

Luke 8:4-21

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[0 : 0 0] 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 fell 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 it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, 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. 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.

[1 : 1 8] And as for what fell among the thorns, they 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.

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 away. Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd.

And he was told, Your mother and your 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.

[2 : 3 0] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good morning. It's good to be with you, to be able to share God's word with you and to hear from him.

Join me in prayer this week. Dave has been in the UK teaching pastors, as he often does. And this will be another grueling week for him.

So when you think about him, remember him in prayer. Who among us doesn't love a good story?

We all love good stories. From childhood, you and I have been invited into the lives and worlds of real or imagined people with four simple words.

Once upon a time. Picture. Picture. Story time in elementary school. Teacher breaks from formal instruction.

[3 : 43] Gathers little ones in a circle on the floor. And begins to tell a story. What home is complete without some form of storytelling?

Whether it's in the living room or family room. Perhaps a bedside kind of story. What parent or grandparent is not pulled in by the words, tell me.

A story. Huh? Satisfaction with story doesn't end in childhood, does it? If I were to look at your phones or your electronic devices or iPads, I probably would see some kind of book.

Something that includes a story. How many subscribe to Netflix? How many channels are on your cable subscriptions?

Because we love story. A thriving entertainment industry testifies to the power of story. Books and movies and plays and musicals draw us in to the storylines of others.

[5 : 03] Particularly when their story has some kind of overlap with our own story. So we are intrigued by story.

And we're willing to pay to read, to listen, to hear, to view what writers create and share.

Given the power of story, it shouldn't surprise us that such a grand medium has been used for centuries to communicate what you and I know as spiritual truth.

Whilst Jesus was certainly not the first one to use story or parable, He found it to be an absolutely superb medium for communicating about God's kingdom as well as his role in God's kingdom.

Indeed, one source says this, The originality, forcefulness, and artistry of Jesus' parables have no parallel in the Old Testament or in rabbinical history.

[6 : 12] So we see this morning in Luke chapter 8 in verse 4, we see a setting. Listen to what that verse 4 says.

And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, notice what it says here, he said in a parable. According to chapter 8 in verse 1, Jesus, Jesus, as we've seen him elsewhere in this marvelous book, he's spreading the good news of the kingdom of God.

In Jesus' own person and work, God's rule, God's reign was present. And Jesus' ministry in a very in living color kind of way gave us, demonstrated what it looks like when God was ruling.

When God is in, he right would say it, when God is in charge. Watch out. Things function differently, friends, in the world, and in your life and mine, when God is in charge.

Priorities are different. Folks who normally get ignored, get attention when God is running things. In Jesus, we get a glimpse of how God, how the God of heaven would function in this world.

[7 : 35] Look back over at Luke chapter 7 verse 22, and there we get a summary, do we not? You remember when John sent to Jesus asking him the question, are you the one that should come, or should we look for another?

And this was Jesus' response to him. Go and tell John what you've seen and heard. The blind receive their sight.

The lame walk. Lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear. The dead are raised up. The poor have good news preached to them. Huh? That's what it looks like.

Or given a sneak preview of the reign, the rule of God. So in the process, Jesus here, he is proclaiming the good news of the kingdom's arrival in and through his ministry.

And crowds are once again, in chapter 8, they're gathering to hear him. Huh? That's what we see in verse 4. And on this occasion, he spoke to them using parable.

[8 : 44] What is a parable? It was a medium of communication that conveyed truth by laying aside one thing against another.

Truth by comparison. Drawing upon everyday life patterns, everyday life engagement, such stories were used as bridges, if you will, to a more significant truth.

Huh? Take, for instance, in last week's text, where we saw the story of the money lender. A certain money lender had two debtors.

Huh? Forgiveness of a money debt was compared to forgiveness of sins against God. Forgiveness, just like forgiveness is a release from a debt.

Huh? That was what Jesus was trying to convey in the story. Huh? While the stories were interesting and entertaining, they aimed at much, much more.

[9 : 44] They were meant to help people to understand who he was, his person, his mission, his kingdom, and what God was doing in and through him. That was designed behind Jesus' parables.

And these stories, these particular stories that Jesus told and gave, they were connected to a bigger story of God's activity. Whether you're talking about connecting with God's activity past in the present when Jesus was there or in the future.

Jesus was connecting his story with God's bigger story. Huh? The setting we see in verse 4. What we have in verses 5 through 8 is the story that Jesus told.

You see it there? A sower went out to sow. Huh? The story is from a world of farming. The bottom line in farming then and now is nourishment so that life will be sustained.

Huh? No food. No life. Huh? But the growth of food demands the right kind of soil. Several weeks ago I found myself in the Brickyard Garden.

[11 : 02] That's our neighborhood garden. Shirley has a couple of plots there. And my task on that particular day was to take a mound of good soil and put it in the bins that were there in the garden.

And it seemed like that that pile of good dirt was not getting small enough after I had gone with several wheel barrels wheel barrel after wheel barrel dumping the dirt in the bin.

Huh? Good soil was needed. Huh? In order to get vegetables that will one of these days make it to my table and perhaps some of your tables because of the good growth that will be in that garden.

But good growth demands, friends, good soil. And according to Jesus' parable, good soil is not the only option. Look what he says there.

The sower goes out to sow, verse 5, and as he sowed, some fell along the path. And guess what happens? It's trampled underfoot. The birds of the air devour it.

[12 : 08] And some fell, and listen to the prepositions that we see, along the path, on the rock, and as it grew up it withered away because it had no moisture. And some fell, here it is, among thorns.

And the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell, here it is, into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold. And as he said these things, he called out, listen up, he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Huh? Along the path, the seed there was crushed underfoot and became fodder for the birds. Precious seed with great potential and we would think, what a waste!

Huh? Underfoot, on the rock, huh? This is where the rock is underneath the layer of thin soil, topsoil, preventing the roots from getting the moisture that's needed for life.

Huh? Among the thorns is where some of the seeds share the same space with useless, pesky thorns. And the thorns win the battle for survival.

[13 : 17] If you were in the crowd when Jesus was speaking on that day, what might you have been thinking? Huh? Good for nothing. Huh? The bottom line is not looking very good at this point.

Nothing to take to the table. It's absolutely tragic. Good seed, but you got bad circumstances. Can this story in any way be redeemed?

Huh? Hold on. Help is on the way because some finally gets in the good soil. It's seed-ready soil.

It's seed-worthy soil. Here's the purpose of planting is realized and it's realized in a very, very surprising manner. Huh?

Good growth would be in the range of somewhere from one seed to 35 or so grains for one grain in the ground. But here the growth is one seed producing a hundred grains.

[14 : 20] Huh? And then Jesus' words in verse 8. He calls out in a clear voice. Listen up. It's this way to calling people to attention as in an officer walking in a room and the first person sees him calls attention and everyone stands up.

Huh? He's calling them to attention. Take to heart what I'm saying is Jesus' word. Huh? The setting. Verse 4.

The story. But what about the significance of the story? I love what we see here particularly in verse 10. But then look in verse 9 you see the disciples his disciples ask him what this parable meant.

Huh? If you were in the audience that day and have heard Jesus' teaching what would you do with it? Are you intrigued by the story? Maybe you're gripped by his passion.

But what then? After you've heard after you've seen him preach with passion huh? What do you do? For Jesus' disciples friends hearing was not enough.

[15 : 34] Huh? They wanted meaning. They wanted more. And in verse 10 we see Jesus his response to these post-sermon seekers those who sought him after the sermon they wanted to know what did this parable mean?

And Jesus responds to them look what he says in verse 10 to you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God but for others they are in parables so that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand huh?

To you it's emphatic these are those who have been given the privilege of knowing the secrets of the kingdom of God these mysteries if you will or secrets these are hidden things which are known to the initiated those who are insiders huh?

Special truth revealed to spiritual people spiritual truth revealed to spiritual people but hidden things to others so that they see though they see with their eyes and hear with their ears they really don't get it huh?

Here's the idea God's truth or his kingdom had been proclaimed through the ministry of Jesus some people in that day had responded they had been given this privilege by God enabling them to see enabling them to respond in fitting and appropriate ways their heart had been open to understand their hearts had been open to believe but to others huh?

[17 : 17] what the God of heaven was doing in and through the person and the work of Jesus was not readily apparent huh? What was music to the ears of some an amazing grace how sweet the sound to some it was actually aggravating to the ears of others what was so brilliant and amazing didn't face those who were otherwise occupied their moral and the profane of that day embraced and they welcomed the ministry of Jesus the religious people were callous and within themselves they were resistant to Jesus huh?

They had little appreciation for what was done or said they were blinded by the darkness of their own hearts for it was light to some to others the result was just the opposite huh?

sometimes those who were listening were not spiritually sensitive enough even to get beyond the story to the spiritual meaning they heard the story but they failed to grasp the lesson huh?

They saw and heard but they were still in the dark in that regard they were akin to those in Isaiah today and if you see the last part of verse 10 Jesus is referencing seeing that they may not see and hearing that they may not understand it's a reference to Isaiah chapter 6 and that is where that Isaiah himself was called this was his commission as a prophet in chapter 6 and verse 8 this is what Isaiah writes I heard the voice of the Lord saying whom shall I send and who will go for us and then I said here am I send me and he said go say to this people listen to this keep on hearing but do not understand keep on seeing but do not perceive make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy and blind their eyes lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand notice with their hearts and turn and be healed here's the idea in the

Luke text the same pattern was repeating itself again here is recalled in darkness a fog similar to that in Isaiah today and here was Jesus God was at work in and through Jesus in a sense he was receding if you will the kingdom of God the sower goes out to sow and some is falling on the ground in that particular day in and through the ministry of Jesus God was receding some were responding some got it others didn't but the work of sowing continued Jesus interpretation for his disciples continued in verse verses 11 through 15 the sowing process in his day he encountered various responses to unbelief just like those perhaps even in our midst on this morning how do you respond to

[20 : 44] God's word when it's proclaimed as it is sown as it is planted in your heart in your hearing perhaps you like some that Jesus describes here as he interprets when God's word is preached some get snatched away quickly like seed on a hard path that may be you as you listen to the word of God what happens it should not surprise you and me that the arch enemy of God and good hangs around when God's word is being proclaimed when seed is being sown it's been like that from the beginning hasn't it take us back to the garden Satan was there and challenged Eve as it relates to did God indeed say he hangs around and has a way of snatching

God's truth away particularly on those whose hearts are hard huh the same one who showed up in the garden shows up today to snatch God's word and hard-hearted people who resist the truth are ripe if you will for satanic snatching listening hearing is not enough huh others among us will receive the word of God joyfully you're here God's word with joy today but what about tomorrow or the next day or the next month when the test actually comes huh if there's rock under the soil of your soul joy really won't last huh where rocks are present roots are absent huh such people are easily uprooted because roots do not go deep where there's this sort of rock like undertow in the heart or in the soul huh after all hearing

God's word friends it's a matter of the heart and then as you look at the soil in verse 13 or verse 14 that falls among the thorns huh here friends three very powerful forces that compete with the growth of God's word in the heart look at what he has cares and riches and pleasures of life friends and where these things dominate and take over the hearers of God's word do not mature huh these things are like long fingers that have a way of choking those who are embraced by them and God's word does not is not brought to maturity huh huh ask the rich ruler of Luke chapter 18 who was preoccupied with his wealth to the point that he couldn't release it in order to follow

Jesus what an opportunity huh leave what you have sell what you have and come and follow me huh but in essence he said thanks but no thanks huh you can't serve God and money Jesus would say in Luke chapter 16 verse 13 and the very next verse verse 14 he describes he spoke of the Pharisees as those these masters of religion but these masters of religion they were lovers of money huh the word of the kingdom does not mature and occupy the same heart space when these things are mentioned ah as the word of God is sown as it goes out among us what's your response to God's truth even as it continues to be sown Jesus was the chief sower and we take our cues from him but God's word in the world is being sown today it goes out and I would trust that as we hear about these alternative soils if you will that there would be a prayer that begins to rise up in our heart the prayer of

Psalms 139 verse 23 search me oh God and know my heart try me and know my thoughts see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting huh three alternative soils representative representative of those in the world I would dare say representative to those of those among us even on today search me oh God I'm not looking at someone else I'm asking you to search me Lord you know the things that the the tenor the the contours of my soul and my thoughts and those things that attract me and take me away from your word but what a picture we have in verse 15 it's the miraculous growth of God's word huh this is the kind of heart friends that sustains growth look at it and as for the the that in the good soil there are those who hearing the word of

[26 : 20] God hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with patience huh here we see the kind of heart that sustains growth it's an honest heart it's a good heart in time and over time God's word will grow hearts like these hearts that are receptive to God's word are like good soil and this is where you and I want to be this is where you and I can thrive this is where we can grow this is where we can serve God's purposes and advance God's kingdom even as he works in and through us there's a warning for us in verses 16 through 18 huh a warning that's just right for disciples friends of any era the ministry of Jesus had lit a lamp in the darkness of that day and through his ministry the ministry of the word there are various things that were made manifest they were exposed secrets were being revealed look at verse 16 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 again these clay lamps put on stands in the homes in that day giving light to those that win similarly the proclamation of the Lord in particular in and through

Jesus had provided just that in that particular day huh for nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest nor anything secret that will not be made known and come to light given the fact that God's word is like a lamp it must be received and not resist it those who and those who receive the light get more light those who resist the light they lose what they have huh hearts that are receptive to God's word are the hearts that receive light and grow because of it and failure to respond to Jesus teaching would result in the removal of the light that one indeed may have had huh the exhortation that we see in verse 18 take care how you hear is good for us today is it not huh it essentially says the same thing as the end of verse 8 does listen up huh hearing

God's word however is not enough not only do you must take heed how you hear God's word huh setting story significance and look at Jesus spiritual family in verses 19 through 21 huh did you notice in verse 21 that Jesus family is identified as those who hear and heed God's word my mother my brother are those who hear the word of God and do it just because you're in the crowd doesn't mean that you're in the family being a part of the family is not based on the origin of the blood that runs in your vein being in Jesus family is determined how you and I respond to Jesus words huh his family includes the likes of those that we've seen earlier in chapter 8 huh the 12 disciples there are with him following him huh and we also see the faithful giving women in whose lives seed had already been sown the seed of the word had begun to come up in their lives and in whom the seed of the kingdom had been planted already by

Jesus huh and such will be the result of those in our day who receive his word as presented and proclaimed seed will come up when it finds itself in the right kind of soil huh you may be in the crowd this morning the question is are you in the family huh it's not based on appearance or fleeting responses or family pedigree it's based on the proper response to Jesus words so what do we take away from this text this morning huh the seed of the kingdom is the word of the king and about the king huh we see here friends the priority of the proclamation of proclamation the centrality of God's word in advancing his kingdom kingdom advance in any day demands requires the proclamation of the word that is how the kingdom is seated huh the seat of the kingdom is the word of the king huh but also hearing and hearing heeding

God's word it's a matter of the heart it's been seen as a spiritual experience it must be viewed as as that and not simply an exercise in auditory hearing that cheapens the word huh our text is masterfully presented in this we see the seed being sown in the soil huh it's interesting that the spirit of how the spirit of God takes the word of God and does a job on the most corrupt heart huh God's word through his spirit sanctifies the soul cleanses the heart it creates itself what it desires what it requires huh we're clean through God's word huh take heed how you hear huh the proclamation of God's word must be received as the light for one's life huh yes an auditory exercise but more importantly it is a spiritual exercise listening is a matter of the heart hearing that stops it listening does not go far enough hear James his exhortation to receive with meekness the word and planet which is able to save yourselves huh hearing listening is not enough huh so we turn our attention this morning to the table and in doing that we turn our attention back to words that we've already heard and sung huh as Jesus family we've embraced him in his word including the forgiveness that he offers through his death on the cross we are those who have the word and planet in our heart and as such we pray the words that we've sung speak oh lord as we come to you to receive the food of your holy word take your truth plant it deep in us shape and fashion us in your likeness that the light of christ may be seen today in our acts of love and our deeds of faith speak oh lord and fulfill in us all your purposes for your glory speak oh lord to your church is built and the earth is filled with your glory that's our desire speak and lord we'll listen speak and we'll obey speak and we will allow your words to mold and to shape us and to cleanse us and to sanctify us so that our hearts would be the sanctified soil for your precious word hearing is not enough do you like the disciples and the post message after you've heard what do you do with it do you lay it aside and return to where you left off on any given

[34 : 58] Sunday or any given devotional or does that word that you've heard become a matter of prayer for you a matter of communing with god from the word and out of the word and opening it up and asking god to give you the kind of insight and the kind of application to your soul and life so that you will not be dominated by the cares of this life and the riches of this world and the pleasures that challenge us and in fact choke us to the point that we are ineffective and that we do not mature as the people of god soar goes out to sow and seed falls in the ground of your soul and in my soul what kind of ground does god's word find in you and in me today it's a space for growth can god's word grow in you will it grow in you in new and fresh ways will you allow him to what's interfering has has has satan come and snatched the word or the roots going deep or is there an undertow an underlying kind of of shell if you will that doesn't allow the word of god to to the roots to grow and you find yourself being uprooted and not really persevering because of the condition of the heart speak oh lord and don't just allow me lord to to hear not simply with my ears but with my heart and then work your purposes in me oh that's his goal that's his desire a sower goes out to sow and he's still sowing today may his word find place in your heart and mine let us pray father we come now to the table it's a place where the family as it were comes while we're nourished by your word and fed by your word we're also nourished through the table and may we come lord on this morning having received the forgiveness of lord from your shed blood for us having had our debt paid we have been forgiven in and through the person and the work of jesus we've heard we've responded so lord as we reflect even today and and praise you lord for your wisdom in calling us to this meal this ceremony that helps us to remember but also nourishes us oh god so we come this morning each one and continue to work in our hearts and strengthen us even through this meal to hear your precious and holy word