

Week of February 12-18

This week's devotional-writer is Mark Kiburz. Mark serves on our Board of Elders and is currently pursuing his ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God.

PICK THE STONES

Scripture Reading: Read Mark chapter 4

Schoharie Valley was settled primarily by Dutch settlers in the late 1600's and then the Palatines by the early 1700's. These pioneers cleared the land and developed the farming community. Farmers in Schoharie Valley realized they had struck agricultural gold. The soils along the Schoharie Creek are among the most fertile in the U.S. No wonder this area was known as the "Breadbasket of the Revolution."

Jesus used a farming illustration in the "*Parable of the Sower*" to instruct believers on how different people can respond to the Word. He masterfully speaks to people in a context they would understand in his day and in ours 2000 years later. The Bible truly is a Book of Ages. Jesus opens the parable by noting how the farmer sows the word. God plants the truth of His word within of us. Jesus says that some people have the seed sown but "*Satan comes and takes away the seed*". My earthly father once told me that, "No one can take education away from you unless you give it away". The word of God can never be taken from you unless you are willing to give the word away. James 4 says "*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee*" When we accept God's word, submit to Him and resist the devil when he come to interfere, we glorify God, solidify His work in us and multiple our faith. Jesus, then, explains that others are like seed on rocky places that die when trials and persecution come. We, as believers, are bound to face tough times and life's pains. Generally, people that know God with their mind instead of their heart fall away during trials and tribulation. We must remember all people face trials and tribulation, it is just what we do with trials that will allow our faith roots to grow deeper or die in Christ. Jesus goes on to say that some seed falls among the thorns. These folks received the gospel but life's cares and worries choked out the word. Finally, Jesus explains that the good soil is a person that hears the word, accepts it, and produces an abundant crop.

Farmers for thousands of years understood the importance of good soil and the work that is involved in growing a good crop. God planted a seed in you. Is your seed planted on the fertile valley soils or the rocky hilly soils? Is it planted in the rich soil or the thorny soil? Once God has prepared and planted you, you will be a field of golden wheat waving in the wind ready for harvest.

Action Step and Prayer Focus: Take steps in finding the seeds planted on stones in your life and pray for God to show you how to transplant the seeds to fertile soil. Check your garden to see if needs to be weeded so that the seed can grow more effectively.

Take-a-way: **It's all about the soil, so, let the Lord clear your land for a great harvest.**