

- **\*READ Luke 8:1-8\*** If we have read this parable once then we have probably read this parable a hundred times. Not only have we probably read it a hundred times, but we have probably studied this parable in Bible classes and have heard numerous lessons presented from this text. In fact, just recently we even considered some important lessons from this text and its sister text from Matthew and Mark.
- However, there are times when you hear some angle on a text that you have never considered before and it really causes you to stop and think. This very thing happened to be some weeks back when I was listening to a friend present some thoughts from this particular account of the parable of the sower here in Luke, and what he was saying caught my attention because I had never thought about this parable from that vantage point before. From there I did my best Berean impersonation, thought upon the text, did some digging, and came to the conclusion that these thoughts had some merit to them. I also decided that these conclusions would be a worthwhile lesson to share with our group.
- So this evening, we are going to consider the parable of the sower from a couple of different angles. We will first summarize the parable, then look at Jesus's explanation, continue by looking at the tradition conclusions we've probably heard before, and then we will look at some alternative conclusions that I believe are worthy of our sincere consideration.

### **I. Parable Summary:**

- A. A man goes out to sow his seed for a future harvest, and as he sows his seeds, the seeds land in many different places that bring about different results. This sort of imagery would have been very familiar with this society because they were very much agriculturally based.
- B. Some seeds fell beside the road, and those seeds were trampled by people walking by. Those that weren't trampled were then picked up by birds as a nice free meal.
- C. Some seeds fell on the rocky soil where they grew up quickly. However, they also withered away quickly because there was no moisture for them to be sustained.
- D. Some seeds fell among the thorns, and were choked out by the thorns as they fought over the nutrients of the ground.
- E. Some seeds fell among the good soil where they were able to establish strong roots which led to growth and the bearing of fruit.

### **II. Parable Explanation:**

- A. The seed that is being sown is the Word of God. The soils that are being sown to are the ears and hearts of those who might hear the Word of God proclaimed.
- B. The seed that falls beside and along the road is likened to those that hear the Word, but the devil quickly comes and snuffs out any faith that the Word might have tried to establish. This is the devil's best case scenario for those who might hear the Word. He would obviously rather they never hear, but if they do hear then he hopes that they don't allow it to have any time to settle.
- C. The seed that falls on the rocky soil represents those who hear the Word, receive it with joy, seek to live by it, but quickly fall away when the temptations of life come upon them. They are those who get excited by the prospect of the Gospel, but they don't truly establish any roots of real faith within the Word and its truths.
- D. The seed that falls amongst the thorns represents the Word that falls upon hearts that are ready to receive until the worries, riches, and pleasures of life come up against them. When these challenges appear, the hearer fails to remain and bears no fruit for the Lord.
- E. Finally, the seed that finds good soil is likened to the one that hears the Word of God, receives it, holds fast to it, and bears much fruit for the Lord. This is obviously what God desires above all else because this represents the hearts of the faithful.

### III. Traditional Parable Conclusions:

#### A. This parable is all about evangelism.

1. For as long as I can remember, any considerations of this parable center around the idea of evangelism and spreading the Word of God. I mean...Jesus even says it right there in His explanation that the seed being sown is the Word of God, so this parable must be about us taking the Word to those around us, right? For so many people, the very mention of the parable of the sower automatically brings to mind thoughts of evangelism.
2. It is normally pointed out that Satan is working against us in our sowing of the Word of God. He is trying his best to make the hearts of those who might hear the Word unfit for receiving the message of the kingdom. Therefore, we are encouraged to not lose hope as we seek to make sure that the Word gets out to as many people as possible.

#### B. We are to sow the seed to everyone and hope they have the right heart to receive and obey.

1. Unfortunately, just looking at this parable from a purely statistical approach can leave us pretty discouraged since it seems like the odds are stacked against us. There are four places where the seed is sown, and sadly only one out of those four places is said to be able to produce a true crop of faith and obedience. These numbers can often serve as a hindrance to our work because we look at the odds as being too great to overcome.
2. Nevertheless, we are encouraged to be patient in our efforts and not lose hope. We are encouraged to not judge where the seed is being sown, but to spread the Word to any and every place that we can. If this sounds like a lesson that you have heard before, then I appreciate that at least a little of my lesson about this parable from about three months ago seems to have stuck with us at least a little bit. Additionally, I think that all of the teaching that we often here from this parable is necessary teaching that I would not disagree with much at all.
3. However...I would like for us to take a closer look at this parable, specifically Luke's account of such, because I think that maybe we might have missed what Jesus and Luke were really trying to get the hearers and the readers to understanding in the originally telling and the recording of this parable. I think the key verse lies in **v.18** where Jesus states, *"So take care how you listen."*

### IV. Alternative Parable Conclusions:

#### A. This parable is about my hearing, receiving, and accepting of God's Word.

1. Again, notice **v.18** where Jesus draws the attention to how the hearers ought to take care how they hear. If this parable was primarily about evangelism and spreading the Word then why doesn't Jesus end on some encouragement concerning diligence in getting the message out? I think that is truly something for us to consider. If this parable is primarily about evangelism then why doesn't Jesus take time at this point to encourage the hearers to not lose hope when the message they are sharing is rejected? Instead of Jesus sharing these words, we instead see Him speaking to the hearers about the way in which they are hearing what Jesus is sharing.
2. I think this is further evidenced all throughout the context of this parable. Notice how many times we see Jesus hit on the idea of hearing and listening well.
  - a) *"As He said these things, He would call out, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'" (Luke 8:8)*
  - b) *"And He said, 'To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND.'" (Luke 8:10)*
  - c) *"Those besides the roads are those who have heard..." (Luke 8:12)*
  - d) *"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear..." (Luke 8:13)*
  - e) *"The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard..." (Luke 8:14)*
  - f) *"But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word..." (Luke 8:15)*
  - g) *"My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it." (Luke 8:21)*

3. Again, I'm not saying that this parable doesn't put forth some ideas that aren't beneficial for evangelism. This whole picture of us sowing the seed among the hearts of the world is a good picture to consider and a good plan to follow. However, when we look at this context as a whole, I think we are beginning to see that this parable isn't about other people and their reception of God's Word....Instead it is all about how I receive God's Word!
- B. I have to put in effort to make sure that my heart is prepared to receive the Word and allow it to produce fruit within my life.**
1. If we are accepting of the fact that this parable is directed towards us and our hearing and receiving of God's Word then we need to consider what this means from the standpoint of the parable itself. It first means that our ears and hearts can be conditioned to hearing and receiving the Word in different ways just as soil finds itself in different conditions to receive or not receive seed for planting.
    - a) Our hearts could firstly be so hard that the truth of God's Word has no hope of putting down roots so that it can produce faith. If we are completely obstinate towards being willing to conform to God's Word then it will find no place within our hearts because it won't even be able to truly penetrate our ears so that we might hear and consider it.
    - b) Secondly, our ears might be receptive to hearing the Word of God, but the Word isn't able to establish strong enough roots to be able to stand strong when the difficulties and temptations of life come upon us. We might get excited about some truth we hear, but when push comes to shove...well we just aren't that committed to it.
    - c) Thirdly, our ears might hear the truth and our heart might desire to receive it, but it isn't able to thrive within us because there are too many things with roots already firmly established within our hearts. If our hearts are fully invested in this world then what happens when some teaching of God's Word goes against what the world desires of us? If our hearts are overrun with worldly thorns then the Word isn't going to find much success.
    - d) Finally, it is only when our ears are open and our hearts are soft and ready to receive God's Word and its truths that we can be transformed by what follows. It is at this point that we can be successful and profitable in our faiths.
  2. This seems to be Jesus's point when He switches the imagery in **vv.16,17**. He had been talking about seeds and soils, but then He switches to talking about the affects of light upon darkness. If we aren't willing to allow God's Word to enter our hearing and change our hearts then we would be like someone who obtains a light but decides to cover it or put it under a bed where it does not useful. Instead, a light should be put in a place where it can illuminate all of the darkness that surrounds it. In the same way, our allowing God's Word into our hearing and hearts will allow for it to show us in which ways we need to be changed to be what God would have us to be. This take a great deal of humility because we are opening ourselves up to criticism and change, but they are a must if we want to be faithful to God and a part of His people.
- C. Only those who hear, receive, and accept God's Word will be part of the family of Jesus.**
1. This is what we see directly following the parable. Jesus's family comes to see Him, but He again seeks to emphasize the need for those who follow Him to listen to what He has to say. ***"My mother and my brothers are these who hear the word of the God and do it."* (Luke 8:21)**
  2. Our desire should most certainly be to be a part of God's family, but that honor is only reserved for those who are willing to listen to the Word of our heavenly Father in faith and obedience. It isn't enough to just hear the Word, but we must also be doers of the Word as James said in **James 1:22**.

It can be an easy temptation to read the Bible and see how it applies to everyone else. It is much more difficult to read it and put effort into understanding what it means about me and my response. I hope this lesson will serve as an encouragement for each of us to be diligent in seeking to take in God's Word so that it might have a strong and powerful impact upon us as we seek to grow in the knowledge and understanding of His Word. Even this week, may we seek to open our ears and hearts to receive that which will help us to be more faithful and obedient to the Lord in all things. Our daily Bible reading is an excellent opportunity for us to allow the Lord to speak to us, the question is whether or not we will listen and take heed. May God bless us to truly be careful how we listen to His Word.