

April 18th, The Art of Cultivation
Part 3 in the series 'New and Improving'

What were some things from last Sunday's message that resonated with you?

Was there anything you wrestled with?

Do you have or have you ever had a garden? What's it like to cultivate one?

If this world is filled with so much evil originating from the minds of humans, how can our minds actually be biased towards love, whether or not we realize it?

A: We are created by God in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26).

READ Romans 1:20-23

20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

What happened to the hearts of the people that Paul is describing? How did their thoughts play a role?

What are your thoughts on verse 22 "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools"?

READ 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5** It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7** It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

What description of love in this passage strikes you most and why?

READ Mark 4:3-20

3 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. **4** As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. **5** Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. **6** But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. **7** Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. **8** Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

9 Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. **11** He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables **12** so that,

“they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,
and ever hearing but never understanding;
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!””

13 Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? **14** The farmer sows the word. **15** Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. **16** Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. **17** But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. **18** Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; **19** but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. **20** Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

In the message Jim said, “deceptive narratives thrive in shallow soil.” How then, do we gain depth so that love can thrive?

A: Think about what you’re thinking about. Be willing to dig deeper and think deeply. Dig up the rocks that hinder the growth of the seed.

Verse 19 says, “but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.” How does fear play into the worries, deceitfulness of wealth and desires for other things?

If love is more powerful than fear, why doesn’t love seem to just naturally choke out the fear in the gardens of our minds?

A: fear is more prolific in this world. Good seeds have one source and are deliberately planted, whereas weeds seem to creep in from almost every direction.

So, how can we root our thoughts in love instead of letting them be rooted in fear?

A:

- Think deeply about what your thinking: Why am I so anxious and afraid? What am I afraid of losing? What has God told me about being afraid of losing things? What promises has God made?
- Intentionally choose to think thoughts of love, gratitude and joy. Choose to think of God and His sovereignty and promises.

At the end of the message Jim prayed, “It is you who work within us both to will and work for your good pleasure. Every time we are tempted to root our thoughts in fear it’s an opportunity to grow something of value, something powerful that could produce a huge harvest spreading out into the rest of the world.”

Does looking at the moments we're tempted to root our thoughts in fear instead as opportunities for love to grow, change your perspective on things?