I want to start off by saying this is a two-part message. This morning will be a launching pad into next week. So, if you want to get the full message you will have to tune in or be here next week.

This morning we are faced with a familiar parable. The parable of the sower. Comes at a point in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus is back to teaching after the twelve have come back from their mission. And he is teaching them about the key part of their mission, to bring the kingdom of heaven with them. And now they are being taught that part of bringing the kingdom of heaven near is sowing the seeds of Gods love which in turn for us becomes the Gospel wherever we go.

And so often with this parable we talk about how its our job to scatter the seed and someone else will water it and the Spirit causes it to grow. We talk about and reference the different hearts of the people to explain why some were rocky and some were good soil.

What I want to do is talk about the good soil. More specifically I want to talk about cultivating good soil. Because I do believe that there are things we can do help the soil be as good as it can be for the seed of faith to grow. As a result, I will first talk about how professional gardeners and farmers create and foster good soil to plant in, then how that relates to faith, and how we can implement in our lives on a micro and macro level.

Whether you are growing flowers, herbs, vegetables, a lawn, or a shrub border, healthy soil is an absolute must. Your plants will be less prone to pest and disease issues, they'll grow better, and they'll look better. With a bit of know-how, some work, and some patience, you can have healthy soil, no matter what kind of soil you are starting with.

If good soil could be achieved merely by buying a bag of fertilizer from the garden center, most Americans would be boasting perfect soil. While fertility is obviously an aspect of good garden soil, there is so much more involved. Good soil has:

* Good texture: You often hear gardeners talk about their soil's "crumb." This refers to the texture of the soil. Good soil is crumbly, like cookie crumbs scattered over the top of an ice cream sundae.
* Good soil has, Plenty of organic matter: Organic matter is just dead plant and animal tissue, which decomposes and enriches your soil as [humus](https://www.thespruce.com/how-to-easily-make-a-compost-2539473). Humus is wonderful because it helps improve your soil's texture by binding some of the smaller particles together, which increases your soil's aeration. It also improves your soil's ability to both absorb and drain moisture. Finally, [organic matter](https://www.thespruce.com/what-is-organic-matter-1401911) helps provide nutrients to your plants. Microorganisms help break down the organic matter into its basic elements, which enables plants to absorb it and use it.
* Good soil has a Healthy pH: Soil pH is the measurement of the acidity of your soil. This affects the minerals contained in garden soil and their availability to your plants. In general, the closer to neutral your soil is, the better your plants will be able to take up these minerals.

There are several things you can do to [improve your soil](https://www.thespruce.com/used-tea-leaves-make-great-soil-1403136) and we will be focusing on the most prominent one. Which is to add organic matter: Adding organic matter is hands-down, without a doubt, the number one way to improve your soil.

So what should you be adding to your soil? Compost is a must--it will improve your soil immediately and introduce microorganisms that will continue improving your soil by further breaking down organic matter. Add as much as you possibly can; it really is nearly impossible to overdo it with compost.

The act of [composting](https://www.thespruce.com/how-to-easily-make-a-compost-2539473) is putting organic materials in a pile or [container](https://www.thespruce.com/tips-for-indoor-composting-2539618) along with water. This pile is turned periodically and the beneficial bacteria will thrive. This creates high heat and breaks down the raw organic materials into a dark, rich, soil-like product. There will be no discernible original parts, and finished compost has a fresh, earthy odor.

compost needs three essential ingredients for the magic to happen:

* Green material
* Brown material
* Sufficient moisture

Green material is high in nitrogen. It is referred to as kitchen scraps such as [coffee grounds](https://www.thespruce.com/using-coffee-grounds-in-your-garden-2539864), peelings, fruit cores, and eggshells. Any kitchen waste that is not greasy or meat can be composted. Manure (not dog and cat [waste](https://www.thespruce.com/composting-cat-or-dog-waste-2539613)—only barnyard animals), grass clippings, leaves, and weeds are also green materials.

Brown material is high in carbon. Paper, sawdust, small branches and twigs, and straw all fall into this category.

Water is the final key ingredient in a thriving compost pile. Without moisture, your pile will take months to do anything, and if dry enough, will not break down at all.

The first thing I want to point out is that more often than not, you are not just going to stumble onto the perfect soil. Creating good soil and having your plants produce at an optimal level takes time and energy. Similarly when we are working on the soil that is someones heart it takes time and energy. This is not a quick process.

Compost needs green material, brown material, and sufficient moisture. The heart needs three things to be fertile for the seed of faith. The heart needs love, grace, and mercy. It is love grace and mercy in combination with each other that is able to soften the heart for people to come to the realization, that yes, they are loved by the creator of the universe.

So lets talk about love. As John tells us, God is love and the way that we are known as Jesus disciples and children of God is by our love. Love is the most powerful force in this world and one of the reasons is because the source of all love is God. All love in this world are manifestations of God.   
And with each action of love we are helping to create good soil.

In a world that is full of information overload. Where people are constantly being told what it means to be beautiful, what it means to be successful, what it means to be happy, what it means to be popular, and most people constantly trying to fit into that criteria, to fit into those boxes, to fit into those molds trying to feel like they belong, trying to feel like they matter, trying to feel like they are enough, love warms the heart. It is love that says, you are good enough. It is love that says you are cherished. It is love that says you matter. It is love that says you do not have to fit into the mold of society in order to be accepted. It is love that builds people up. And then when someone is overwhelmed by, and saturated with love and you tell, them just wait, there’s something even better than the love that I have showed you. There is agape, unconditional love that comes from God. And what you experience from me, is not me, it is God at work in me because God loves you so much that God sent the Son Jesus Christ to die for you, it begins to make sense. Because just like you cannot overdue compost on a garden, you can never love someone too much. Love never loses its efficacy.

Grace and mercy go hand in hand for me. When we think about the love of God, it is displayed through grace and mercy. We are given grace when we are given what we don’t deserve, and we are given mercy when we are not given what we do deserve. So think about salvation. We deserve the consequences of our sin and yet do not receive them, and then we are given salvation and eternal life with God even though we don’t deserve it. And when grace and mercy work together something beautiful comes of it.

I don’t have enough time to say all I want to say in one message and I think this is important so next Sunday I will expand on this message and talk about creating good soil in individuals and in a community.

And here is what I want you to take away from today. We are all called not just to sow the seeds, we are also as farmers called to work the soil. We do this by manifesting the character of God in our words and deeds. And when we manifest the character of God which can be summed up as love expressed through grace and mercy, we are creating good, rich soil. So that when we sow the seeds in the field of the world they have a greater chance of sprouting and growing. Think about this week, what soil are you creating.