

Series: Increase

Echo Church | Week 38 | September 21, 2025 | Rich Saunders Jr. |
“Where is My Increase” | Matthew 13:1-9 (NKJV)

Matthew 13:1-9 (NKJV)

- 1 On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea.
- 2 And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.
- 3 Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: “Behold, a sower went out to sow.
- 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.
- 5 Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth.
- 6 But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.
- 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.
- 8 But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.
- 9 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Introduction: Where Is My Increase?

We've prayed. We've fasted. We've declared and decreed. We've shown up to church Sunday after Sunday, sowed our offerings, and yet, we're still asking, "Where is my increase?"

It feels like we're doing all the right things, but the results don't match the effort. We're waiting for the breakthrough, but it seems like the heavens are silent. Could it be that the issue isn't with God's promise but with the condition of our soil?

Jesus tells a parable in Matthew 13 about a Sower who scattered seed. The seed was good, but the results varied based on where the seed landed. This parable isn't just about farming—it's about faith, focus, and follow-through. If we want to see an increase, we need to examine the soil of our hearts and the stewardship of the Word we've received.

Point 1: "The Path – Distracted Hearts"

Verse: *"And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them."* (Matthew 13:4 NKJV)

In ancient farming, the "wayside" referred to the hard, beaten path where people walked. Seeds that fell there couldn't penetrate the soil and were quickly eaten by birds.

The "wayside" represents a distracted heart. In today's church, this is the person who hears the Word but is too distracted by life's noise to let it take root.

Distractions come in many forms. For some, it's the constant pull of social media, where we spend hours scrolling but only minutes in prayer. For others, it's the weight of worry—our minds are so consumed with what's happening in the world, our finances, or our relationships that we can't focus on what God is saying.

A distracted heart is also a divided heart. Matthew 6:24 reminds us, *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."* When our attention is divided between God and everything else, the Word can't take root.

Distractions don't just steal our focus; they steal our faith. The enemy knows that if he can keep us distracted, he can keep us defeated. The birds in the parable represent the enemy swooping in to snatch the Word before it has a chance to grow.

Original Quote: *"A distracted heart is a defeated heart because it can't hold onto what God is trying to plant."*

How often do we leave church inspired but lose the Word by Monday because we're too busy scrolling, stressing, or striving?

Point 2: "The Rocky Places – Shallow Faith"

Verse: *"Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth."* (Matthew 13:5 NKJV)

Rocky soil had a thin layer of dirt over hard rock. Seeds would sprout quickly but couldn't develop deep roots, so they withered under the sun.

This is the believer who gets excited about the Word but doesn't go deeper. They shout on Sunday but don't study on Monday. They know the lyrics to the worship songs but don't know the scriptures that sustain their faith. When trials come, their faith withers because it's surface-level.

Surface-level faith is faith that looks good on the outside but lacks the depth to endure. It's the kind of faith that's built on emotions rather than devotion. James 1:22-24 reminds us, "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.*"

"Shallow faith produces temporary results, but deep roots sustain lasting growth."

Challenge: Are we building a faith that can withstand the heat of life's challenges, or are we only growing on the surface?

Point 3: "The Thorns – Competing Priorities"

Verse: *"And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them."* (Matthew 13:7 NKJV)

Thorny soil allowed seeds to grow, but the thorns (weeds) grew faster and choked the plants, stealing their nutrients and sunlight.

This is the believer whose faith is choked by competing priorities—money, relationships, career, and the cares of this world. The Word is planted, but it's not the priority.

Weeds grow faster than the seed because they require no cultivation. They represent the distractions and worries that creep into our lives and choke the life out of our faith. Jesus said in John 10:10, "*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*" Weeds are the opposite of what Jesus came to give us. They steal our focus, kill our joy, and destroy our ability to grow.

How Do We Recognize a Weed?

A weed is anything that grows in your life without intentional planting. It's the worry that keeps you up at night, the pursuit of success that pulls you away from God, or the toxic relationship that drains your energy. Weeds don't announce themselves—they creep in subtly, but their impact is devastating.

"When everything is a priority, nothing is fruitful."

Are we giving God's Word the space it needs to grow, or are we letting the weeds of worry and worldly pursuits choke our spiritual growth?

Point 4: "The Good Ground – Prepared Hearts"

Verse: *"But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."* (Matthew 13:8 NKJV)

Good soil was tilled, free of rocks and weeds, and ready to receive the seed. It produced a harvest because it was prepared.

This is the believer who not only hears the Word but applies it. They cultivate their hearts through prayer, study, and obedience, creating an environment where the Word can thrive.

Prayer tills the soil of our hearts, making it soft and receptive. Study plants the seed deep within us, giving it the nutrients it needs to grow. Obedience waters the seed, ensuring it doesn't wither under the heat of life's challenges. Without all three, the atmosphere isn't able to produce. A lack of prayer, study, or obedience creates a non-thriving environment—not just for the individual but for the entire community of believers.

When prayer, study, and obedience are absent, we create a spiritual drought. But when they are present, we create an environment where not only we thrive, but our families, churches, and communities thrive as well.

"Increase isn't about the seed you receive; it's about the soil you prepare."

Are we intentional about preparing our hearts to receive and steward the Word, or are we expecting a harvest without the work?

Four Things We Can Do to See an Increase

1. Guard Your Heart:

Scripture: Proverbs 4:23 – “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”

Protect your heart from distractions, negativity, and anything that would harden it to the Word of God.

2. Go Deeper:

Scripture: Colossians 2:7 – “Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.”

Don't settle for surface-level faith. Study the Word, meditate on it, and let it take root in your life.

3. Eliminate the Weeds:

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1 – “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

Identify and remove anything that competes with God's Word—whether it's worry, busyness, or misplaced priorities.

4. Stay Consistent:

Scripture: Galatians 6:9 – “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due

season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."

Cultivate a daily habit of prayer, worship, and obedience. Consistency creates an environment for growth.

Conclusion

In Matthew 13:18-23, Jesus explains the parable. He says the seed is the Word of God, and the soil represents the condition of our hearts.

The question isn't whether God's Word works—the question is whether we're creating the right conditions for it to grow.

If we want to see an increase, we need to:

- Stop blaming the seed and start examining the soil.
- Recognize that increase isn't just about hearing the Word; it's about holding onto it, applying it, and letting it transform us.

Final Charge: "Your increase is tied to your intentionality. Prepare the soil, protect the seed, and watch God bring the harvest."

Why Scatter and not plant?

1. Historical Context: The Farming Practice

In ancient Israel, farmers often used a method called "broadcast sowing," where they would scatter seeds by hand across a field. This was a common and efficient way to plant crops, especially in large areas. After scattering the seeds, the farmer would plow the field to cover the seeds with soil, allowing them to take root.

This method was practical for several reasons:

- **Efficiency:** Planting seeds one by one would have been time-consuming and labor-intensive, especially for large fields.
- **Maximizing Coverage:** Scattering seeds ensured that the entire field was covered, increasing the chances of a good harvest.
- **Trust in the Process:** Farmers understood that not every seed would grow, but they trusted that enough would take root to produce a harvest.

2. Spiritual Significance: The Generosity of the Sower

The act of scattering seeds in the parable symbolizes the generosity and abundance of God's Word. The sower (representing God or anyone sharing His Word) doesn't withhold the seed or limit where it's scattered. Instead, the seed is spread everywhere—on the path, rocky places, among thorns, and on good soil.

This reflects God's heart:

- **God's Word is for Everyone:** The seed is scattered widely because God's message is meant for all people, regardless of their current "soil condition."
- **Opportunity for Growth:** Even though not all seeds will grow, the sower gives every area a chance to produce fruit. This shows God's grace and willingness to give everyone an opportunity to receive His Word.
- **Faith in the Harvest:** The sower trusts that some seeds will fall on good ground and produce a harvest, even if others don't.

3. Why Not Plant Seeds Individually?

Planting seeds individually would imply a selective or limited approach, where the sower decides in advance which areas are "worthy" of receiving the seed. But the parable emphasizes that the Word of God is not exclusive—it's available to everyone.

- **God's Kingdom is Abundant:** The scattering of seeds reflects the abundance of God's Word. There's no shortage of His truth, grace, or love.
- **The Focus is on the Soil, Not the Seed:** The parable shifts the focus from the act of planting to the condition of the soil. The seed (God's Word) is always good, but the soil (our hearts) determines whether it will grow.

4. Application for Today

The farmer's method of scattering seeds challenges us to think about how we share God's Word. Are we selective, only sharing it with people we think are "ready"? Or are we generous, trusting that God will bring the increase in His time?

This also reminds us that not every seed we scatter will grow, but that doesn't mean we stop sowing. Our job is to scatter the seed; God's job is to bring the harvest.

Key Takeaway

The farmer scatters seeds because it reflects the abundance, generosity, and inclusivity of God's Kingdom. It's not about controlling the outcome but about giving every area a chance

to grow. This method reminds us to trust God with the results, knowing that even if some seeds don't take root, the ones that fall on good ground will produce an abundant harvest.