

## Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, March 14, 2015

As a young boy, I was fortunate to live on my Grandparent's farm for nearly two years while my Dad was stationed overseas. Those were special times spent with my Grandpa Opa and I must say I learned some valuable lessons from him that have carried me through challenging times in life. Farming is a very humbling profession filled with many unforeseen risks that can greatly affect your livelihood. Weather is unpredictable and you are basically in the commodities market for better or worse. What Opa had going for him was eighty-plus acres of excellent loam soil that produced fine crops as long as the rains came as expected and other adverse weather conditions did not interfere with harvesting the crops he produced.

Jesus shared a parable about soil in Matthew 12:3-9 with a large crowd that gathered around Him on one occasion. He spoke about the Seed (God's Word) falling on four types of soil. Please bear with me on this since I know these soil types are applicable to our lives and our faith journey. The first seed scattered by the farmer fell on the path and the birds came and ate it all. Some fell on rocky places without much soil. Even though small plants grew, they soon withered from the scorching sun and the lack of proper roots. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew faster and choked the plants before they had a chance to mature. Finally, the seeds that fell on good soil produced a substantial crop that was one hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

You may be asking, "So what does this have to do with my life?" Well, as followers of Christ I believe this parable gives us an important example of what really matters during our short time here on earth. Once we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, we need to assess just how we spend the days that lay ahead. Since we have no idea just how much time we have, there should be a real urgency to our pleasing God in every way possible. Certainly we need to continue to work and provide for the needs of our family. And we need to spend adequate time nurturing our family as well. But "good soil" needs to make room for God's Word and being about His business. That will look different to each believer, but I can tell you what it looks like in my life.

Seldom does a day go by when I'm not confronted by someone in need and I look forward to the spiritual discussions that often follow and the opportunities to serve their needs as God sees fit. Sometimes it's as simple as referring them to someone else who has the expertise and wisdom to help them more than I ever could. On other occasions I know that God wants me to invest time, talent and possibly treasure into their lives. Jesus showed His compassion and was the friend of many and we need to do likewise.

You may want to ask yourself a few questions regarding your relationship with the Seed (God's Word): Do you see the seed being eaten by the birds before it takes root? Are your efforts for God having minimal impact or simply withering before you very eyes? Are the concerns of this world choking out your usefulness in furthering His kingdom? Are you bearing much fruit for God's glory? I hope you can honestly answer the first three questions with a resounding "No!" and the last with a triumphant "Yes!" Find a trusted Christian friend to dig deep into this issue with you to see if your life represents the type soil God can use for His glory. Hopefully, that trusted Christian friend will give you an honest assessment. Take their words to heart and strive to drawing closer to God every remaining day of your life.

In order to be prepared for what lies ahead, we need to be in God's Word daily and be around others who will strengthen us in our walk. In the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon reminds us that "A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." So, call upon the Holy Spirit to strengthen you each morning, come along side fellow believers, be available to God in all seasons and become that fertile soil that produces much fruit!

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Matthew 12:3-9; Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12; Psalm 1:1-6; James 5:7-9.

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### **Matthew 12:3-9 New King James Version (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: <sup>4</sup> how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? <sup>5</sup> Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? <sup>6</sup> Yet I say to you that in this place there is *One* greater than the temple. <sup>7</sup> But if you had known what *this* means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. <sup>8</sup> For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

<sup>9</sup> Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue.

### **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**

<sup>9</sup> Two *are* better than one,  
Because they have a good reward for their labor.  
<sup>10</sup> For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.  
But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls,  
For *he has* no one to help him up.  
<sup>11</sup> Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm;  
But how can one be warm *alone*?  
<sup>12</sup> Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.  
And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

### **Psalm 1:1-6**

1 Blessed *is* the man  
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;  
<sup>2</sup> But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.  
<sup>3</sup> He shall be like a tree  
Planted by the rivers of water,  
That brings forth its fruit in its season,  
Whose leaf also shall not wither;  
And whatever he does shall prosper.  
  
<sup>4</sup> The ungodly *are* not so,  
But *are* like the chaff which the wind drives away.  
<sup>5</sup> Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.  
  
<sup>6</sup> For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

### **James 5:7-9**

<sup>7</sup> Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. <sup>8</sup> You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

<sup>9</sup> Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!