

Are You Listening?

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Date: 03 August 2025

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[0 : 00] But we're going to pick up our reading in Luke's Gospel, chapter number 8, in verse number 4. The first three verses kind of just gives a little quick note about Jesus is in the middle of His ministry, but I do want to point out that many of His ministry was funded by women.

People say, well, the Bible doesn't elevate women. Well, Jesus does. And the Bible does, by the way. Jesus was able to do many of His ministry because of some of these ladies that were giving up their substance.

And that's kind of what's going on is Jesus' ministry is booming. But Luke wants us to know that there's people that were involved. And God intends for people to be involved in the ministry. And they helped it to move forward. And so Jesus is moving forward. He's preaching to the multitudes. And that's where we find our place in verse number 4 where the Bible says this. And when much people were gathered together and were come to Him out of every city, He spake by a parable.

Here's the parable. A sower went out to sow his seed. And as He sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.

[1 : 08] And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. Verse 8, and others fell on good ground and sprang up and bare fruit a hundredfold. And when He had said these things, He cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be? And He said unto you, And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand, which would be a reference to Isaiah and a prophecy there.

Verse number 11. Now the parable is this. The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear. Then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

Verse 13. They on the rock are they which when they hear receive the word with joy, and these have no root, which while for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

And that which fall among the thorns are they which when they have heard go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection.

[2 : 22] But that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience.

This morning I want to preach a message entitled this, Are You Listening? Are You Listening? Anybody ever been asked that question? Jesus asked the question.

He says, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Let's go to Lord in prayer and then we're going to jump right in. Father, thank you for this opportunity. Lord, thank you for the beautiful music that was able to be sung this morning because it reminds us of who you are and it points us to you.

But I pray that you were honored and you were glorified in that, Lord, that it would stir our hearts and it prepared it for the preaching now. Lord, I pray you would just help us to set aside all the things that we may be thinking of and the things upcoming and we're in a busy time of year and school starting back and all the things we may be worrying about.

And Lord, help us just to focus for these next few moments on your word. Help us to really truly listen to what you would have to say, Lord. I pray that you would empty me of self, Lord. You would cleanse me of sin.

[3 : 27] You would fill me with your spirit, Lord. I need you. I need you to be a help to me, Lord, so I can be a help to your people. Lord, I pray that there's someone here today that does not know you

as their Savior, that today would be that day.

And we ask all this in your Son's precious name. Amen. Thank you so much for standing. You may be seated. Does anybody here suffer from the dreaded disease of selective hearing?

Yeah. Some of you aren't even listening already. This is a great start to the message. I mean, I know that I do. At least that's what my wife tells me. Sometimes she just starts conversations like this.

You never listen to me. I'm thinking, this is a weird way to start a conversation. But probably she's been talking for a while and I haven't really heard what she's saying. But if we're honest, there's a big difference between hearing and listening.

There's a big difference there. I mean, I'm going to speak for the husband because I think that I understand this well. I've had 18 years of practice. I know there's been times where you have nodded your way through a conversation.

[4 : 30] Come on. I'm not the only one. And by the end of the conversation, you are repainting the house. You're going to Hobby Lobby. And apparently, you're going to go gluten-free for the next three months.

And you're like, wait, what just happened to me there? Because you were hearing, but you weren't really listening what was going on. For parents, I know we've all been in the boat where you've told your kids to clean your room.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I heard you. And then you walk in the room and guess what? Nothing has happened. Parents? Amen? Yeah. I mean, that's what it is. But I would imagine that all of us have suffered from spiritual selective hearing.

We would maybe not be as readily to admit it as maybe these first two kind of silly illustrations. But, you know, there's times in our life where there's verses that we read and we're thinking, I don't really like that that much.

Some verses we love all the time and we can quote them and we got them hanging on our wall because we went to Hobby Lobby. Because it was 50% off week. And we were there with our wife and we bought it because that's just what you do. And we love that verse and the way that it speaks to us and it makes us feel and it's an encouragement.

[5 : 37] You know, we like the sermons that really, really kind of lift us up and I hope that they all do. But let's be honest, sometimes sermons are hard because they meet us right where we live. And things in our life need to kind of change and move a direction.

I'm thankful the Lord loves us enough to tell us the truth, by the way. You know, we memorize the parts of the Bible that kind of support our preferences, you know. I remember vaguely a couple weeks ago, I've tried to block it out of my mind that there was a whole bunch of burnt orange in this auditorium.

And I quoted a verse that the horns of the wicked shall be cut off. But if you look at the rest of the verse, there are the horns of the righteous. But you know what? I took that verse and made it fit my preferences right there.

I just had to be honest as your preacher. I'm going to ask for forgiveness there, but I don't really mean it. And we can kind of laugh about that, but the sad reality is many Christians live their life like that.

They'll take a verse and they'll wrench it and they'll apply it to their life. And the hard parts they kind of just put away and won't really look at it. Because when it comes to our spiritual life, selective hearing isn't a medical condition.

[6 : 45] It's a heart condition. And that's really the heart of this text. That's really what Jesus is bringing forth. Because biblically speaking, Jesus isn't concerned with how your ears function.

How you hear certain things. What he is concerned with is how your heart responds when the truth is spoken. That's what Jesus is really nailing down.

Because Jesus had no problem drawing a crowd. We're going to see that in a minute. But he didn't want to just draw a crowd so he could itch their ears. No, he wanted to touch their hearts. That's why Jesus says in the end of verse number 8, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus isn't, he's not asking, he's not like the Verizon guy, can you hear me now? That's not what he's doing. Some of you kids have no idea what that is. I just dated myself. It was a big deal, big commercial way back in the day.

But that's not what Jesus is asking. He's not saying, hey, can everybody hear me back there? No, no, here's what Jesus is wanting them to understand. Are you really listening?

[7 : 48] Listen, every time we open up the word of God, whether it's in this church, whether it's in a Sunday school class, whether it's in your own personal devotion, the question isn't, are you really hearing it? No, are you open?

Are you humble? Are you willing to obey what the word of God says? Are you ready to respond? Listen, that's how you should come to church. That's how you should open up your word of God on your own time, in your devotion time.

Not saying, well, I've got to just check off the day. No, open it, ready to respond. Ready to do what it says. That's what Jesus is really kind of telling this crowd here.

So with that in mind, I want us just to look at how Jesus addresses this issue of listening with our heart. Of hearing with our heart. As the crowd gathers, Jesus doesn't shout louder.

Here's what he does. He tells a story. Jesus is a master of this, obviously, but he's a great storyteller. He brings these illustrations in. And this parable wasn't just for some people on an Israeli hillside a long time ago.

[8 : 56] No, it's for us today as well. It's for us to ask ourselves, are we really listening to the truth? Are we really responding to it? So with that, let's kind of lean into this text this morning.

Verse number four kind of lays the setting out. And when much people were gathered together and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable. Really, when you study the gospels and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, we notice very quickly he can draw a crowd real fast.

Especially as he's gotten off the ground here and the public is really excited about everything he's doing. And when he's causing blind people to see and lame people to walk, and most importantly, as we got the most amen so far this service, at potlucks, he made a lot of food appear.

I mean, it's just that we laugh at them, but you know, the saying was true in Jesus' day, and it's here. If you feed them, they will come. And Jesus drew a crowd.

And when we think back to John chapter 6, when he fed the 5,000, he fed 4,000 at another point, and that's just men. Most likely their wives and their children were with them. Large, large crowds.

[10 : 06] They continued to follow him, not because of who he was, because they wanted more bread. The idea in John 6 was, hey, if this guy can do this, we should make him king. He's got my vote.

That's basically what they were saying. Because they were looking at the physical and the material. And many came throughout his ministry for the physical miracles. And after he did a miracle, and when you really study the miracles of Christ, every time he does a miracle, he preaches a message. They were all about the miracle, but then he starts preaching, and they say, hey, this is a hard saying. Who can hear it? And they begin to kind of filter out, and they think, well, that's not really what we came for. But that's why Jesus came.

Because Jesus didn't come just to fill our belly and to heal physical infirmities. By the way, he can still do those things. But he came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came for the great condition that we all suffer from and sin, and we've all fallen short of the glory of God.

And that's why he came. So Jesus sees this crowd gathered. And instead of being excited about it, here's what we notice about Christ. That his heart breaks.

[11 : 12] Every time a multitude gathers, and many times it doesn't say it per se here, but he had compassion on them. Because he looked out and he saw them as sheep with no shepherd. And he knew what they needed.

They thought they were there for another reason. They thought, hey, maybe we're going to see a miracle this time. Hey, I missed it last time. I'm not going to miss it this time. But Jesus says, this is what you need. You're looking for the spectacular, but I need you to get a hold of this right here. So he doesn't entertain the crowd. But he tells this parable to test their hearts. To see, check on the soil. See how the soil looks there.

You say, well, what is a parable, preacher? Sure. The meaning just off the top means this. Set something alongside of something else. Really, a word that's closely related to parable is parallel. So here's really what a parable is when you see it in Jesus' ministry especially. He's taking an earthly truth and he's laying it parallel or alongside a heavenly truth.

[12 : 17] So something they would understand with plowing and farming is something that everybody would instantly have thought of. I would imagine many times maybe they would look out

and there would be a sower out there taking the seed and sowing it.

And they could visualize it in their head. But Jesus doesn't just use a parable to illustrate a truth. But he tells us here in verse number 10 that he uses a parable to conceal it from those with hard hearts. You say, what? Look at verse number 10. And he said unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand.

See, parables are both a means of grace and a means of judgment. You think, what does that mean? Here's what Jesus is teaching. That they sift the sincere from the superficial.

That he was bringing them here. Listen, Jesus wants everybody to hear. But the reality is everybody doesn't want to hear. You know, sometimes, you know, we don't do it.

[13:24] Hopefully you don't do this at work. When your boss is saying something like, I can't hear you. You know, when kids are little, maybe they try that once or twice. You know, when you see a kid like, yeah, I don't know what you're saying.

But sometimes that's how people come to the word of God. Sometimes that's how people come to church. Maybe not physically, but their hearts are stopped up. Hey, I'm here. They're here for whatever reason it might be. But Jesus is saying, listen, if you're looking for the truth, you'll find it. But if you're trying to avoid it, if you're stopping your ears and you're stopping your heart, then that's what's going to happen. It's going to be stopped. So with the crowd pressing in, some maybe are curious.

Some are probably skeptical. And some are probably genuinely hungry for more. So Jesus begins to speak this parable. And it's not just a clever teaching method. It's really he's filtering out who wants it and who doesn't.

So here's the parable in verses 5 through 8. So Jesus describes the sower scattering seed over the field.

[14:36] And he says there's four types of soil that it finds. But a couple things that he makes clear in the later verses that we're going to pull out right now to help us. Number one, the seed is the same in every single case.

Here's the seed. The word of God. Jesus makes that very plain in verse number 11. The seed is the word of God. It's deep. But that's what we have to get a hold of.

The sower is faithful in casting it out. The sower, God uses people. God uses men. God uses women. God uses you to cast the seed out. The seed is the same.

The sower is faithful. The difference in the outcome lies solely in the condition of the soil. That's what the difference is. And that's what Jesus wants us to see.

And you think, well, doesn't the word of God, isn't it powerful? It is. It is of intrinsic power. Isaiah chapter 55 verse 10 says, As for as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven and returneth not hither, but watereth the earth and make it bring forth the bud.

[15:38] That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void. But it shall accomplish that which I please.

And it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it. Isaiah is reminding us that the word of God is powerful. And that it will accomplish its work. And the Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter 4 that the word of God is quick.

And it's sharp. And it's more powerful than a two-edged sword. I mean, it gets down between the bone and the marrow. That's why sometimes when you're reading the word of God or the preacher's preaching, you're thinking, is he reading my mail?

No. I don't even check my own mail. It just has bills in it. You open it up like, I'll check that tomorrow. No, here's what does that. The Holy Spirit. The word of God is alive.

It's not just a book. That's why you can read a verse over again. You can read a passage again. And something comes to you that you've never saw before. Why? Because the author is reading it to you. He's speaking to your heart.

[16:36] And he reminds us of that truth. Yes, the word of God is powerful. But hold on. Don't get scared. But it's not automatically effective. You said preacher.

You just said it was powerful. Here's what it must be met with. Faith. Those two things have to meet. That the word of God has to be met by faith. That faith cometh by hearing.

And hearing by the word of God. That we have to be willing to hear it. See, God has sovereignly designed the heart to respond. He's created us to respond to him. But the fruitfulness of the word

depends solely on the condition of the hearer.

Because if you don't want to hear it, guess what? You won't hear it. If you want to be obstinate to it, you can do that. See, in this parable, Jesus lays out four responses to the word.

Four types of soil that really represent four kinds of hearts. So we've already seen that the seed stays the same. God has promised that he will send his word forth.

[17:38] That the sower will be faithful. But the soil. That's what makes all the difference. So I want us just to walk through these four types of soil. The first type of soil we see is found in verse number 12.

The hard heart. The hard heart. Those by the wayside are they that hear. Then come at the devil and take away the word out of their hearts.

Lest they should believe and be saved. See, this type of heart, this type of soil is unresponsive. It is a heart that has been trampled down and packed down by life.

And sin. And pride. And all of the things that are in that. I mean, think about a field. Kind of a, as you walk along the edges. And they would have understood this. Many of the, they would have walked by the fields we see even in Luke's gospel.

Where Jesus' disciples are walking by the edge of the field. And they just grab some corn off because they're hungry. So they would have understood that. As the sower is sowing the seed out. Some are going to fall right by the edge where people walk.

[18:43] And you know what happens there? It just gets trampled down. I bet it may be at your house. There's a path that you walk every single day. In the grass or whatever it is. And all the grass looks really good. But right in that one spot, it is just trampled down.

I mean, it's just, nothing grows right there. Jesus is saying that's kind of what that heart looks like. It's not bad soil per se. It's just hard from being repeatedly walked down on.

And people with a hard heart, they may have been wounded by others. There's a reason their heart is in that condition. Life has happened. And maybe some injustices have been experienced by them.

You know what that does? It hardens us. You know, kids when they're little, they just think everybody's the greatest and believe everything. But unfortunately, as we grow older, guess what we get? We get more cynical. We begin to think, well, you know, that's just life.

And we don't trust people maybe like we used to trust people or whatever it may be. And those people are in this situation. Maybe they've been burned by the church. That happens. And they're so disillusioned and think, well, if that happened here, then I don't need church.

[19:49] Maybe they're just disillusioned by life. If God really loved me, then why would this happen? And I prayed for that and nothing changed. And I did this and nothing happened there.

You know what all those things can do? They can create a hard heart. Maybe others are hardened by pride. I don't need all this religious stuff. Hey, I'm glad you found it.

I'm glad that works for you. But I have my own way. And that hardens the heart as well. But it's not just people outside of the church and people disillusioned by life. Sometimes people are hardened by routine.

Sometimes people are so familiar with church and so familiar with all the things that they become numb to the truth. They say, well, I've grown up in church.

It doesn't matter if you've been here one day or a hundred years. Listen, you have to be open to the truth. And here's the danger of what Jesus is saying. When the ground is hard and the seed is not taking root, Satan is waiting.

[20:49] He's going to come and snatch up the seed. He's not going to give it time to germinate. He's not going to give it time to take root and to begin to think about it and respond. That they're waiting. It's like the birds that are there as soon as it is.

I mean, you ever been on a patio eating chips and salsa? I know it's almost lunchtime. I'm going to keep moving on. But, you know, I'm like, oh, listen on the patio. It'll be super nice. But then you're out there and you're just like guarding your food from all the birds.

I'm like, get away from me. Listen, that's kind of the picture. It's like Satan is right there. Listen, I'll just tell you right now. He's not excited you're here in the church this morning.

Listen to the word of God. And what he wants to do is cause distractions. Cause problems. And have your mind thinking about other things. And coming up this week and that. And here's what he wants to do. Take that seed away.

That's what Jesus is speaking of. He's really talking about spiritual warfare. That Satan is the father of lies. And he's the God of this world. And he blinds the minds of unbelievers.

[21 : 44] And maybe you're here this morning. You don't know the Lord as your Savior. And the devil's thinking, well, if God really loved you, why did he let that happen to you 20 years ago? You know what that is? It's taking that seed and taking it. Not allowing it to take root in your life.

Listen, he is actively engaged in preventing people from responding to the word of God. You know why? Because the gospel changes lives. Still does today, by the way.

The gospel changes lives. Okay, just making sure we're on the same page there. And he's not about that. Listen, he knows he's already lost. But he's going to take as many down with him as he can. That's, we find it all throughout scripture.

So how do we make sure that our hearts aren't hardened? That our soil of our life is not like that? Because even after salvation, we can just become so, just kind of go through the motions.

And we can come to church and we can just kind of not be moved at all. We should never want to find ourselves in that place. So how do we make sure that we're not? We need to prepare our hearts before the service.

[22 : 47] Listen, coming to church on Sunday is usually a Saturday decision and even sometimes earlier in the week. That you prepare your life, you prepare your heart for it. You should get up in the morning and say, Lord, would you speak to me today?

That's a great thing. It's just a simple prayer. Another thing we can do is we can confess sin that hardens our life. The Bible tells us in 1 John 1.9 that if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Sometimes we know things in our life should not be there. But we think it's not that big a deal. You know what it's doing? It's just hardening the soil. Hardening the soil. And the seed's not able to take root. Here's what we can do.

Refuse distractions. Distractions. We can be distracted so many times. Anybody distracted?

Squirrel. Listen, I can get as distracted as anybody. But sometimes we need to take, you know, maybe reading the Bible on your phone is not the best idea.

Not against it if you're doing it right now. I mean, I've got an iPad up here. But you know what? Sometimes I have to stop reading it on my phone because a text would come in. Or this would. I need to check my mail. I need to do this. I need to do that.

[23 : 53] Listen, we've got to put some distractions away so we can focus on what's really important in our life. Here's one that we all should do. Just beg God to soften our heart.

Listen, if your soil of your life is hard, Hosea says, Break up the fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord. That's what we have to do. We have to look for those opportunities.

We don't want to find ourselves in this place. But if you don't know the Lord as your Savior, this is kind of where you are. But the Lord is trying to get in. He's trying to make room in your heart for Him. But not all unfruitful soil is hard and resistant.

Some receive the word with smiles and raised hands. Oh man, that was awesome. That was a blessing. But Jesus tells us it doesn't last. Verse number 13, it shows us this. The shallow heart. The shallow heart. They on the rock are they which when they hear receive the word with joy. And these have no root which for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away.

[25 : 01] Listen, we're all kind of prone to be this way. That we respond emotionally but not deeply. We respond just kind of out of a response but maybe not really thinking about it.

We get super excited about things. But it really doesn't last. It's kind of that idea, hey, we're going to shout amen on Sunday. But on Friday we're thinking, I'm done with all this. Sometimes that's the reality.

That's the shallow heart. It's not that we didn't believe it when we heard it. Jesus says, listen, they hear it and they know it's true and they receive it with joy. But Jesus doesn't intend for His word to be just kind of some shot in the arm.

No, it's supposed to be something that changes us throughout our week. It's not just a Sunday thing. It's not just a in your devotion type thing. The person with the shallow heart, they like the word of God.

They just don't live the word of God. That's really what Jesus is saying. There's a lot of people if you say, hey, you like the Bible? Oh, yeah, I like the Bible, I like the church. But their life doesn't match it.

[26 : 01] You know what Jesus shows us over and over again? We should match what we say. We should practice what we preach. Their faith sprouts fast but it dies just as fast because there's no depth to it.

Listen, we're to grow. Paul tells us that we're to be rooted. We're to dig our faith deep. Not shallow because it's not going to last.

I mean, we understand that. We live in Texas. If you don't plant something deep enough, it's dead right now, is it not? Yeah, you're looking out there, you're thinking, I've been watering this forever. It's got no roots.

It's dying. It seemed really good and you were excited when you planted it but it's not surviving right now. That's kind of the idea. It's that thin layer of limestone and the seed looks like it's growing but it's just surface level.

And as soon as last week happened, it's done. It's 100,000,000, 5 degrees or whatever it was. See, the moment, that's what Jesus is saying in verse 13.

[26 : 58] The moment hardship comes, that temptation comes, that testing comes, the joy fades. And so does the commitment. Because let's just be honest, it's real easy to make a spiritual decision in here.

Because everybody wants to make one. And we're at church and I mean, that's what you do. And you hear a message, you hear a song, and you think, you know what, I'm thankful for that, I need to do that. And the question is, do you take it outside these doors with you?

Because sometimes we just leave it in our seat and it doesn't go to our car. It doesn't go to work with us. It doesn't go to school with us. It's shallow. No, emotional excitement is not the same as spiritual transformation.

That Jesus wants us to grow. That he wants us to dig deep. That he wants us to handle that. And we see that sometimes this can kind of represent a false conversion. People that make it a superficial profession, but really it falls away under pressure.

We need the Lord to give us a new heart. God doesn't say, get emotional and happy and excited about everything. He says, let me renew you. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

[28 : 05] That's what God wants to do in our life. He doesn't want us to just say, well, let's just make it look pretty for a little bit. No, he wants us to last. He wants us to grow over a long period of time.

Without the work of the Holy Spirit to establish a rooted faith, no amount of enthusiasm will last. It will not. I mean, you can be excited for things for a while.

I mean, some of you are excited about the Cowboys right now. Okay, maybe you're not. That was a terrible illustration. Sorry about that. At some point, you know, you're going to lose it real quick. Like the first game. You're like, man, I thought this was our year. Next year. That's okay when it's the football team. What about your spiritual life?

What about your walk with the Lord? God doesn't want you to just come on Sunday and get excited about things. He wants you to come on Sunday to take some notes down and to realize, I need to put this in practice in my life.

[29 : 00] Because that's how it happens. I mean, we see it all the time that somebody maybe is excited about baptism, excited about certain things in their life, and then they disappear in a month. And I'm thankful for what God is doing in our youth group and our teens, and I really think they desire to grow in the Lord.

But we've all seen it. I was there as a teenager in my own life. Went to camp. Got excited. Told a testimony. But it had been a month or two since I opened my Bible, since I've been back from camp. Just the reality of it.

Just how it goes. Sometimes people get excited about church because they've got a lot going on in their life, and they join the church. But as soon as the crisis kind of dies down and life gets back to normal, they're gone.

That's not how Jesus intends for us to live our life. So how do we avoid shallow hearts? We cultivate our hearts between Sundays. Listen, we have to make sure that Sunday's not the only morning we crack this open.

We need to read it. We need to pray. We need to obey it. Listen, don't just respond to a sermon emotionally. Respond obediently. That's what Jesus was saying at the end of Luke 6 when we were

there.

[30 : 02] A wise man built his house on the rock. You know what the rock is? God's word obeyed. That's what God wants us to build our life on. That we should take some things from a Sunday morning service, Sunday night or Wednesday, and take them out there and apply them.

That's how we begin to dig roots. Paul told the Colossians, As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up.

So we see the hard heart. We see the shallow heart. But some people go even a step further. They hang around and they stay active and they may be even looking fruitful. But beneath the surface there's something wrong.

So we see in verse number 14, we see the crowded heart. And they which fell among the thorns are they which when they had heard, go forth and are choked with the cares and the riches and the pleasures of life and bring no fruit to perfection.

This type of soil, this type of heart receives the word but really never bears fruit. Not because of rejection, not because it doesn't love the Lord and know Jesus as their Savior, but because of distraction.

[31 : 14] Have you ever noticed maybe you have tried a garden? Your weeds grow faster than your garden does sometimes. I know my weeds grow way faster than my yard does. I got to mow my yard because the weeds are more than my grass is.

I mean that's just what it is. These may be good hearted people in the sense that they want to do what the Lord wants them to do, but they're pulled in a hundred different directions. That worry crowds their mind, riches consume their time, pleasures of this life numb their spirit.

They know the right things to do. They've heard it and they're trying, but there's all kinds of things. Listen, think of a garden that's overrun with weeds. It's not because the soil is bad. It's because nobody's tending the garden.

That's why weeds happen. You know, if a gardener's out there every day, you know what they do when they see a weed? They pull it. They get rid of it. They toss it to the side. And this type of heart, Jesus is teaching us this, that it really reflects this divided allegiance.

That we want to do what the Lord wants us to do, but we also, you know, have things that we want to do. That we want to be in here and there. Jesus made it real clear in Matthew 6, no man can serve two masters. That we're not called to serve the Lord on Sundays and Wednesdays and live our life any other way we want to during the week.

[32 : 31] No, that we're supposed to be all in. That we're supposed to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. That includes us anytime, anywhere. That's what he wants us to see. See, the thorns, it reflects something that's taken the place of where Christ should be.

You know, we think of Old Testament idolatry and you think, well, I don't have any statues in my house I bow down to. Idolatry is anything you place before the Lord. Anything you put up more importance, you spend your time, you spend your treasure, you spend all your talents on those type of things.

And that's why God is reminding us that as we grow in him, as we're sanctified, it's not just about what we add, but also what we get rid of. Because sometimes there is things that we need to get rid of that aren't bad things, but they're not helping our priorities.

I mean, we keep going back to the phone. I think I used this illustration a couple weeks ago. I'm really kind of looking at my life in my phone. Because how many times are we on that thing? You really want to get serious about it? You can go look on your phone, it tells you how many times you pick it up a day. Don't, it will convict you. But how many times do we pick this up a day?

[33 : 45] I'm not saying we have to pick it up all the time, we have to read it 87 times. But if we pick our phone up 150 times a day, because if you're like me, sometimes you know what I do? As soon as I wake up. We make time and prioritize what we want to do.

That if we really want to have this crowded heart, if we really want to allow it to grow, we're going to have to prioritize the word above entertainment and above media and above good things. Because I'm not saying we can't ever have a time and do fun things.

I love to do that stuff. But are we willing to grow? Maybe the question we need to ask ourselves this morning, what weeds are choking out God's word in my life? Is there something I'm allowing in the garden of my life that's not allowing everything else to grow like it should?

That we have to regularly pull the weeds, we have to cut those habits, we've got to repent of misplaced priorities. It's not that God doesn't want you to do those things. There should always be a priority.

And God's always at the top, by the way. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And all those things you're worried about and all those things you want to do, you'd be surprised what God lets you do.

[34 : 54] What God allows in your life and how God blesses you in certain areas. But I'm thankful that we can look at our life and Jesus is not doing this to be mean, but he wants to help us. He's not over here just kind of lamb blasting people and say, listen, check the soil.

He wants your life to grow. He wants you to be closer to him today than you were yesterday. But I'm thankful that all soil is not unproductive.

There is one heart that receives the word and clings to it and produces lasting change. It may take time, but here's what it is. It's worth it. That's the receptive heart.

Verse 15, we'll close with this. But that on that good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience.

See, this is the ready, humble, teachable heart. The one that doesn't just hear the word but keeps it has this idea of holding it tightly. You ever see a little kid with a toy they love?

[35 : 58] I mean, try to get it out of their hands. It's amazing how strong babies are, by the way. When they have something they shouldn't have, I'm like, this is like a full-grown gorilla and you're trying to get it out of their hand. Listen, how tightly are you holding on to the word of God?

It should be the dearest thing to you. And when you do that, here's what it's going to do. It's going to bring forth fruit. Not by accident. No, this type of heart, this type of soil is cultivated.

It's tilled with repentance. It's watered with prayer. It's guarded from the thorns. And it's fertilized with regular obedience to the word of God. That's how you grow as a Christian.

That's what Jesus is teaching. Jesus says this too. It comes forth with patience. See, true fruit bearing is the evidence that God is working in your life.

We're looking at it in the Sunday school class here in the auditorium. John 15 is what it's all about. When you're abiding in Christ, when you know him as your Savior, here's what will happen.

[36 : 58] You will bear fruit. You will bear it through him. But this fruit is not merely external activity, but it's internal transformation. It's a Christ-likeness that cannot be faked.

We've all been around, and I hope that people can say it about you. Hey, they're the real deal. Listen, we should all desire to be the real deal kind of Christian. You know what this world needs to see?

You know what your classmates need to see when you start going back to school? You know what your employees and your coworkers need to see? Authentic Christians living their life. That's what makes a difference.

We're not perfect. We're not claiming that we've got it all figured out. But there's a heart, and there's a hunger for God, and others can see it. And we see that taking place, that this growth is progressive.

It's not instantaneous. You know what you should be able to do this morning? Look back at your life over the last year. You know what you should hopefully see? Growth.

[37 : 56] Why? Because that's what God intends for you to do. He doesn't intend for you to stagnate. He doesn't intend for you just to reach a level and think, well, I'm good here. No, I'm pressing on the upward way.

New heights I'm gaining every day is what the old song says. We're reminded that's what God has for us. See, this path of sanctification, this path of growth, I love this phrase.

The Lord has been laying it on my heart over and over again. It's long obedience in the same direction. That's what it is. That's how God grows us.

It's just step by step. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. It doesn't say it lights the whole path. You know what it does? He just wants us to take that step today and take that step tomorrow and apply that truth to our life and apply this truth to our family and apply this principle to where we are.

One of my really good friends, Brother Michael Jones, he's preached camp a couple times. He's preached here before. He says this. This is a good way to help our heart stay receptive. That we let our Sundays touch our Mondays.

[39 : 04] I love that. That what we hear here today, what we're reminded of, what we write down, we don't just write it down for today and think, man, that was really good.

Take it with you tomorrow. Take it to work. Take it to your friends. Let your Sundays touch your Mondays. Hey, when you're reading your Bible on your own time, and I pray that you are, journal what God is teaching you.

Well, I'm not a journaler. Why don't you try it? Hey, this is what God's teaching me. You know why? Because you can go back and you can look at it six months later. You think, well, I'm not growing. You know what I like to do? Look back and say, well, God was doing this in my life, and guess what? I can see how he did this and brought me here and brought me there. It reminds us of what God has done. Apply what you've learned one truth at a time.

And don't be satisfied with being stirred. You know what you need to aim for? To be changed. God is aiming for us to be conformed to his image.

[40 : 03] That's the goal. James tells us this, but be doers of the word and not hearers only. Because when we hear the word and we don't do it, here's what we do.

We deceive our own selves. We're contaminating our own soil. So now that we've heard Jesus' parable, we realize this, that we've been invited to find ourselves in it.

He wasn't teaching this for this crowd. He's showing it as a mirror. And you should be able to look in this mirror and say, you know what? This is where I'm at. This is where my life is.

This is where my heart is. Which heart describes you? Is it hard? It's unmoved by the word? Is it shallow, excited, but really kind of inconsistent in your life?

Maybe it's crowded. You really want to do it, but you're just distracted. You're just busy. Or maybe it's receptive. You're hearing and you're keeping and you're obeying. We know this.

[41 : 07] The seed is good. It's perfect. It's the word of God. The sower is faithful. God has placed people in your life. God has placed me as the pastor of this church to sow the seed.

He's placed other people in your life that are sowing the seed. The only variable is the soil. And if you're not where you should be, it's okay.

Because soil can change. Maybe some of you this spring, you went out to the garden. You went out to put flowers in your flower bed because you just nodded through that conversation. Your wife said you're going to plant flowers and now you're at Home Depot.

You went out there and you thought, you know what? I need new soil. And you went to the store and you got new soil. Because you realize the necessity of it. The same is true in our life.

Hard ground can be broken up. Maybe there's some weeds in your life this morning. Here's what needs to be happening. They need to be taken out. They need to be pulled out. These shallow roots give them an opportunity to grow, to dig deeper.

[42 : 06] But it takes intentional cultivation. And we do that by preparing for the word. Listen, every time you come to church, prepare for it. Say a prayer. Even if it's on the way.

Lord, speak to my heart this morning. Prioritize the word in your life. Listen, is this as much of a priority as it should be? In your daily, weekly life? Practice the word.

What it says, do. And lastly, persevere in it. Because here's sometimes what happens. All right, Lord, I'm going to do this. And I'm going to see immediate results.

You remember in elementary school when you plant in your little Dixie cup? They put the soil in there. You put the seed. God bless you teachers that do that, if that's any of y'all. Because you know what my kids do the very next morning?

It's not growing. You know why? Because it takes time. Listen, that same works in our life. You may not see immediate results. Keep watering.

[43 : 07] Keep reading. Keep praying. Keep getting plugged in. Listen, the seed is being scattered today, right now. Don't just hear it with your ears. Hear it with your heart.

He that had ears to hear, let him hear. Would you stand with your heads bowed and with your eyes closed? Jesus gives these parables because he cares, because he loves you.

He wasn't saying, well, these people can't get in and these people can't get in. Only this one group. No, he wants us to take a real look at our life and to see where we are. Because there's nothing that's impossible.

You think, well, God can't do that for me because I did this, this, and this. No, no, no. He's already done it. He's already paid the price. That's what the cross of Calvary is all about. All have sinned and comes from the glory of God.

But Jesus paid the debt. He wants to give you a new heart. He's not looking just to fix you up. He's looking to transform your life completely.

[44 : 17] And maybe you're here and that's what you need. Not trying to just put new paint on your life. Do a little bit of outside renovation. No, you realize this, that you need a new heart.

That Jesus loves you. He came to save you. If that's you, I'd love to meet you down here this morning after church. I'd love to talk to you about it. Maybe you're here and your soil's kind of shallow.

You get excited about things, but it's not consistent. Maybe you're distracted by all the things of life. And you know the Lord is your Savior, but you're just not really moving forward. Because there's all kinds of weeds.

Maybe get rid of it. That we would all desire to have the heart that's receptive to God's word. Listen, I don't know where you are, but I know this.

God wants you to respond. His word will not return void. The seed has been sowed. The question is, how will you respond today? Father, thank you for this opportunity. Thank you.