

# How well do you hear?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Every fortnight, I meet this young guy at Westfield, shopping town in Brickport, and we read the Bible together. His parents came to our church in 2018, and his mum was really worried about it when he was a young guy back then because she was worried about his faith.

So I told her I'd meet up with his son, and so we started doing that. And actually, 40 years later, we still meet every Friday, every other Friday morning in the Brickport of Westfield.

You see, in his teens, he was on fire for the Lord. He even went to Bible college. He even did a postgrad in theology. This year, he's applying to do a PhD in theology.

He's like a professional Bible reader. But the reason I meet up with him is because he stopped believing everything the Bible says. The seeking point for him was when he found out that not everyone will be saved.

That was the seeking point. And because the Bible is like a tapestry or a tower of gender blocks, when you pull out one thread or pull out one block, lots of other pieces fall down as well.

[ 1 : 09 ] And so he now doesn't believe in revelation. That is, that the Bible is God's word. He doesn't believe in bread. He doesn't believe in a father-son relationship with God.

He doesn't believe in him. He doesn't believe in him. He doesn't believe in him. Of course, he doesn't believe in God. He doesn't believe in that. I never thought that someone could go to Bible college and come out and come out of the Dharma.

That's that was something. And on the other side, it was shocking to me. But that is, my friends, the seeking point for him was about salvation because he heard in the Bible that not everyone will be saved.

And that is exactly where we are in Luke's gospel this morning. You see, chapters 7 and 8 of Luke's gospel, they're a little section. They're bookended by the same miracle.

And that is, someone who's brought from death to life. There's two grieving parents who've lost their children. A few weeks ago, it was the widow of Nain who lost her son.

[ 2 : 11 ] And next week, it's Jairus and his daughter. And in both situations, Jesus brings the children from death to life. Salvation is our thing today.

In fact, all the way through, it's the same thing. Whether it's terminal illnesses, forgiving sins, really evil spirits, they're all pictures of death to life.

Salvation is the thing. You see, back then, if you had any one of those problems, you had to get to Jesus. If he was in the next town over, you had to drop your plans and go and see him so he could put his hands on you.

But what happens to people on the other side of the world? Great if you happen to be in the next town over. But what happens if you live in another country? What about us?

We live 2,000 years removed from Jesus. He's not here to lay his hand for us. What about us? And the answer is that salvation comes to the world not because Jesus is everywhere, but because his word is proclaimed everywhere.

[ 3 : 20 ] And this is our first place. Look at verse 1. After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.

You see, the ministry that advances towards the kingdom is not healing, but proclaiming the good news. In fact, when Jesus first began his ministry, he stood up in the temple and said, the spirit of the Lord is upon them to proclaim the good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the victims, to proclaim the fear of the Lord's faith.

When I meet with that young guy at Westfield, the reason we read the Bible together is because it's all of Jesus' words. They really have the power to save him, to bring him from death to life.

Okay. But that means it's about words. And our salvation depends on how deep we are. I'm sure you can do that. If there was only one of the, which one of your sexes would you not want to lose? And I'm sure most would say, can I please keep my eyes? Or I have my sense of peace, because I really like to hear and preserve. And Jesus would say, nah. Don't lose your hearing.

[ 4 : 41 ] Don't lose your hearing. Keep your ears. Your salvation depends on it. And you can see this, look at verse 12. Verse 12. Those along the path are the ones to fear.

And then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. You see, only those who fear Jesus' prophet will believe and be saved.

And so, are you listening? Do you remember last week? He forgave that woman a great sinner. If we want our great sins forgiven too, it will depend on how well we listen.

Today he shouts out, whoever has ears to hear, let him hear. And today is the parable of the sower. A parable, all about how good our ears are working.

And so, this is our second point. If you look at the parable verse 5 to 8, you can see that a farmer who sows seeds.

[ 5 : 44 ] Now, I really wanted to buy a bunch of seeds from buddings and start chucking them out, like, across the room. But I was in fear of Eric Smith because small seeds would get sucked in the carpet.

I was going to do broadening seeds with a large one. Just imagine, I'm throwing seeds out. That's what the farmer is doing in this parable. The seeds, they fall on different sorts of soil, but only one type of yield is a crop.

It's a very nice story. It's very plain and simple. And we might think that Jesus has used this parable to make salvation as easy as possible to understand.

But parables work very differently. Look at verse 9. His disciple asked him what this parable meant. He said, You see, in Jesus' eyes, there are disciples and there are others.

The disciples, they get the secrets of the kingdom of God. That is, knowledge about salvation. But for others, all they get is a very simple parable story which is nice and quaint.

[ 7 : 07 ] A story you can learn nothing about God from, however. So that, though seeing, they may not see. Though hearing, they may not understand.

And that is a quote from Isaiah that assists our Old Testament reading. You see, back in Isaiah's time, Israel was so bad at listening to God. He said, Alright then, I will hide my message of salvation in a word.

In a word that bad listeners will never be able to hear and respond to and repent and be saved. And that is what Jesus is doing to parables today.

He deliberately keeps the knowledge of the kingdom of God as secrets. A secret that only disciples will understand. And you may say, No, no, no, no.

Jesus would never do that. But that is exactly what verse 10 says. Though seeing, they may not see. Though hearing, they may not understand.

[ 8 : 09 ] And the reason why is this. Wherever Jesus goes, there are crowds and crowds of people all flocking for him to lay his hands on them. Some of them love Jesus, but many of them don't.

We've already seen what the Pharisees do. And so he speaks in parables to sit and sort between disciples and others.

It's not that it prevents people who want to listen from hearing. But parables work like a mirror. They reflect who really want to understand, who really want to learn more, and those who couldn't care less.

And so, are you listening? Because in verse 9, it's only the disciples who bothered to ask him what the parable meant.

Only disciples want to learn more. And so to people like that, Jesus explains to them the secrets of salvation. Let's look at this parable. It is our third point.

[ 9 : 10 ] Verse 11. This is the meaning of the parable. The secret is the word of God. The ones on the parable are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe in the sound.

Those on rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in their pride and testing they fall away. The seed that fell among the thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering, produce a crop.

And the punchline is there in verse 15. Good soil is a person who hears the word and retains it, and perseveres with it.

But all the other soils, various things along the way, stop them producing a crop. So let's look at the various soils. Soil number one, that is a park.

[10:19] As soon as Jesus speaks, it says, the devil comes and takes away the word from the heart. The parable describes it like a bird snatching seed, as soon as it's thrown on a pavement.

And I reckon that that makes sense of some of our family and friends, some of our colleagues, when we try to share our faith with them. We share our faith, but it never sinks in.

It is in one ear and out the other, snatched away. They never understand. It never takes root. Just as though you were scattering seed among a flock of pigeons.

You ever done that? That seed never has a chance. It barely even hits the ground, does it? There's no way that seed is going to grow into a plant. It doesn't stand a chance. Those birds just snatch it away.

There are some people who come to church. I think they're like that as well. Even as they come, whatever they hear, they trample on it. That is, they don't realise the words are words of life and salvation.

[11:22] And they trample on as if it's just seed, like it's nothing. They never realise that salvation was under their feet the whole time. No chance of taking root.

I can move on in the sermon because those people aren't missing anyone. So let's look at Psalm 2. Psalm 2. Verse 13. They received the word with joy when they hear it, but they had no root.

And they believed for a while that by the time of testing they fall away. See, maybe when they first heard preaching, they were like, wow, I've never understood the Bible until now.

They're so overjoyed. But then struggle and disappointment comes. And they have no root deep down up to weather the storm. Maybe it's a long-term marriage that tests their faith.

Maybe it's a painful divorce. Maybe it's the everyday battle with sin. Or the constant struggle to stand up for Jesus in a culture like ours.

[12:24] The young man I read the Bible with, when he realised the Bible had said something he wasn't happy, he stopped taking it seriously. They were once overjoyed to have Jesus' word.

But when their faith is tested, they fall away because they have no root. The third soil is verse 14.

The seed that fell among the thorns stands for those who hear, that as they go on their way, they are choked by life's worries, bridges and pleasures, and they do not mature.

The thorny ground here, that stands for the triumphantly, the Christian double-up. You know what that is with the Christian double-up? It's trying to have the kingdom of God in your life as well as the world in your life.

Trying to have it take an initiative. It's called a Christian double-up. And so when that happens, Jesus' word inevitably gets choked out. Some people will be offered great jobs, great jobs that require them to work all sorts of hours so that they're too tired to come to church.

Some people who buy a house before even checking whether there's actually a Bible-teaching church in that area. Trying to love Jesus while secretly loving your asset portfolio, it doesn't mix.

[13:51] The Christian double-up will choke Jesus' words away. Verse 18 says that what they think they have will be taken away from them.

From holiday houses, weekends away, they are great, but they oblige us to spend around eight to ten Sundays away from Bible teaching of this church.

Sunday sports, an activity, they're great for the kids, great for their friendship and fun, but why would we deprive our children up to 15 Sundays in here away from their Sunday school programs and the Bible teaching they get there?

How do we expect our children to make a good decision for church when they turn 18 if we let them miss up to 15 weeks a year because putting that was on a Sunday?

The right illustration here is thorny ground and it goes like this. You would never plant tomato seeds in the middle of a blackberry bush and expect to get to mark those.

[14:58] You see the blackberry bushes? Blackberry bushes do not live harmoniously alongside anything. Do that. They choke everything else out in the area. Trying to live for Jesus and the world will never be a harmonious double life.

If Jesus were to do that with supper, the world will choke it out. There might be more to say on these things I mentioned in these examples.

There will be some nuances along the way. But the subject today is left to life. It's salvation. Is it really going to roll with us with salvation? Let's finish.

Let's keep going for the positive. This is soil number four. Soil four it says it stands for those with a noble and good heart who hear the word through repayment and by persevering produce a block. This is good soil. Good soil are disciples of Jesus. Disciples retain what he says the way a plant retains every block of water.

[16:06] A plant knows that it has to retain that water if it wants to have life and bear fruit. A disciple cleans to Jesus' words in exactly the same way. His words are full of salvation and eternal life.

Andrew and I we have to work really hard to get to the bottom of the passage because so many disciples in this group are hungry. Hungry to have the good stuff of Jesus' words.

Our Bible's small group numbers they are blooming right now because there are so many disciples who are so eager to hear Jesus when he speaks and to study his word so they can understand it better for themselves.

There are some families here who are willing to learn. There are some couples here who are from the church they actually go away and talk about the church. Talk about what they learned, what they were encouraged by, what they didn't agree with, what they were challenged by.

It is all superb. And every time disciples do this it's a sign that the seed is growing deeper and deeper into good soil.

[17:19] Spreading roots as seeds do, good fruit, a crop, a harvest, that will be inevitable when you put seed in good soil, when it's allowed to be watered and nurtured as these disciples are doing.

Disciples retain Jesus' words, they persevere with Jesus' words. That is, they persevere through all the struggles that stop the other soils from listening.

Even when the Bible says things we don't understand, even if it says things we don't always agree with at the time, good soil, the good disciples, they persevere, they keep listening.

Can I put down a big application for disciples in the room? Why not look at your diary and lock out every Sunday for the rest of the year?

Lock it out in your diary so that everything else you do bounces off that. rather than church being thinking that nothing else gets in the room. Could do that. Not because we're legalists, not because we mark attendance, but because the church is where we hear the good stuff, where we hear words of salvation, Jesus' words.

[18:40] This is where they're proclaiming. Obviously, there will be, not even we're put in hospital or sick, obviously someone will die along the way, couldn't you know.

There will be four weeks of annual leave, there will be something unavoidable. Could we lock out church attendance for the rest of the year, every single week? We've had an increase in our numbers this year, 10-30 service at least, but 50 new people turn up 6th January.

It's really exciting. Term 1, the start of the new year, everything's really exciting, but will we be at school when we get to term 3? Our Bible score groups, I said the numbers are groovy.

Will you block out that meeting in your diary so that everything else bounces off it instead? Tell your family and friends that you've blocked that time out. Tell your bosses that you've blocked that time out that it's a non-negotiable.

Tell them it's for Bible study and they will be surprised by your bold level of commitment. And I think you will be surprised by how accommodating they will be to you.

[19:53] Why not decide a habit of reading the Bible every single day, even on the busy days? Maybe just read a little bit less on those days. But why not decide to listen to Jesus every single day of the year?

All of these things are the disciplines of group of soil, the disciplines of disciples. Disciples that listen to Jesus, that retain his word, that persevere with his word.

In soil like that, the fruit is available. And as we finish, I just want to give a carrot and a stick as the why to sow for.

Jesus is there, I'm not going to come. A carrot and a stick as the why to sow for. We'll give the stick first and then I'll finish with the carrot. The stick, verse 16. If no one bites a lamp and hides it in a

clay dark or puts it under a bed, and so they pull on a stand so that those who come in can see the light.

For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought into the open. Therefore, consider carefully how you listen. These verses are all about future judgment.

[ 21 : 06 ] When it says, consider carefully how you listen, it actually means look how you listen, which is quite a strange thing, look how you listen, but it means listen to Jesus with your eyes on future judgment.

The illustration in verse 16 and 17, they're all about things being made visible to the eyes on the final day of judgment, things being made disclosed and brought out of the open.

Listen to Jesus' words, conscious that one day everything will be seen. Listen conscious of future judgment, that everything will be disclosed and brought into the open.

The way we listen will be the difference between verse 18, given more than we already have, or verse 18, even what we have has been taken away.

So, look and listen with an eye on future judgment. That's the stick, that's the carrot, the person I came to see. Now, Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get him because of the crowd.

[ 22 : 16 ] Someone told you, your mother and brother are standing outside wanting to see you. You replied, my mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it to practice. Quite clearly, Jesus doesn't count his family by biology alone, but everyone who puts his word into practice.

the women in the story in verse 2 and 3, they were cured from evil spirits and diseases. Saved is the word, and now the word is bearing fruit in their lives because they're supporting the proclamation of the word out of their own means.

My friend, who I read the Bible with, he studies it professionally, but never bothers the putting into practice. I can't believe that you can have that much Bible exposure day in, day out, and still not even do one thing it says, put it into practice.

If he did, he would be as close to Jesus as Jesus' mother and brothers. In his family is the idea, and I reckon that is the best picture of salvation you can get, in Jesus' family.

His salvation is for everyone, it is for the world, but it comes through the proclaimed word of God.

And so, it will only include us if we're willing to listen to Jesus, to respond to him with beautiful ears.

[ 23 : 42 ] So I pray that we will always listen to Jesus. God, we thank you that Jesus' salvation is for everyone, that he really can take everyone from death to life, but please, we will respond to him rightly, if we have ears that listen.

And to seek Jesus out, help us do the pain with word, to prioritise it in our guidance. Please, we put it into practice.

Please, Father, we will persevere with Jesus says things that are difficult and hard to understand.

Please, we will let Jesus be God, and just sit at his feet and listen.

And pray for our children as well. And I see him death. He said.