

**Sunday, July 16, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church**  
**Bible Study**  
**“Seeds in the Dirt”**  
**Genesis 25:19-34 and Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23**

Open with a word of prayer

**Gathering Time** (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants answer, “What images come to your mind when you hear the word ‘dirt’?”

**Genesis 25:19-34. Context.** The story of the Bible’s “first families” continues after the death of Abraham with the story of Isaac, Rebekah and their children. If there was strife and discord in the family history of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac, the next generation knew no less. This week’s reading describes the struggle between the sons of Isaac, Esau and Jacob, starting even in the womb.

**Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23. Context.** This week’s reading is taken from the third major collection of Jesus’ sayings in Matthew (chapter 13), the “parable discourse” as it is sometimes called. The parables are a form of teaching that was unique to Jesus in his time and place. As Jesus first told them, they were generally brief narratives drawn from the experience of everyday life that he used as a way of saying something about the coming kingdom of God. They are not merely illustrations or allegories, as Christian tradition has generally preferred to treat them over the centuries, nor can they be easily reduced to a single “point.” This week’s parable is the parable of a sower; but the interpretation is a (likely later) allegory of the seeds/soils – a way for Jesus’ disciples to understand their place, and the place of others around them, on the scale of reactions to Jesus and the winnowing that would be a part of the coming judgment. Matthew’s community might have taken solace in these words in the face of the social, political and religious upheavals of the second half of the first century.

**Read Genesis 25:19-34 and Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23**

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the text?

**Read Genesis 25:19-34 and Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 again -**

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- What did Esau give up in exchange for the stew? (Gen 25:29-34) Why did Esau do that? How did Esau’s lack of ability to see beyond his immediate need affect him?
- What does the seed represent in the Parable of the Sower? (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23) (Gen. 13:19)

- In Matthew 13, four different types of soil are mentioned in the parable: the path, rocky ground, thorns, and good soil. Which one might describe your current condition (personal or community) and why?
1. “Some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up” (Matthew 13:4). “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path” (Matthew 13:19).
  2. “Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away” (Matthew 13:5- 6). “As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away” (Matthew 13:20-21).
  3. “Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them” (Matthew 13:7). “As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing” (Matthew 13:22).
  4. “Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” (Matthew 13:8). “But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty” ((Matthew 13:23).
- “Built into both stories (Esau and Jacob and the Parable of the Sower) is the idea that you have to be able to see beyond the immediate moment, to see beyond what is so that you can claim what could be. A skill that a disciple needs to develop, and quickly, is the ability to look beyond the immediate horizon into the future that God has in store for us all”.
  - How well do you see beyond the immediate moment in your life? How about seeing beyond the current moment in your church? How might we be good dirt (soil) to be fruitful in our life (worship, small group, prayer, fellowship, mission) or church? What distractions/obstacles do those in your community face to experiencing God’s abundance/fruitfulness?

### **Closing Reflection Question**

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

**Prayer** (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

**Sending Forth** (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

Gracious and Loving God, we thank You for Your Word and the Parable of the Sower. Help us to have receptive hearts, eager to receive Your truth and to bear fruit in our lives. Show us any areas that distract our spiritual growth and give us the wisdom and strength to overcome them. May we be faithful sowers of Your Word, spreading it to others and nurturing fruitfulness in their lives? In Jesus' name, we pray, **Amen**.

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven  
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power  
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.