

A Ready Heart

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Date: 17 February 2019

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[0 : 0 0] Hello everyone, how are you doing this Family Day weekend? Are you all doing well? Ooh, there we go. A lot of yous here. This is nice. Okay, so my name is Tad Inboden. I am not Aaron Roberts.

I am the Director of Student Ministry here at St. John's. And what that means is that I oversee all of the youths and young adults here at the church. From grade 7 all the way up to college and career.

And I work with a great team of youth leaders who help make the ministry run. I couldn't do it without them. And a lot of them are there in the back corner right now. So I applaud you guys. Thank you so much.

Just give them a round of applause. That's great. They make this ministry. So what I would like to do tonight, before we dive into the text, I want to start with a personal story as a way to enter in.

Are you all okay with that? Okay, okay, great. So how many of you have ever set a New Year's resolution that didn't really start, you know, till mid to late January?

[1 : 0 4] You know, maybe early February. Maybe even mid to late February. Has that ever happened to anyone? You don't need to show hands. One person in the back. Nick Jones. Okay. Well, okay.

Okay. Well, that is what happened to me. I set this general kind of goal that I could achieve. And it was to get healthier. Okay. It was to get healthier in the New Year.

And I didn't start to get healthier until about, you know, late January. Okay. To be honest, it was about early February. And the area that I wanted to get healthier in was the area of my physical health.

Now, I'm a new dad. And as any dad knows, your physical health can fall to the wayside with a new baby. And I didn't want that to happen. So what I did is I decided to wake up early and start going to the gym.

But as I started working out, I realized how tough it is to get back in shape. And when it's that tough, you have got to dig deep for any source of inspiration that you can find.

[2 : 0 6] And the inspiration that I go to is watching and listening to ultra-endurance athletes. Now, this will make a lot more sense to motivate me to keep working out I signed up for an ultra-marathon in June for a 50-mile race.

Oh, this will motivate me to keep going. But so I listened to these ultra-endurance athletes. And the person that I listened to was this guy named David Goggins. Now, David Goggins, he is a bad dude.

I mean, really bad dude. He is a cool guy. Now, I don't condone everything that David Goggins says or everything that David Goggins does. But he is inspirational.

He is this retired Navy SEAL who came from this abusive home and he has overcome so much adversity and accomplished so much with his life. I mean, he's really like living life to the full.

He's doing all that he can to leave a maximum impact. Let me just give you some examples. He is the only guy to complete Navy SEAL training, Army Ranger School, and Air Force tactical training.

[3 : 13] He has completed over 60 ultra-endurance events and placed in the top finishers in each of those events. And he's held the Guinness Book of World Records for pull-ups.

I mean, this guy is a beast and he is inspiring when you listen to him. Now, this one day, I was running on the treadmill and I was listening to a podcast with David Goggins and I was shocked to hear that David Goggins believes in God.

At least some form of God. Probably the Judeo-Christian God. His theology is a little wacky, but he believes in God. And I was even more shocked to hear that what drives him to do all that he has done in life, to do all this stuff and raise money in support of kids for the Special Warrior Foundation, to do all this stuff, is he's afraid of not becoming the person that God has made him to be.

I want you to listen to what he said about his greatest fear in life. Here's what he said. My biggest fear in life is getting to heaven and being judged by God and him laying out this big chart in front of me.

And on that chart is all this amazing stuff. And then God looks at me and he says, see all this. This is what I created you to be.

[4 : 33] This is what you were supposed to do with your life. And then he says this. And so that's why I try to be the very best that I can be. Now you know what's interesting about Goggins and what's interesting about my understanding of what church leaders say.

Church leaders echo the same sentiment as Goggins. Maybe not the same theology but the same sentiment. Rick Warren, for example, the author of The Purpose Driven Life and the pastor of Saddleback Church, he says that when we die, we are going to stand before God and God is going to ask us two questions.

He's going to ask us first, what did you do with my son, Jesus Christ? Did you accept him as your Lord and Savior? And then what he's going to ask us is what did you do with the gifts and the talents and the abilities and the life that I gave you?

Did you live it to the full? Friends, we were made by God to make a difference in this world. You were saved so that you could serve God with your gifts and your talents and your abilities.

You were healed by God to help other people in need. You were meant to have faith in Jesus Christ. Yes, a robust, trusting relationship.

[5 : 56] But you were also meant to bear fruit and lots and lots and lots of fruit. You were meant to leave an impact here.

But the question that I have and I've had a lot of my Christian life and I'm sure a lot of you have as I'm talking about this is how do I actually do that? How do I live the life that God is calling me to live?

How do I bear fruit and fruit that will last? How do I have this maximum impact for the kingdom of God? How do I allow the power of God to work in me and through me so that I can make a lasting difference?

The answer to these questions are all found in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. In it Jesus says if you want to live the life that you were meant to live if you want to bear a lot of fruit you must receive the kingdom of God with the right kind of heart.

Let me say that again. You must receive the kingdom of God with the right kind of heart. So what I want to do is break down that statement in this sermon.

[7 : 10] First I want to talk about receiving the kingdom of God and then I want to talk about the right kind of heart that we need to have in order to receive it. Is that clear? Does that make sense? Okay, good.

I'm seeing some nods. So first receiving the kingdom of God. In the parable that we see here the seed represents the message of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven according to Matthew.

Now we need to ask ourselves and we need to get very clear on what the kingdom of God actually is and then how it impacts or why it's so important for our ministry in the church and our mission in the world.

So let's break that down. First, the kingdom of God is this. The kingdom of God is nothing less than the power of God entering into this world and healing every alienation and every brokenness in every area of life.

That means healing in the spiritual realm. It means psychological healing. It means emotional healing. It means physical healing.

[8 : 30] It means social healing and it means economical healing. And when it comes to us when the message of the kingdom comes to us it comes as this vulnerable message like a seed.

This crazy message of a crucified king. And it enters into our life and it begins to work on us organically and naturally.

It doesn't overwhelm us and break us but it works in us. And it begins to create this flourishing garden in us and it begins to flow through us in the most comprehensive way possible to heal and to restore and to renew.

That's what the kingdom of God is. It's this life-changing pulsating life-giving power that enables us to be who we were created to be and do what we were created to do.

Okay then. So if that's the kingdom and if that's what we need this life-changing power to live the life we were created to live how do we actually get it?

[9 : 36] How do we receive that life-changing power? Jesus tells us in verse 19 he says we receive it by hearing the message.

Listening friends listening is the primary skill of the kingdom of God. We need to be quiet and humbly listen to what God is trying to say to us through his gospel.

But friends this is hard for most of us is it not? Listening is a very tough skill. I know that for me in my marriage my wife can attest to this talking is like my spiritual gift.

I love to talk I love to voice my own opinions I love to be heard I love to get a hearing but actually hearing my wife and actually listening to what she's trying to say to me to understand what she's trying to say to me is hard.

It's really really hard and sometimes if I'm honest I don't have the right hard attitude to actually understand or receive what she is trying to say to me.

[10 : 53] I'm sure plenty of you who are married and in a relationship can understand that. But Jesus says this he says it's your heart attitude that makes all the difference if you're going to receive the life changing power of the kingdom.

So then here's the question what kind of heart attitude am I supposed to have? But more importantly I think what kind of heart attitude should I avoid or should I not have?

And Jesus tells us in this parable Jesus tells the parable of the sower to the crowd at first right? He tells it to the crowd on the boat and then he brings his disciples aside and he tells them the meaning of the parable and what we see in the parable is that there are four different types of soil and those four different types of soil can they represent a lot of things but one of the things that they represent is your heart attitude towards the kingdom of God and it's the first three soils that should be seriously avoided those hearts attitude and the last one is the one that we should aim for so let's look at these together let's just break them down and then we'll close the first heart attitude that we can have towards the kingdom and the one that we should avoid is a hard heart this is represented by the sea that fell along the path so back in those days there were paths that went through the fields and people could walk on them any

Joe Schmo and the farmers walked on them so what would happen is the soil would become hardened as people walked on it and as the farmer was broadcasting his seed he had a little bag and broadcasting his seed some seed would fall along the path but because the soil was so hard the seed would not take root the germination process didn't happen it just laid on top of the soil and then what would happen naturally the birds would come and pluck the seed away come and eat it so what does this represent who does this represent it's saying this it's saying it is possible to regularly attend church to regularly and consistently hear the gospel message week in and week out but it never makes a personal penetration in our heart we can harden ourselves to the message of the gospel we can think we have all the answers about

God and about the kingdom we can think we know all that there is to know and we can miss what God is trying to say and trying to speak to us we just can't understand it it is possible for our faith to remain only at a theoretical level and never enter into a more personal and emotional level friends it's possible to hear all this and the power of the kingdom of God never takes root in our lives now if this is you I just want to pause here if this is you and you're thinking man that's me I feel like I have a hard heart I feel like I've been sitting here week in and week out but it's not really entering in I'm not really feeling that power I'm not really feeling God's presence in my life all you have to do it's not a big deal I'm not going to ask you to come to the front but all you have to do is sit quietly in your seat and say Lord soften my heart soften my heart to receive your kingdom receive your gospel so that's the first attitude that should be avoided a hard heart what's the second the second attitude is this a superficial heart this is the one that should be avoided the second heart attitude this is represented in the parable by the seed that fell along the rocky ground now I have been told that in

[15:10] Israel there are a lot of rocks and layers of rocks and soil a top level of soil would sit on these rocks and it wouldn't run very deep so when the farmer would broadcast his seed seed would fall in it would take root and the germination process would happen quickly the roots would go down but they wouldn't go down very deep so when the plant actually sprouted up the sun comes down and it heats it up and it withers away and it dies so who is this representing these are the people who have moved beyond the theoretical and their faith has become personal and they are genuinely excited about Christ notice that they receive the message with joy in verse 20 but the problem is that their faith is shallow and superficial it's only at an emotional level when times get tough when persecution enters into their life when all the good things in their life just vanish or disappear they turn their back on God in other words these people can't take the heat they say what use is God if I can't have the things that

I want to have and live the way that I want to live they were looking for a God to fulfill their deepest dreams and desires and when he didn't do that when bad things started to happen they say this whole thing isn't worth it now friends I work with a demographic I work with youths and young adults and I see this kind of thing all the time and I've seen it in my own life that kids they go to camp or go on a mission trip or I know for me I hear a good sermon or I get in this great encounter with God and I get really emotional and then what happens is over time real change doesn't take place this happens all the time with us we get excited about a sermon we cry in a worship with a worship song we're moved by something but it doesn't really have deep life transforming qualities about it you see if we have this kind of heart it is difficult to serve

God and live the life he's calling us to live we can't say in our heart God yeah I'm excited to serve you only when it makes me feel good because here's the thing God's gonna ask us to do things that are uncomfortable and hard and difficult he even asks us to sacrifice everything for him so if that's you and you're living at this emotional level in this emotional plane right now and things haven't gone really deep just ask God to deepen your faith and walk with him to count the cost so the superficial hearts should be avoided what's the third heart attitude the third heart attitude is a divided heart this is represented by the seed that fell along the thorns see the seed goes down it takes root and it begins to flourish but the thorns make it hard for it to actually produce fruit who are these people these are the people who are genuinely committed to Jesus

Christ but Christ shares control with other areas and other things in your life some of us are committed followers of Jesus Christ I'm sure a lot of you are committed followers of Jesus Christ here and you want to do great things for God you really genuinely do that's your heart's desire but you're looking around at your life and you're thinking I'm not seeing the fruit when I was preparing the sermon I had to do that where's the fruit in my life that I want to see I'm not seeing lives transformed how I want to see them I'm not seeing the gospel proclaimed how I know I should be proclaiming it I'm not seeing culture renewed in the way that I could use my gifts and my talents and my abilities I'm not making that impact on my neighbor I'm not seeing God's power work in me and through me and it's discouraging it could be because we have divided loyalties it could be that the worries of life as

Jesus says things like family schedules bills your work making money school working out they're all competing for Christ if we want to see fruit in our lives genuine kingdom fruit in our lives we need to recognize that Christ is supposed to have every area of our lives that he needs to be number one in our life and if he's not we will likely remain choked and unfruitful so we need to avoid what the hard heart the superficial heart and the divided heart so then what heart attitude are we supposed to have it's the ready heart and that's what I've titled my sermon for tonight and it's represented by the seed sown on the good soil see you see good soil was cultivated and made ready to receive the seed it was this prime condition for the germination process to begin and one where you could eventually see a crop yield friends in order for us to receive God's word and begin to bear fruit in our lives we need to have hearts that are ready to receive it we need to have this humble posture each and every morning that says

[21 : 09] God I want to be used however you want to use me I want to hear whatever you have to say wherever you want me to go whatever you want me to do I will do it it takes that posture each and every morning to be guided by the lordship of Christ it's a heart that first says Lord how do you want to work in me internally what areas in my own life do you want to work on what are those rocks and those thorns that you want to deal with and you want to remove and then it goes from internally and then it looks externally and it says Lord where do you want me to sow the message of the kingdom today where do you want me to make an impact for the kingdom of God today how do you want me to use my gifts and my talents and my skills to make an impact in my workplace at my school at my job but friends in closing it can be a temptation

I know it's a temptation for me to feel like we have to do all these things to achieve our win over God's love and affection and approval and if we don't live up to this standard that God's not going to be happy with us that he's not going to approve of us that he's not going to accept us but let me tell you that the gospel says the message of the kingdom is nothing like that in it it says Jesus did all the things that we could never do he lived the life that we could never live and he died the death that we were supposed to die he wore a crown of thorns on his head so that we would not have to deal with the thorns in our own life by ourselves or the thorns out in the world by ourselves and then he was buried literally in a rock so that we could go and live the new life that we were created to live and make an eternal and lasting impact and he gives us the power and his spirit to help us with that friends we need to come to him not with a hard heart not with a superficial heart not with a divided heart but a ready heart amen