king? **1 Samuel 10:27 - 27** *But some wicked men said, “How can this man save us?” They despised him and did not even bring him a gift.* You may recall that the incident took place next door to Saul’s hometown of Gibeah and that those “worthless fellows” or “wicked men” were likely among those who knew Saul best in his youth, just as the men of Nazareth in Jesus day thought they knew Him best from His time growing up among them. But in both cases, the critics were failing to take God into account. Truly human nature dictates that “Familiarity breeds contempt” in the minds of those who don’t trust God.

[APPLICATION] The hardened heart fails to take God into account. It can only see what it thinks true of itself. The hardened heart despises the thought that anyone other than itself could possibly be its Savior, rejecting the thought out of hand.

(v.57b) A Principle – Why did they reject Him? What was the cause of their unbelief? Jesus analyzed their condition of heart using a well-known proverb: **Matthew 13:57 - 57** ...*“A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own house.”* This proverb was well known among both Jews and Greeks in Jesus’ day and expressed a common human failing: pride causes men to RESENT anyone they think their equal who seems to rise above themselves. You see, their problem was envy, “The difficulty of acknowledging the superiority over themselves of one of their own number,” said G. Campbell Morgan. Ultimately, the thing that kept them from hearing what the Sower was saying was their pride. Their unbelief was based in an unwillingness to submit themselves to the carpenter’s son; the son of Mary; the brother of James, Joseph, Simon, Judas, and their sisters. What was the cause of their unbelief? In John 7 Jesus spoke about this to another group who rejected Him. Listen to the men of Jerusalem ask the same question about Jesus that the men of Nazareth asked and hear Jesus’ analysis of the heart problem that keeps men from receiving God’s answer: **John 7:14–17 - 14** *When the feast was half over, Jesus went up to the temple courts and began to teach. 15 Then the Jewish leaders were astonished and said, “How does this man know so much when he has never had formal instruction?” 16 So Jesus replied, “My teaching is not from me, but from the one who sent me. 17 If anyone wants to do God’s will, he will know about my teaching, whether it is from God or whether I speak from my own authority.* Here is the principle that differentiates the hardened heart that cannot receive God’s Word from the softened heart that welcomes it: **17** *If anyone wants to do God’s will, he will know about my*

¹ G. Campbell Morgan, “The Gospel According to Mark.”

² Expositor’s Bible Commentary on the account in Mark’s gospel.

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teaching, whether it is from God or whether I speak from my own authority. There must be a humility of heart that wants to do the Father’s will for anyone to hear what God is saying and be saved.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Without submission to God’s will from the heart, pride keeps men from hearing God’s gospel of salvation.

[ILLUSTRATION] How often have we seen it? More to the point, how often have we seen it in ourselves? Someone who is too proud to accept a gracious offer of help in a time of need.

[APPLICATION] Pride is the ultimate killer of the soul when the offer of salvation comes to the hard-hearted man. It is seldom the case that an intellectual objection keeps men from being saved. Millions have come to faith in Christ who didn’t understand the first thing about how Jesus satisfied God’s wrath against them. All they understood was that they were wretched sinners, and Jesus was somehow a great Savior, and their hearts were humbly open to doing whatever God said to do so they could be saved. What keeps men from Christ always is prideful self-sufficiency. Pride kills, and unless God kills pride in the sinner’s hardened heart first, nothing wonderful can happen when the good news of Jesus is presented to the sinner.

(v.58) A Tragedy – The story closes with a simple statement of the tragedy that results whenever anyone hardens their heart against God’s Son: **Matthew 13:58 - 58** *And he did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.* Make no mistake. The text says, “He DID NOT do” miracles, not “He COULD NOT do” miracles among them. Their unbelief could not render Him impotent. He wanted to do great and mighty works for them, without a doubt. But unbelief on their part negated the purpose those mighty works were to fulfill, and God never does purposeless things. The purpose of Jesus’ miracles was to affirm that the seed He was sowing – God’s good news of the Kingdom – was true. Miracles were never done without serving this purpose. By their refusal to consider the truth of who Jesus was, the men of Nazareth rendered useless any mighty work Jesus might have done among them. Without a purpose, miracles are no longer “signs” – they are just “magic.” And God never does “magic.” Miracles are given to strengthen believing hearts; they can have no positive effect on hearts that refuse to believe. Mark tells us that in mercy Jesus laid His hands on a few sick people because apparently a few in Nazareth were open to the Healer – but the wonder works that might have been done never came to pass because of the hardness of their hearts.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] To receive God’s healing, we must be humble enough to receive God’s Healer.

Conclusion: A Sower went out to sow and sowed good seed in the hearts of the men of Nazareth, but as He sowed, the seeds fell along the path and the birds came and devoured them. Tragedy awaits those with hardened hearts. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to soften the hearts of the people in our hometown. We don’t want the people of this place to be like those in Nazareth. The account we have before us tonight was of Jesus’ last visit to His hometown. What a sad way for their story to end – to have had the Savior among them for so many years, and yet to have missed their chance of salvation.