

Luke 8:1-21 - How's Your Hearing?

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Date: 26 March 2017

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. Thank you guys. That is our prayer. That is what we long for as we come this morning to God's Word. In Luke chapter 8, you can find it on page 864 of the Bible in the pew in front of you. If you want to grab one of those, Luke chapter 8. As this chapter opens, as we have been walking through Luke's Gospel, we find Jesus and His close group of followers going around town to town, telling and showing the good news of the kingdom.

And I want us to notice something interesting in these first three verses here before we pray and read the rest of the passage that we're going to talk about this morning.

In addition to the twelve disciples, some women are in this group with Jesus. We only get three names, Mary Magdalene, Susanna, and Joanna.

[1 : 14] But several women, many women, it says. Now, that may not seem unusual to you, but in Jesus' day, in a Middle Eastern culture, in particular in a culture of Jewish rabbis, and who typically follows them and would go around with them, this is highly unusual.

In fact, not just unusual for many, it would have been scandalous. Jesus certainly would have taken a few dings to His reputation because of this reality.

But other than being unusual, why would Luke mention these women who are with Jesus and His followers? Why intentionally bring this point out?

Well, partially because it fits with Luke's theme of the message of the kingdom that he's talking about here being good news of great joy for all people.

Not just men, but women as well. The community King Jesus is shaping features all sorts of men and women. There's probably a whole sermon in there about the significant place of women in the community of God's people, and we could just stop at these three verses, and you're saying, great, just do that this morning.

[2 : 34] Why not do that this morning? Well, because there are 50-some of our women on a retreat, and my wife is one of them, and I'm not going to waste an opportunity for brownie points with my wife.

Come on, give me a break. We can't have that sermon this morning. We will talk about it again more as we go through Luke. But instead, let me just say this this morning before we read the rest of the passage.

Women are vital in the kingdom of Jesus and in the work of his church. Notice that these women who are with him are even providing for Jesus and his followers out of their own means, from their own pockets as they're traveling around.

Any Christian community is weakened when it neglects to engage well with its godly women. God has created male and female in his image.

Yes, with unique roles and uniquely in his image. God's word describes for us many things about how that plays out in our relationships, but we need our women.

[3 : 45] We should honor our women. We must thank God for the women he has blessed this particular church with and how they love and serve in this body.

In the previous story at the end of Luke 7 that Peter preached about last week, there's a woman whom other men had objectified and used.

Jesus treats her very differently. Jesus honors her, forgives her, dignifies her. It's worth us asking the question, has the good news of Jesus changed the way you view or treat women?

It should, in a noticeable, counter-cultural way. Perhaps more generally, has the good news of Jesus changed the way that you view or treat others who are marginalized, left out, the least of

these?

It should, in a noticeable, counter-cultural way. Jesus is good news of great joy for all people. Do they experience that in relationship with us?

[5 : 00] I heard this week that our children's ministry is looking for more volunteers to spend time caring on Sunday mornings for some of our special needs kids to love them and be with them.

And I thought to myself, Jesus would sign up twice for that. He loves those who others tend to ignore or overlook. That's his heart.

What a great opportunity to share Jesus' heart, right? Many others, not just our women, many others are marginalized in our culture as women were in Jesus' day and in some ways still are today.

So I want to pray for our women as many of them are gone this weekend and then we'll turn our attention to the rest of this passage. Will you pray with me? Father, for your creative design in making us male and female, we praise you.

we give you thanks for your wisdom in designing us. For the way you have called us into relationship and community together and for the way you have designed your church to work with men and women laboring for your kingdom.

[6 : 17] And Father, we thank you for the women of this church and of this community. For the ways that you have uniquely shaped them. For the amazing gifts you have given to them.

For the tremendous blessing they are, an example they are to us in this church. We thank you. We pray for them and those especially on the retreat as they spend time together this morning around your word and praying together.

Might you bless them. Might you meet with them there in a special way. Might your spirit continue to work as they come back and minister among their friends and families in this church.

Father, use them in great ways. And Father, we come to your word this morning that shows us these things that might not always be the way we would naturally think.

That challenges cultural assumptions like Jesus did then that calls us to you in ways that our hearts need this morning. And so would you prepare us to hear your word.

[7 : 25] Would you speak and might we listen and hear and see and worship our Savior. And it's in his name we pray.

Amen. Luke chapter 8 we'll pick up at verse 4. 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 and as for what fell among 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 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 Jesus 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 thus far God's holy inerrant inspired word that we might know him more early in our marriage

I was sitting on the couch one morning eating a bowl of cereal watching ESPN Sports Center having a great time and I have a vivid recollection of this morning because my sweet wife walked into the room to talk with me about something I say I have a vivid recollection of it I also still have no

idea what it was that she came to talk to me about what happened as I sat there watching and her talking I heard every word that she said only in one sense of the word heard I grunted a few times in response nodded several times but she perceiving what was going on in the situation at one point stopped mid-sentence and I had absolutely no reaction I was glued to the highlights didn't even notice I'm hoping now that laptop computers and smartphones are fairly common that I'm not the only one who's ever been in this position but if you haven't been there it is not a good position to find yourself in don't do that when my wife is speaking to me it is vital that I hear her properly that I not just have sound waves pass through my ears but that I truly listen that I understand that I respond appropriately to what she's saying how much more is this true with the word of God with the good news of the kingdom of Jesus Christ

Jesus is teaching us here through these parables and these stories that he tells in this section of scripture that hearing the word of God properly is of vital importance we must truly hear it in fact it has eternal significance that we hear it properly do you think of yourself as a good listener generally do you think you listen well to the word of God specifically hearing the word of God properly is of vital importance and that's what this passage is about notice Jesus focus on hearing here how do you know Will that that's what this passage is about just look through it and hear what he's saying we didn't stop as we read through it but verse 8 he who has ears to hear let him hear verse 10 there's a difference highlighted between mere hearing that I was describing happening while I ate my cereal and watched sports center and true understanding verses 12 and 13 and 14 and 15 as Jesus begins this famous parable of the sower you'll notice all four soils are people who have heard the word and then what happens next it's different each time verse 18

Jesus says very clearly take care then how you hear in verse 21 as we get to the end Jesus says my mother and my brothers the ones that are in this close vital relationship with me are who the one who gave me birth and the ones I grew up with no it's those who hear the word and do it that's what Jesus is talking about here we need to grasp what he's talking about when he's talking about hearing the word of God don't we there's something that he's onto here in this passage when Jesus speaks of the word of God of course he means the holy scriptures what we now know as the Bible as we have it in particular not just the words themselves but the story that it tells featuring King Jesus as the one who through his life death and resurrection redeems and restores all of God's creation that has been broken and fallen and us particularly in our relationship with God that has been broken by our sin it's the Bible and that message of good news of a

[14 : 38] Savior Christ the Lord that's what Jesus is talking about that's what it is that we must hear properly he says so let me acknowledge up front the awkwardness potentially of a preacher telling you how important his preaching is hey y'all should pay attention to me more that seems a little bit self-serving and strange perhaps this time each week is not the only time you are to encounter the word of God but it is a primary one when we open this book and read and preach these truths we expect to hear God speak we mean it that strongly because this is his word and he continues to speak through it by his spirit that's not to highlight the preacher quite the opposite actually it means that the good news of the kingdom should far outshine the preacher himself a

British preacher Charles Spurgeon once said of two of his contemporary preachers Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Wesley may preach the gospel better than I do but they can't preach a better gospel amen that's why we come and talk about this it's not really all that interesting what I might think personally but if God were to speak to us we ought to listen the word of God the message therein is what we must hear properly not the eloquence of will or anyone else and I'm never going to apologize for highlighting that priority it's his word not mine so what does Jesus say that proper or true hearing of the word of God looks like what's he describe in this passage well after some negative examples we get to the end of the parable of the sower and there's good soil right here's what it's supposed to look like verse eight some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundred fold and then Jesus explains later what the parable means he says 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 there's two things that he highlights there first proper hearing begins with faith with holding it fast it starts with trusting the word of God as the truth that directs and guides me not just because of what it is but because it comes from the one I trust to be my good shepherd because I trust him I trust his word we are not merely to hear the words of scripture but to hold them fast they are written that we might get to know our creator and king that we might worship him more trust him more contemplate him more consider who he is that we might have an actual relationship with him through faith that he

would speak and we would listen and we get to speak back to him and know that he hears us as well it's a relationship but of course it doesn't stop there it's a relationship that is to transform all of our lives hearing that begins with faith also leads to fruit fruit when we hear God's word with faith it produces fruit as we persevere patiently a hundred fold kind of fruit verse 8 says we hear God's word and we do what it says now it just makes sense that that's part of proper hearing right action that we would do what's been said when you tell your child to make her bed how do you know if she has heard you properly whether or not the bed gets made right if you walk upstairs several minutes later and the bed is a mess and she sits there on the ground playing with her dolls she has not heard you properly you will probably say something like did you hear what I said to you and you know that she was close enough that the words passed your ears how many times do I have to tell you do I have to say it you you've said things like that before right you might have heard me but you didn't hear me properly there was no fruit to your hearing the same would be true with a boss who gives directions he knows they were physically heard but but he wants to know if there was fruit from them if his employees actually followed his directions or if you're at a restaurant and you order a cheeseburger with no mayo and it comes out and there's white stuff dripping off of it all over the place this is terrible by the way should never be done that way the server has not heard you they may have heard what you said but they didn't hear you properly there was no fruit from your comment your words didn't have the desired effect right hearing properly involves hearing trusting and action proper hearing begins with faith and that faith leads to fruit fruit that according to the next brief parable

Jesus tells about the lamp shines into every area of our lives that's what's going on here it's very hard to understand out of context but in the context of what we're talking about this parable of the lamp begins to make sense look at verses 16 through 18 no one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed but instead puts it on a stand so that those who enter may see the light this is the word of God that Jesus is describing right it's not something to be heard and then hidden away as though it speaks into nothing else and we end up living in darkness but no it's rather that we and others around us would see God's light on our path showing us how to live exposing and enlightening everything verse 17 nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light so because that's true take care then how you hear how are you hearing the word of

[21 : 23] God 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 for those of us who hear the word of God and are seeing it speak into this area of our lives and then again over here it continues to do that as we study it more as we read it more the older we get the on Sunday morning and hidden again and left aside not to speak into my life it won't even it will stop working that way it will stop making any sense on Sunday morning because it doesn't matter to the rest of my life even what I thought it was useful for won't be worth anything anymore it's not just about churchy things it's to shine light into all of life and the proper hearing involves seeing every part of my life as under the authority of

God's word and therefore responding redirecting when necessary repenting when I need to when I hear his word what does that fruit look like just a couple of examples it means for instance that when I learn of God's providence in his word his sovereign care for me even in the painful parts of life it's not merely for the purpose of me being able to teach a lesson or to answer a test question about providence but rather it leads my heart to trust him in grief and in struggle it's for that in my life it means that when I see I am disobeying my parents or misusing my body or neglecting another of God's commands that when I see that in God's word I confess my sin and turning back to him seek to live the way that

God directs me to live even if I don't fully understand why it's best it means it means on a day when I'm ready to give up hope all together and everything is dark that I see God's word and the glory promised to await me in heaven and as the hymn writer says I trace the rainbow through the rain in this situation and I decide no there is hope I don't see it now but I believe there is hope even here it means I don't merely give a cent to Jesus as being the most valuable thing that I don't just say things in verses I've heard before like I should seek God's kingdom first above all else that I don't just say those things or recognize that they're from the Bible but that those values would drive my major life decisions more than dollars or other desires that I might decisions

I'm making day to day that's Jesus heart that we would hear properly trusting him and following him in every part of our lives having a relationship with him that transforms all of life but Jesus

addresses this issue of hearing at length in this passage because he knows so many of us have hearing problems some of you on the way in told me you saw the title and said I got hearing problems are you talking about me today maybe maybe not I promise not to talk about hearing aids but we've seen many in Luke already who have hearing problems they're in the crowds around Jesus they hear lots of things that he says but they don't respond with faith or fruit where does that hearing problem come from let's look back at the parable of the sower again there were four kinds of soil right four types of people who all heard the word but they responded differently something different happened we've only talked about the good soil so far first there's the soil on the path a sower a sower and was trampled under foot and the birds of the air devoured it and Jesus explains what he means 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 hearing problem number one Satan himself did you know that there's a battle going on every time you hear the word preached every time you walk through those doors into a service like this one a battle every time you stop on your own to consider the truth of the gospel showing up in a situation in your life you walk into a battle Satan wants to snatch the word away from you if you've ever wondered why it's so hard to read God's word to meditate on your life one of the primary reasons is that Satan is waging war in your heart urging you to doubt God accusing you so that you think you must do something to earn

[26 : 57] God's favor rather than resting in the comfort of the gospel attempting you to think other things would be more productive investments in other words you may have trouble hearing God's word because someone else is yelling loudly in your ear some hear the word but Satan snatches it up so faith and fruit don't follow hearing problem number two suffering suffering difficult things in life verse six hearing hearing hearing hearing hearing problem number three which is distraction distraction verse seven some fell among thorns and the thorns grew up with it and choked it

Jesus said here's what's going on with the thorns they're 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 it's not so much the difficulties that they're facing it's maybe even the good things that are happening and that they see around them and that they think that's what really matters that's what's really valuable that's what I need more of that's what I'm focusing my life on and the word of God begins to fade if you've ever been with someone struggling with hearing loss and you've gone to a noisy restaurant you know how frustrating that can be for them they maybe want to have an important conversation someone they're focused on but it's so hard to do why because all the background noise can't get filtered out it distracts them from being able to focus on something they want to treat with importance that's what happens in the thorny soil particularly

Jesus says the background noise that tends to drown out what's important for us is worldly cares the riches of this world gets in our ears it's attractive to us it sounds good worldly pleasures do the things that we want to do things experiences priorities that become more valuable or attractive to us than Jesus sometimes even unintentionally we notice they've begun to dominate our time and our attention they begin to shape our lives more than God's values more than His word so how's your hearing how are you receiving God's word has the gospel of Jesus Christ become in some ways background noise or is it words of life that you're desperate for every day are you bearing fruit or is most of your life when you're honest generally unaffected by what

God's word has to say does the good news of the kingdom shape your approach to every situation or really it's not at all is a blogger that you follow or just your own wise thoughts far more influential with you when you're making a big decision have you considered how the word of God speaks into your free time your finances your marriage your vocation have you considered those things if you haven't considered deeply how it impacts your parenting or your relationships in every sphere of life perhaps you should jump into one of those Sunday school classes that started this morning y'all that's why we have classes like that they don't have to meet at nine o'clock on Sunday morning to do this but that's why we have some of them because we need God's word speaking into all of those areas of our life and if we don't stop to consider it we'll tend to go with whatever we think or whatever we happen to hear or scroll through on social media and we want to come together and say how does

God's word speak into my life as I try to parent my kids I need that we need that we need to slow down and hear properly how it speaks and bears fruit in all of life listen I know you hear the word of God some because Ron said earlier we're not bashful about the fact that that's what we talk about

when we gather here and you're here and you hear the word of God some but James warns us very specifically in his letter not merely to hear the word I know at least you're merely hearing the word James says don't merely hear and forget what it's shown you about yourself he said that would be so foolish like standing in front of a mirror in the morning and walking away and forgetting what you've seen about your face when you look into God's word sometimes you have to look deeply and hear thoughtfully we need to sometimes revisit what we've heard or read once that's one of the reasons we write small group questions to go with every sermon we preach here at [33 : 29] Southwood they're right on the home page of the website right here at the bottom of the screen where the sermon is this is on the home page every week usually by the time you get home you can click right there where it says small group questions and you don't even have to be in a small group although you should anybody can go and have questions that say give me a chance to revisit the word of God that I heard this morning in particular they're geared towards what does this look like in my life they're not magical questions they're questions to help you slow down and think what does it mean in my life some of your groups talk about them together slow down and listen and trust the loving father who's speaking to you ask him to transform you according to his word see that's actually the hope for struggling hearers in this passage the parable of the sower does challenge us to consider what type of soil we are how our hearing is how we're doing with that but if you think about the agricultural picture

Jesus has painted the soil is not the thing with the power to produce the fruit is it you ever seen soil just go around and start bearing fruit on its own no where's the power coming from it's from the seed right that's what produces the fruit the seed is the source of the growth the seed Jesus says is the word of God his gospel plowed deep into our hearts by his spirit that has in itself the power the potential for producing fruit that's why Jesus urges us to hear it well not because the burden is all on us to produce all this fruit get it together and produce fruit better no that's not what Jesus is saying but because when we hear God's word we are being entrusted with something so precious you can think of it as a love letter from your creator your

God writing to you holding in your hands something where he's telling you what he's designed you for and how much he loves you that he created you for relationship to live in fellowship with him and that he was so committed to that that even when you broke it and ran away from him he pursued you all the way to the cross that he loves you that much that's what he wants to tell you in his word he wants to show you how his son has demonstrated his love for you to its fullest extent and you hold that in your hands something that you have that is so powerful so trustworthy so transformative so glorious in what it is that we must give it its worthy of our undivided attention our thoughtful application to our lives our sacrificial shaping of our lives around it regardless of what makes sense or what other personal preferences we might have why do you think

Satan's so intent on snatching it away from you on making something else seem more valuable to make you think you can't trust it why is that so important to him because when the powerful seed penetrates our heart it bears fruit a hundredfold Jesus is saying beyond what you're used to sowing beyond any seeds you're used to this is the kind of fruit you don't know about the power of this seed does something amazing it produces crazy fruit fosters our relationship with Jesus where we're his mothers and his brothers it transforms us into the fruitful followers of Jesus that he's called us to be we hear our father speak listen if you're struggling to hear if you if you realize this morning that maybe you don't hear God's word enough or you certainly don't hear it as he intends for you to if you're not seeing the fruit of the word in your heart and in your life don't focus on the fruit don't focus on the fruit go back to Jesus himself the vine remember dwell on his love for you

Jesus says if you abide in me and I in you you will bear much fruit focus there on him soak in the word until you see Jesus pray that God would show you the glory of his grace in Jesus as he speaks to you it's what he wants you to hear he loves you and he's written you a letter about it he wants you to hear of his love for you in Jesus offer yourself to him as soil where he through the power of his word not your efforts can produce much fruit let's pray that he would do that in our hearts father father you have spoken in your word you have spoken through your spirit you're the one who gives ears to hear we need them make us people who hear you who hear your voice clearly through all the other noise around us that would tell us other things that would offer us hope in other places that would tell us the great value of other alternatives might we hear you speak today tomorrow in every situation and in all of our lives might your word guide and speak clearly to us we ask it in

[39 : 39] Jesus name and for his glory amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org