

06/15/25 - Luke 8:1-21 - "Take Care How You Hear"

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me to Luke chapter 8, verses 1 through 21. Verse 1.

And many others who provided for them out of their means. And when a great crowd was gathering, and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, A sower went out to sow his seed, and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it.

And some on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it, and choked it.

And some fell into good soil, and grew and yielded a hundredfold. As he said these things, he called out, He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said to you, To you it has been given, to know, the secrets of the kingdom of God.

[1 : 40] But for others, they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this, the seed is the word of God, and the ones along the path are those who have heard.

Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy.

But these have no root. They believe for a while, and in time of testing, fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, there are those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

As for that, in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand so that those who enter may see the light.

[3 : 04] For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.

Take care, then, how you hear. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken.

Then his mother and brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, Your mother and brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.

But he answered them, My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it. This is God's word. Well, thank you, brother Nathaniel, throwing you into the fire, reading the word in front of a bunch of people.

Praise God for his word and for all the work that he's doing through his word here at Steel Valley Church. And the song, just like the song that led into the reading, these are ancient words, and we come with open hearts.

- [4 : 26] And that is my prayer as we enter this specific text. What an appropriate song to sing. Have you ever wondered how people can hear the same exact sermon and walk away with a plethora of takeaways?
- Some, to the preacher's credit, maybe some, not so much. You know, you might talk to one person and they were like, Do you have any idea what he was talking about up there?
- That happens often here. And so we clarify all that in house churches. But anyhow, you know, the confused ones who leave.
- You go to another person and they're just kind of just, Yeah, whatever. You know, they're still bitter from maybe a church conflict or something like that. They walk in with bitterness in their hearts.
- And some are asleep by minute seven. That might be a personal best for me. But then the snoring comes. And as far as we know it, Eutychus has never fallen out of the window here.
- [5 : 43] But some fall asleep. And still amidst all these varying responses to the Word of God and a sermon, there's a couple people that are just changed.
- Completely convicted saying that. They might go along the line of saying that was the best sermon they've ever heard. While the other person who's bitter is scratching their head.
- What are you talking about? This is a big waste of time. I could have watched some church on the TV or whatnot. And some are just transformed.
- They're convicted. They're energized. Have you ever wondered how people can hear the same exact sermon and walk away with totally different responses?
- Well, the passage today in Luke chapter 8 makes known these reasons. We come with a question.
- [6 : 52] And it's not always the message. It's not always the volume of the microphone. You just couldn't hear the preacher. It's definitely not always the preacher.
- But it's more than likely always the condition of our hearts. Hearing.
- Jesus isn't giving us a life lesson on how to grow grass in your backyard. Okay? If that's what you're getting from the passage so far, well, let's look at something deeper here.
- We need to see that He's actually testing hearts and hearers of His days, disciples specifically. He issues a warning in verse 8.
- It's not about where you plant the seed. But the warning is in verse 18. Take care then how you hear.
- [7 : 59] It's a warning of the heart in the midst of this agricultural parable. And the tragedy of this passage is that we can hear the good news of the kingdom of God from the lips of Jesus Christ, the best preacher that ever lived and was resurrected.
- And we can depart scratching our heads, completely unchanged, with the same bitter hearts leaving that we came in with, and live lives void of fruit to a world who needs this good news of the kingdom.
- The depth of our receptivity of the word, of ancient words imparting within us, is directly related to how we hear.
- How we hear. And today, we'll be breaking this passage into three sections. And I'm going to kind of chunk these together of the parable, the problem, and the proverbial point.
- Parable, problem, and proverbial point. And by the end of our time, I believe that we will see loudly on display is that the fruit of the word depends on the condition of our hearts.
- [9 : 34] The fruit of the word depends on the condition of our hearts. And so the sermon title, I'm going to go with that warning. Take care how you hear.

And I'd like to pray together as we enter into this first section for the Lord's word to find soft soil this morning.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word. It's an ancient word. It's a word that the world needs to hear, but the world rejects.

Father, we come with open hearts right now for your word to impart. Lord, let your spirit do that work within us and help us by your Holy Spirit.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. And so the parable here is laid out. One sower and four soils.

[10 : 40] In verse 1 through 5, Luke starts with Jesus Christ proclaiming. Luke loves his summary statements. We saw that in the book of Acts as his second volume to his first volume, the Gospel of Luke.

And he provides a summary of what's going on. Jesus is proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. And he had quite a following. Men and women were following him.

And the message of the kingdom was different than what the world had ever received before. It was a message that contained truths that go far beyond human wisdom or human intellect or maybe human insight.

It's a powerful message that can radically transform our lives. And yet still sometimes it falls on deaf ears.

To illustrate this point, as all these people are following Jesus, it's like he wanted to make a point here. Why are you all following me?

[11 : 52] And so he makes a little illustration, gives this agricultural parable. Concerning a sower, sowing seed, and the various challenges that the seed faced when it landed.

And now in Jesus' day, I want you to imagine this and kind of grasp this. It's a little bit different than what I just did in my backyard literally like three days ago. I tilled up the soil, got it all ready.

I wasn't going to waste my time and throw the seed out before I got the soil nice and soft and ready, right? That's just kind of what we do. In this day, culturally speaking, the sower would go out.

The soil was in its precondition, how it was, and they would cast handfuls of seed out. And the plowing would then come after the seed had already been scattered.

And so on Palestinian soil, I mean, it's pretty dry in many places. And the seed would meet all sorts of types of soil. And Jesus describes what happens here, evaluating dry, dead soils.

[13 : 05] And so let's take the parable for what it's worth at this point and make some observations together. Look with me. In verse 5, we see a seed falling on a path.

And so he says, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot. And the birds of the air devoured it.

And so this is seed that fell on hard, impenetrable soil. And notice here that there was, the issue here is the seed, not the fruit.

And so he goes into a little bit of fruit here. There's another seed that's made a seedling, falls on some rocks, and as it grew up, it withered away because it had no moisture.

It was shallow. It was rootless, essentially. In essence, it was fake. You had another seed falling along thorns.

[14 : 15] And the thorns grew up in verse 7. It grew up with it. So in proportion of this seed growing, along with this seed's growth, you see thorns popping up.

And it got choked out by the thorns. It was crowded, choked out. And so with this seed, there was stunted growth. But then the fourth soil here in verse 8, And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.

I like how Luke simplifies this. If you read the other synoptic gospels, they go a couple more dimensions of fruit production. But Luke just says, the point is, it produced a lot.

It was receptive. It was receptive. And very, very fruitful. And I want you to see that these are all unique aspects. These are all unique stories here.

The first is only concerned about the seed falling on hard ground. And then the other ones are concerned about fruit. One was fake fruit.

[15 : 25] One was stunted fruit. And then one was actually abundance of fruit. And now, if we're honest, as we got to be honest with the disciples in Jesus' day, parables can sometimes feel a little cryptic.

Like you got to decipher rightly. And this is actually the exact point why Jesus used parables. He made you think about it to allow the Spirit of God's wisdom to bring it to light for you.

Jesus didn't tell parables to make truth easier. Let me break this down in a parable so you understand. It's actually opposite. He broke it down into a parable so only those who have ears to hear would understand.

And He told them to sift through the serious from the superficial in verse 10. He says to look upon this because this is serious business.

He concludes, He says, He who has ears, let him hear. So why do people hear and others don't?

[16 : 46] Well, we have to follow along here because I am not at liberty to explain something that Jesus Christ explains.

So we have to go to the next verses. And so keep the seed's purpose in mind that it is purpose to produce fruit. And so in the next section, we see the problem, the whole point of Jesus saying this.

In verse 9, we see that hearing isn't the same as listening. You can hear Jesus Christ's words, but to listen, it's a little bit deeper. There's a little bit more involved to listen.

Trust me, I got four kids. I know the difference between them hearing and them listening. Any parents can get an amen for that? Amen. Okay, I'm in good company.

Misery likes company. No, I'm just kidding. These are very difficult years. I love every minute of it with our kids.

[17 : 47] Verse 9, we should find it extremely ironic that even the disciples, those closest, you got a multitude of people, men, women, and then you got the 12 disciples.

They hear this message and they're like, oh, so the kingdom of God is about farming. We are going to be farmers, Peter.

No more fishing. I made Carmen chuckle. Let's close in prayer. Carmen has Father's Day lunch plans.

No. They missed the point entirely of the parable. Those closest with Jesus, that should be really ironic. Really, really ironic.

And so Jesus explains the parable to them. I love when Jesus explains the parable. It's the preacher's best friend. Keeps us in context. And when he explains it, he references Isaiah 6, verse 9 through 10.

[18 : 57] He references Isaiah to explain that repeated hearing, habitual hearing, and a lack of response leads to hardened hearts.

He says, let's look in the history books at those folks who had perfect attendance at church, who heard and weren't changed.

And now, this isn't about God withholding truth or hiding truth from people, but it's about people refusing to accept it, refusing it, and they become blind after a certain point of time of refusal.

In verse 11 through 15, we discover that the seed, as Jesus says, is indeed the word of God.

Amen. And the four soils are the condition of hearts. You got four soils metaphorically portrayed as condition, various conditions of people's hearts.

[20 : 09] And so Jesus elaborates here. He revisits the soils of the previous soil types that the seed falls. In verse 12, he says, for the hard hearts, the hard soil, the word bounces off it.

It doesn't even get under the surface of what you see. Satan snatches it away. It's metaphorically spoken about as the birds carrying it away and devouring it.

Verse 13, to the shallow hearts, these are hearts that are quick to joy, quick to an amen, quick to all this emotional hype, but they have no root.

Confusing emotional reaction with spiritual transformation. Very easy to do and very popular in Christianity today. When trials come, all of a sudden they fall away.

Well, where's all the heights? Where's the emotional height? In verse 14, he addresses the choked out hearts. And now, these don't necessarily reject the word.

[21 : 19] They got the root systems and everything intact. But they also have a life full of other things that are stunting their growth in their Christian walks.

And they are choked out. They love things more than the fruit of God's word. It's an attention that spends more time on anxiety in their lives than the peace that comes from His word.

It's those who find more fulfillment in working rather than resting. And boundaries in that words. Or enjoy pleasures of this life more than a passion for His word.

And then in verse 15, we get to this soft heart, this soft soil. This is one that hears, holds fast, and bears fruit through perseverance.

Now, we can always give ourselves too much credit. And so, I'm going to continuously put myself on the chopping block so we can be honest with ourselves because we always want to say that, yeah, we got a soft heart.

[22 : 39] I'm good. You feel validated through a message like this. But I want us to pause for a minute because have you ever heard, like me, have you ever heard a sermon just as I have, nodded along with the sermon but depart completely unchanged.

You hear and you're just like, man, yeah, that's good. But the very challenge, the application of the passage, you leave and Monday comes and you're just like, what was that sermon about?

I know it was good. And you're at your house church and talking about the sermon notes and you're just like, what was the title of that sermon, right? It's kind of just superficial stuff. Do you ever read your Bible without ever actually hearing it as you're reading?

Do you ever read a page and say, what in the world did I just read? It happens all the time. I'm putting myself on the chopping block. I've been in both and worse situations than that church and we need to be honest with ourselves.

You see, if the Word never bears fruit in our lives and changes us, the sower and the seed are not the problem.

[24 : 02] It's not a bad seed. The sower in God Himself is not a bad sower. It's heretical. The stagnancy that we feel in our lives is a direct result of the poor condition of our hearts.

It's the hard reality. This is the habitual refusal that Isaiah 6 talks about.

That's why Jesus is going back into history to those leaders who had perfect attendance at church, who did all the great things. They read. They had the entire Torah memorized.

Right? But still, they had a habitual refusal to do God's Word. We have to take responsibility, church, for our own complacency in God's agricultural initiative within and through our lives.

Our responsibility of where that seed is landing. Church, this is a parable about response.

[25 : 19] It was really interesting how the fruit is what it's about. It's about us. It's talking about our lives, the condition of our lives, how we're departing from, we'll just make it simple, how we're leaving church.

Right? Because we hear, we receive God's Word, and that's probably a very accurate depiction. And so, the process of sowing seeds is not the ends.

Getting into a chair on Sunday is not the ends. That's not it. It's a means to an end. And it's always been that way.

And the type of parable that Jesus gives to His disciples and all who have ears to hear confronts our hard hearts of unconfessed sin in our lives.

It confronts it. Because it's a heart that tunes out truth continuously, habitually, and the harder our hearts get.

[26 : 29] It's a heart that habitually gossips about other people. Right? And the harder it gets. It confronts our shallow hearts who are fired up for a moment until the hardships come, and they will.

It confronts our choked out hearts our lives that are filled with so many other things that drown out the noise of God's Word and the fruit that God desires to produce in and through our lives.

This is a parable about our response, church. John Piper says that the preaching of the Word is not merely the conveyance of information, but the confrontation of the soul.

Right? We're not just communicating the message of the kingdom. The message of the kingdom wants to enter your soul. Jesus makes it clear.

Anyone can hear about it. Anyone can hear about it. You can bring a Muslim student from YSU here, and they can hear it, but not all will listen.

[27 : 44] not all will be confronted. There is no level of participation that we can do apart from the Spirit to aid us in receiving God's Word, and this is so important.

It's not about, remember, cultural context. They didn't plow until after it was sowed. We can't say that we need another church or another Bible or another discipleship group or another anything.

No. All these things are just distractions from you. You need to look at your heart, right? It's pretty clear here that there's no level of preparation that we can do just as the seed that Jesus is referring to that lands on pre-existing conditioned soil, whether hard or soft, the tilling doesn't come afterwards until after the seed is down.

And so those that are on hard ground, the birds already got the seed, right? It is often the spirit that breaks us down in humility and rightly so before we hear God's word.

As we humble ourselves, we have shame over our stubbornness just as it were for the people of Isaiah. We come crying to God to soften our hearts, to forgive our enemies, to allow us to allow our lives to match up with the degree of our perfect church attendance.

[29 : 25] The seed is good. The word is powerful, so powerful, but not all hearts are ready to be softened.

just as soil cannot prepare itself to receive, only life can come through the sower.

There's nothing dirt can do to be useful in bearing fruit. It needs something outside of itself to come and bring life.

Calvinists in here say, amen. We should find it interesting, very interesting, that the plowing does come after, and God comes and tills the soil of our hearts to be even more ready to grow.

Is that you? Today? Today? If you're here today, maybe you're not even a Christian. you just thought you'd take a look at a cool looking building. Maybe you've heard the gospel before and it kind of just always bounced off.

[30 : 38] Perhaps life has trampled your heart down. It's tamped pretty solid, whether through hurt from your last church or maybe abuse as a child and things of that nature.

But guess what? The seed is being sown again right now. And to what condition of a heart is it falling upon?

Could this be the day that God softens your hearts and opens your eyes finally to His grace? The sower hasn't given up on you, and I don't know who needs to hear that today.

He has not given up on you today. Pay attention, humble yourself, and have faith in Jesus Christ because salvation is not by your works, not how much you prepare your hearts, but how God prepares you to receive.

Receive it today if you are not in Christ. Christ. Now he follows the parable with a proverb, and the point is clear.

[31 : 55] What you do with the Word matters. There's consequence by what you do, and not just for your heart, but for your whole life. And so we ought to listen carefully to that.

And quickly here, the proverbial points we see in verse 16 to 21. Shifting from the parable to a proverb, it's Jesus makes a simple point.

No hidden messages or anything like that. He says in verse 16, no one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar and puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand so that those who enter may see the light.

Those who enter may see the light. And so here, our individualized culture that leeches upon us as the church is confronted with this communal proverb that Jesus didn't save you individually.

And he did, but that's not the ends. It's not just you and God. You can live in your little hole without any problems around, problems being people, right?

[33 : 11] No, he saves you into a body for others. And we see that here. The work of the word produced internally was intended by God to be revealed as a light to the world.

And while you can see because of that light, the purpose is, Jesus is saying the purpose is so others can see. Others. It is meant to be received, displayed, lived out.

And what we see as just a little seed, as small as they can be, God sees a tree, massive tree. In other words, this receiving the word is not something that we should say, well, when I'm ready, I'll change.

There's a lot at stake here. We should see that. The kingdom is at stake here. For that, we might understand, then, why Jesus warns the people here in verse 18.

Take care, then, how you hear. Take care, then, how you hear. See, hearing without obeying leads to loss.

[34 : 34] others who need to hear, need to see you obey. This isn't about hearing sermons, it's not about Bible readings, it definitely can apply in those different areas, but the overall point of this is about application of all of it.

Prior to the warning of verse 18, Jesus reminds those in his day and us today that everything hidden will be brought to light for all to see.

You better do it now, because if you don't, there's going to come a time where Jesus Christ will reveal your lack of response later. Commitment and complacency will be revealed one day, both of them.

And so what we do now determines our spiritual trajectory from now until eternity. There's a lot at stake. And I love it, before Jesus drops the mic, in just the way of saying, there was no microphone, got somebody in the back, why are you talking about microphones?

He drops the mic, metaphorically speaking, he gives one last powerful point of how God's word reprioritizes our lives and how it ought to and how it was designed to do.

[36 : 02] Verse 19 through 20, here comes Jesus' family, right? And he says in verse 21, before the mic drop, my mothers, my brothers, my family are those who hear the word and do it.

That's it. You see, the kingdom of God, in the kingdom of God, obedience trumps even biology.

In the kingdom of God. It reprioritizes our lives for all to see and it reprioritizes our relationships. We're no longer friends with the world.

Your family, in God's eyes, is designed by faith, not flesh. God's design. And so this is good news if you're married today or maybe you're widowed today, maybe you're single, that you have a vital part in the family of God, regardless of your life situation, your life status, you have great purpose because our status is not about what may appear in our lives.

It's not about status but it's about obedience. It's about obedience to God's word. Just as James 2 reminds us that faith without works is dead. Remember that.

[37 : 37] And that's it, church. You've heard the word. You've heard the word this morning. Carmen heard the word. But according to Jesus Christ's own words, not everyone of y'all are actually listening today.

It's a sad reality. It's the saddest aspect of preaching that a preacher needs to face. Are you listening today?

will you obey this transformative good news in your life that changes you from darkness into light to be a display of God's mercy and His grace in your life or will you just forget it?

Will this be another Sunday where the seed falls on ground sort of unnoticed? go back to work tomorrow and just kind of blend in with the crowd.

Somebody's warnings going off. This might be for you. So, what would obedience look like for you this week?

[39 : 04] We're not here to just warm seats. obedience might look like repenting of your sin, confessing your sin.

Maybe Father's Day is full of a lot of frustration because God took away your husband and now is it kind of, or your dad, and now is a day of just kind of like, I'm not happy.

All right? what would this week look like for you? Would it be to have courage in the status of being a forgiven sinner that someday we will be united once again with Jesus and those loved ones who have gone before us?

And that they're actually, according to 1 Thessalonians, the ones that are actually benefiting more from going before us because they will rise first from the dead? Yeah, this is a hard season of life difficulty, but don't let that reveal that your roots were never taken root in the promises of God's word.

What would obedience look like? Maybe reconciliation with a friend, family member, maybe risking something for your faith?

[40 : 29] Your corporate job is forcing everyone to display rainbow flags in a month like we have, and you're just like, no. You can't be friends with the world.

If the word doesn't come out of you, it probably never got in you. And it's better you hear that now than someday find out that it's too late.

how many more Sundays will pass that we appear more biologically connected to the world than spiritually connected to the church? How many more Sundays will pass?

Kevin DeYoung says that it is impossible to sit under faithful preaching for years and still walk away unchanged. not because the word lacks power, he says, but because the heart lacks submission.

How can we take care how we hear? How can we do something about it? It comes through submission. It comes through humility.

[41 : 49] It comes through honesty and trusting that when you hear, the seed takes root and that your life and your lives will be a testimony that that seed indeed took deep root.

May we cultivate a good and honest heart today, one that listens deeply, holds fast and bears fruit with patience, knowing that a humble heart is never too old or too young to bear fresh fruit.

So whether you're one of the older folks in the church, you're never too old to bear fruit. Or maybe my son, a preteen, you're never too young to bear this fruit.

So take care how you hear because the word that is sown today will either change us and change everything for us or it will become our greatest regret for enduring from now into eternity.

And so you see that the word is everything, that the fruit of the word depends on the condition of our hearts, the fruits.

[43 : 04] Let's pray. deth Pr Pr Pr