

WHICH KIND OF DIRT ARE YOU?

By Fred Orcutt, Coordinator, Hood County Prayer Task Force

I am not a farmer. In fact, any time I try to plant any kind of flower, vegetable or other plant, I wind up killing it! I can't even keep a store-bought plant alive. I have a black thumb! But being from the northeast U.S., where ancient glaciers shaped the landscape, I have learned something about farms. I know that many farmers in that region must contend with different kinds of dirt. There is, of course, deep, rich, nutritious soil where seeds germinate, take good root and flourish. There are also rocky places that are not of much value for farming and there are hard-packed places where the soil has been heavily trodden by the farmer and his machinery. And then there is soil infested with weeds and thorns. Even here in Texas, I have seen these weeds grow and entangle themselves among my rose bushes and choke the life out of them.

Jesus told a story about these different kinds soils to help the people recognize where they are in relationship to Him. (Matthew 13:3-9 and 18-23) He said the packed soil in the pathways is indicative of those whose hearts are hardened to the message of His grace and mercy. The seed doesn't begin to take root – the Word has no effect on them. The seed falling on the rocks finds shallow soil and begins to take root – people who hear the Word and eagerly embrace Jesus, but when the winds of adversity or persecution blow, they quickly leave Jesus and go their own way. Those whom the weed/thorn-laden soil represents are those who, like the rocky-soil people, hear the message of Jesus' love and sacrifice. They also embrace it, but they are fruitless like plants choked by weeds. They are pulled aside by the problems of life and the pursuit of riches. They fail to serve Jesus and people the way He intends. Then Jesus talked about those who receive the Word of God, like rich, fertile dirt receives the seed. They trust Jesus and go on to listen to and study His Word and do what it says. They are the ones who produce large crops of love and good deeds. They are the ones who share the message of Christ with others and lead many to Jesus.

It seems clear from this story that the hard-path people have no relationship with Jesus. They don't care about Him and are lost with regard to eternity. It is also clear that those who are good dirt have trusted and know Jesus personally, serve Him and others well and will inherit eternal life. I wonder about those represented by the two kinds of dirt in the middle of the story: the rocky dirt and the dirt encumbered by weeds and thorns. Are they really saved and Heaven-bound or are they lost and headed for eternity in Hell? I must confess, I am not sure. The Bible (John 1:12) says that "*all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His Name, he gave the right to become children of God. . .*" It also promises, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. . .*" (Acts 16:31) The apostle Paul, talking to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:14-15, emphasis added) about building on the foundation of Jesus Christ, admonished them, "*If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved – even though only as one escaping through the flames.*" Ephesians 2:8-9 makes it very clear that we are not saved by our good works, but through trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, it would seem that those who are rocky dirt and weed-laden dirt are indeed saved. They embraced Jesus – but were not fruitful. However, Jesus Himself told the multitudes on the mountain, "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*" (Matthew 7:21-23)

It is not for me to determine whether the rocky-soil and weed-choked people will enjoy eternal life, but the apostle Paul cautioned us all to "*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith.*" (2 Corinthians 13:5) Think on that. Pray about it. Do some self-examination.