

# Luke 8:1-21

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 02 April 2017

Preacher: Matt Coburn

[ 0 : 00 ] I'm sure it's happened to you. You've been in a conversation with a friend at a coffee shop. You've been talking with your spouse after the kids have gone to bed. You're driving along and your kids are chattering away in the back seat. And you find yourself saying, uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh. And suddenly with horror you look up and you realize their mouth is still moving. And you have no idea what they are saying. And you have completely stopped listening minutes or even more ago. Maybe you've been there. We get distracted. We get caught up in our own thoughts. We find that in the middle of conversation, we're still thinking much more about ourselves than what is being said to us.

It happens to us when we get on airplanes. The steward and stewardesses stand up in front and give instructions on what to do in an emergency. Have you been on a plane recently? Have you noticed how few people even put down their reading material or look up?

[ 1 : 17 ] How easily we don't listen. I remember one time I did listen. It was the first time I went rock climbing.

The guy who took us said, this is your harness. Put it on this way. Clip it in this way. Double check it like this.

And I listened because my life depended upon it. But often, so often in life, we don't listen, do we? And I know that this is true not only in our interpersonal life, but it is true in our spiritual lives as well. How often we stop listening.

Even when the words continue to come to us, we stop listening to God. We stop looking for Him to speak to us.

[ 2 : 15 ] We stop believing that what He has to say to us is really, really important. We get distracted. We start thinking about ourselves.

And we stop listening. And in all this way, we grow in patterns of becoming deaf and not listening to God and what He has to say to us this morning.

We are going to continue in our series in the book of Luke. If you want to pull out your pew Bibles, we're on page 864. Luke chapter 8 is our passage this morning.

And it is about hearing and listening. So, turn with me there, and we will read our passage together. And dive in.

Luke chapter 8. We're going to read verses 1 through 21. Soon afterwards, He went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.

[ 3 : 25 ] And the twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities. Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, wife of Chusa, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their means.

And when a great crowd was gathered, 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.

And as He said these things, He called out, He who has ear 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.

[ 4 : 40 ] But for others, they are in parables, so that they may see, they may not see, 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 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 and puts it under bed, but puts it on a stand so that those who enter may see the light.

For nothing that is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be made known and come to light. Take care, then, how you hear.

[ 6 : 01 ] 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 mothers 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.

And he answered them, my mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it. Let's pray.

Lord, even as we have just sung, we pray now. We pray that you would speak to us, that you would speak to us through your holy word.

Lord, we thank you that you have given us your word, and we thank you that you have given us your Holy Spirit by which we have understanding, and by which you open our eyes and our hearts to know and to understand what it is that you are saying to us.

God, I pray this morning for our hearts and our ears that we would be open to you, that we would be ready to receive what you want to say to us this morning.

[ 7 : 16 ] Lord, use me that the words that I speak would be your words, would be useful for all of us as we sit under your word. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. So this section is quite a long section, and it comes right after, if you remember, Pastor Nick last week talked about the encounter that Jesus had at Simon the Pharisee's house with Simon and the woman, and what you saw was that these two people responded dramatically differently to Jesus because of their understanding of who he was, but also of their understanding of their own sinfulness.

The woman who was completely an outcast in the culture received Jesus with worship and adoration sacrificially and even shamefully showing her devotion to him, demonstrating that she understood who Jesus was and her need for him.

Whereas Simon, the proud Pharisee who thought he was righteous in his own and had very little to be forgiven of, treated Jesus shamefully himself. by not giving him honor nor showing him love and respect.

And so, this story which reveals the hearts of these two people is then, I think, the springboard that launches us into this section of text. And you see at the beginning and at the end what you have is a community of people around Jesus as he's going around and doing his ministry of preaching and teaching.

[ 8 : 55 ] At the beginning, you see, there's this, Luke recalls, Jesus is traveling around doing his ministry of proclaiming the word of God and with him are traveling disciples.

And so interesting, isn't it, that Luke makes sure to mention. Look, do you see? It's not just the woman at Simon's house. Here are other women who are hearing and receiving and being brought in to God, to Jesus' circle.

They're the ones who are hearing the word and responding and seeing its power at work in them. And then at the very end, he brackets it with his own flesh and blood coming to him and saying, come out and see us.

And Jesus says, oh, don't you see how important the word of God is in our community? In fact, it takes greater precedent than flesh and blood. Those who hear the word of God and do it, those are the ones who are my real spiritual family.

And so, Jesus shapes this whole story around this hearing the word of God and talking about how it is, how important it is. And at the center of it, of course, we see is this parable.

[10:08] Now, a brief note about parables because parables are kind of fun. Jesus uses parables a lot. This is the first major teaching parable. There was a little one back in chapter 7.

But in the book of Luke, this is his first parable. Parables are stories that have a point, that have references to things that people understand to make a point.

Most of the time, they're not allegories. An allegory is something that has one-to-one correspondence between each detail and some truth that's trying to be communicated.

In fact, this is the one parable that seems more allegorical than many because both the seed and the soil are representative of particular things.

But most parables simply have one point that they're trying to make. Jesus uses these parables and it's fascinating when you saw this when we read it in verses 9 and 10 as the disciples asked him about parables.

[11:05] Why are you preaching in this way? What is going on? He says, I'm preaching so that you who receive the secrets or maybe the word underlying that secret is the idea of mystery.

You're actually receiving a mystery not like some esoteric knowledge that you can only have through being physically deprived for a long time and having a spiritual experience. But a mystery of this is something that wasn't known before but now has been made known by God.

And so he's saying you are receiving you are receiving this message this message of knowledge about what it is that God is doing in the world and who he is.

But it's interesting because he then goes on and quotes from Isaiah about those who hear but never hear and those who listen but don't understand.

And he says part of the reason I tell in parables is because some people will listen and some people won't. And to those who listen it will be great food that will feed and fuel their understanding of God.

[12:14] But to those who won't to those who can't in fact it will harden them and they will be increasingly frustrated and their hearing will have less and less power in their lives.

And so that's just want to clear up some of the the sort of surrounding things because we're going to spend most of our time talking about the parable. And what I want you to see is all these things point to the meaning of the parable is the meaning of this whole section I believe.

We see Jesus' exhortation in verse 18. Take heed how you hear. This is his point.

This is the point of the parable. And this is the point of our sermon this morning. Take heed how you hear.

And as you see the parable I'm not going to rehearse it it's a fairly straightforward thing. It's a common Palestinian picture of how you would sow a field. A guy has a bag with a lot of seed and he walks up and down and he just reaches in grabs a handful and he throws it.

[13:28] And the picture is he's throwing it abundantly. He's throwing it without regard to how receptive the soil is from his own perspective. He's just sowing the seed and he walks up and down the field and he does this.

And he's sowing it on the edges where there may be thorns growing. He's throwing it where the soil doesn't look very good. In Palestine the soil sometimes was very shallow and you couldn't see that the rock underneath it was very near the surface.

There would be walking paths at times right through the middle of an agricultural field. And so he's just sowing the seed and seeing how it falls in different soils.

And that's what he says in this parable. And there are two things I want to examine this morning with you. One is the seed itself and two is the soils that they land in. And how that informs us as we think about Jesus' primary exhortation for us to take heed how we hear what Jesus has to say to us. So let's look first at the seed. In verse 11 it's very clear. Look with me. Now the parable is this.

[14:42] The seed is the word of God. The word of God is not a phrase actually used often in the Gospels.

Luke uses it just a couple of times. In Luke 5 he uses it to describe what the crowds were coming to hear when they gathered to listen to Jesus as he preached.

It's used in chapter 11 most likely to refer to the Scriptures that they would have had in the first century which would be the Old Testament in that time. But we see Jesus and we see Luke shaping this whole section of or we see Luke shaping this whole section that we've been looking at.

Do you remember back in chapter 4 Luke began by quoting Jesus as he read the prophet Isaiah in the temple.

And he said this prophecy about the kingdom of God being at hand and about how the lame would leap for joy and how the blind would see and how the captives would be set free.

[ 15 : 56 ] And he sat down and he said today in your hearing this Scripture is fulfilled. So Jesus' teaching was always about how the Old Testament was informing what does it mean that the kingdom of God is at hand.

But he was saying more than that. He was saying that this points to something new that is happening today. And so this is what I want to talk about for a little bit. What is the seed of the word of God that Jesus is referring to?

I think there are two aspects to it. First the seed is a seed that has content. The message of the kingdom is the message that Jesus is proclaiming about how God is fulfilling all of his promises in the Old Testament.

And if you were reading Luke it would have been post-resurrection. It would have been post-ascension. It would have been after Jesus had risen from the dead. And you would have probably heard about or if you read through the whole book you would have gotten to chapter 24 verses 26 and 27 where Jesus opens the scriptures to his disciples after the resurrection and talks about the prophets and Moses and how they all wrote concerning him.

how he would be crucified. How he would offer himself up on the cross for sinners. How he would rise again from the dead three days later demonstrating his victory over sin and death.

[ 17 : 33 ] And so the message of the word of God is focused on Jesus himself. it is about him and his work and how he is the fulfillment of the riches of God's work throughout all of creation redemption and even into glory.

And so the content of it wasn't just information this is what God is like. It wasn't just history this is what God did. It wasn't just theology this is how it works although it is all of those things.

But the message the word of God is more than that. The message of the word of God is about a person. And this is the seed that Jesus is referring to when he says the seed is the word of God.

I just want to stop for a minute and point out to you that we don't have Jesus preaching today but we have this and this from Genesis to Revelation helps us to know this this Jesus and this word of God this is the word of God because it points to what John refers to in John 1 the word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us and we have beheld his glory the glory of the only one.

this morning I want to ask you what do you think about the word of God when I say that? Is it ethical instruction?

[ 19 : 14 ] Is it morality? How to be a better person in this world? Is it advice on how to live? How to wisdom on how to do better in your finances or your marriage or whatever?

is it information? The core of it I believe is the understanding is that the word of God is revelation it is God in his as my seminary professor would call it God's gracious self-disclosure the word of God is God coming to us as humanity and saying this is who I am I have created you to know me and I want you to know what kind of God I am and I'm going to show you what kind of God I am through history through all the works that I do through all the ways that I change life but at the pinnacle of it I want you to see who I am by seeing me in human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ this is what the writer of Hebrews says in the times past long ago and many times in many ways God spoke to our fathers but now in these last days he has spoken to us by his son

God is making himself known to us through his word this is the whole point and so it has content Jesus Christ and him crucified at its center but it also has power Jesus uses the image of a seed if you go out there and you take an acorn and you plant it under the sidewalk in 20 years the sidewalk will be gone and there will be a tree growing up uprooting that sidewalk the seeds have this incredible imagery of power when you plant a seed what happens it produces life what seems like this dry raisin like thing that won't do anything when you plant it in the ground in good soil it actually produces life and this is why he uses this image because it's so powerful to capture what the Bible thinks about the proclamation of the word of God this is what

Nick referred to in the beginning in the book of Ezekiel the prophet went and preached to a valley of bones and yet it had power and in that power God worked to bring life it's what we read earlier in Isaiah I will not let my word return to me empty but it will always accomplish the purposes for which I sent it it is what in the book of Romans the apostle Paul talks about the gospel the message about Jesus being the power of the word of God for all people and why he says in chapter 10 how can

anyone be saved unless someone preaches to them unless they let me say that right how can anyone be saved unless they hear the message and how can anyone hear the message unless someone preaches to them you see the Bible tells us that the verbal proclamation of this message of who Jesus is is at the very center of the powerful work of God doing things in our life to bring life spiritual life where there is death friends does God's word bring life to you maybe you see it as restrictive or condemning maybe you see it as legalistic maybe you think it's dry or boring or irrelevant

Jesus is reminding us this morning that the word of God is a seed that has power to bring life to us spiritually so he says the seed is the word of God take heed how you hear it but then he goes on and he talks about the sower as he throws the seed there are all of these soils aren't there there are all of these different soils that that seed lands on the first seed is the the rocky path it's hardened it's not receptive what does this look like sometimes I think we think a hardened person is someone who fights with us when we talk about God or those sorts of things he's the one who responds angrily or defensively against it but I'll tell you what you know what I think the truly hardened heart looks like disdain it doesn't matter

[ 24 : 19 ] I don't care it's completely irrelevant to me you can argue what you you can if you argue you care about something when you don't care at all a hardened heart I think looks like that kind of dismissiveness and the word just bounces off as it would if you threw it on a well-worn footpath in first century Palestine as one pastor describes it in the hardened heart the seed never penetrates the mind it never touches the conscience it never enters the heart not only is the heart hardened then but Jesus says but also there is another dynamic that comes along the birds symbolizing the spiritual forces of darkness and the enemy of our souls he comes in and he whispers to us that seed doesn't work that's absurd no one would do that you you're going to look really foolish to your friends if you believe that well that's not going to really help you when the rubber meets the road the enemy comes in and he whisks away this word with all of these lies

I remember when I was a teenager I grew up I actually went to a church I don't believe it preached the gospel very clearly but it talked about Jesus we read the Bible it bounced off me it bounced off me for years and years I remember my sophomore year some of my friends were really vibrant Christians and I mocked them and I made fun of them the holy rollers I called them because they were praying for their friends and reading the Bible and I thought it was foolish maybe you remember what it's like or maybe you've known people you love for whom that's true take heart God changed me he can change them too so that's the hardened heart what about the shallow heart challenge of trials and expectations the seed seems to land well oh

I'm so excited about this there's a great emotional response of joy and happiness yeah that sounds great that sounds wonderful but it falls on shallow and rocky soil and the root doesn't go deep the gospel doesn't penetrate into the recesses of our lives it doesn't get down into our values and our priorities it doesn't take hold of the breadth of all that we are and then when a trial comes along when it becomes hard when it becomes costly to believe what we believe there's no power for it the wind comes and pulls it up I have a neighbor she is an organic vegan something or other I'm not quite she's but she grows the most amazing garden in the world she actually has chickens and she moves her coop so that their fertilizer can fertilize their garden and literally she plants the same seeds

I do and I see in my pitiful little garden these sprouts that come up and when I go away for two weeks in the summer and it gets dry and there's no rain and nothing happens my plants wither and die hers are like burgeoning and overflowing over the fences and she's like do you want three bushes of tomatoes because I can't handle all the ones that I have friends this is what happens our hearts are like the soil in my garden when it gets hard when it gets dry can't stand up strikes me that I see this happening in two different ways two different seasons of our lives one is transition for those of you who are college students when you leave college so many times the root is shown to be shallow in the trial of that transition or maybe you're about to have a baby having a baby is one of those times when it can be very easy for the soil to just show its weakness and the plant to show its lack of roots sometimes it's the changing of friendships the loss of people who've helped us spiritually sometimes it's being hurt by the church by people in the church relationally it's at these times when we see how deep the root goes it's also of course as

Jesus makes clear during times of trial whether it be facing sickness or a loss of a job the breakdown of a relationship I'm sure each of you can fill in the trials that you have seen or the trials

that you have seen others walk through to say I felt those I know what they are so some seed falls on hardened and bounces off some seed falls on the shallow and yet doesn't take root some seed is choked out by the cares and the riches and the pleasures of life notice that it's not all bad things right I mean Jesus in the imagery uses thorns and thistles and interestingly there are like 140 plus different varieties of thistles that grow in Palestine in Israel and so that was an interesting side note that there were lots of them to grow up but to notice that they're not all bad things certainly we can let bad things grow up in our life and choke out our desire to know

[ 30 : 56 ] God and His word but sometimes it's good things it's success it's a job promotion it's getting married it's another kid it's moving into a new house and yet all of these things can rise up and choke out the word of God and whether they're good or bad at the end of the day we love these other things more than we love the word of God we love these other things more than we love Christ and can I just say that there are times when in this modern era in evangelicalism today I fear that we out of a desire to avoid being legalistic don't stand and make a priority of the word of

God in our lives we don't want to make our quiet time a legalism so we say well we'll get to it when we can except when we don't and the more we do that the more we don't and suddenly we find it's been months since I last sat down and actually read my Bible or my kid keeps being successful in sports and then suddenly they have games on Sundays and then maybe once or twice yeah there's flexibility this isn't legalism but it grows and it grows and grows and suddenly you haven't been to church in three months because other things have just grown up in your schedule and we don't fight the battle to make it a priority and hear me clearly I don't want it to be a legalistic duty that's not what Jesus is picturing here but he is warning us of the danger of letting all these other things grow up in our lives and choke out do we treat the word of

God as the seed that is able to give us power or do we presume and then of course finally talks about the good soil the good soil that does what he says it holds it fast with a good and honest heart the good soil is that which treasures and receives the word of God not only does it receive it but it clings to it and holds on to it and it bears fruit with patience which means that it recognizes that it will take time for this process to happen and that the word of God is not a vending machine that produces immediate results at every turn but instead it is this organic reality that produces in us life over time and the good soil receives it with a good and honest heart that sees and values the truthfulness of it and trusts in its power friends

I got to watch someone receive the word of God as she walked through facing sickness and ultimately as she walked through facing her death and though she struggled at times with faith though she struggled to know how to respond though the trial was fierce and the winds blew hard and there were times when she was overwhelmed what I saw was she turned to the word of God some of you helped her giving her passages of scripture to read every day giving her books that are going to point her to the scripture every day and I saw her cling to that in that trial I got to see good soil up close and personal and it was so encouraging to me it was the thing that got her and us through it in many ways friends how do we know how do we know what our soil the soils of our heart is like well it's interesting right because

Jesus says that the fruit of it is what a harvest the fruit of good soil is a harvest and a harvest that's a hundred fold and if you've been a farmer in Palestine a hundred fold would be a miraculous response it would be a an unbelievable a supernatural harvest so Jesus is using something he's using this imagery to say what the seed is going to produce is more than you could even ask or imagine in your life this is what the word of God will do for you so here's the challenge as we close the challenge is how do we respond to this it's very easy to take this parable and say well I guess I got to get my soil right how do I how do I get out my weeds and dig a little deeper and you know how do I make sure that I'm not choking and you know what that's not a bad impulse we ought to stop and take stock of the reality of our heart and ask ourselves are we hardened are we shallow are we being choked out is that the soil of our heart but underneath the message of the soil is the message of the seed

[ 36 : 59 ] God's word the message of Jesus Christ has power to bring you life and you don't have to clean up your soil completely before it can begin to do its work in fact part of the cleaning up the soil is the very work that it will do all that he requires of you is to come and say I need it I need it I need it and that's what Jesus is exhorting his hearers take heed do you hear it will you listen to it will you let it get into your life and transform you you are called to receive that's what he's asking you to do and what does this look like how do we apply this how do we pursue a life of hearing the word of

God friends it's not rocket science you have to read the Bible it's just that simple you have to read the

Bible and you have to figure out how to read the Bible in whether you're Susanna Wesley and you literally put your apron over your head in the middle of 13 children and you have your Bible in the middle of the kitchen while chaos ensues around you or whether you're putting it on your iPad so you can listen to it audio as you drive to work in the morning or as you exercise whether it's late night choosing to turn off the television so that you can read the word of God before you go to bed whatever it is whether it's plastering Bible verses on your mirror in your bathroom so you can see it every morning be some grand Bible reading plan where you're reading 12 chapters a day and doing two hours of Bible study you don't have maybe it will get there I hope you love the word of God so much that it might get there but if you don't start with just the basics let the word of God speak to you and let me just say for a minute if you're here this morning and you're exploring

Christianity and you're recognizing maybe my heart is open to this maybe I want to know more about this the best thing you can do is to open the Bible and to read it read about Jesus start with the gospel come talk to me if you want to talk to me about where to start but just read the Bible let God speak to you seek for ways to have the word of God present in your life and not only that but also seek a community this is so fascinating that Jesus bookends this story with pictures of communities of people who are receiving and treasuring the word of God together make it a priority to be in a small group do something beyond Sunday morning where you have some other believer in your life who is reminding you of the scriptures whether it be a small group that formerly at Trinity or whether it's a few people who get together to read and pray or whatever it looks like don't think you can do it alone and I know this is proverbially preaching to the crowd but let me make it a priority to be here on Sunday and to hear the preaching of the word of God come back on Sunday night hear the preaching of the word of God again what a great blessing you get two instead of just one how wonderful is that and not only come but prepare yourself yourself one pastor wrote this when people listen to a sermon they make some kinds of evaluations good or not very good it's the sermon they want to assess but according to the parable of the soils it is really God's word that because the way we respond shows what is in our heart good hearing is just as important as good preaching think about as you're sitting there right now how can

I be a good hearer some of you need to take notes some of you need to get up and walk to the back halfway through just so you don't fall asleep some of you need to make sure you go to bed so that you can be ready to receive the word of God and this certainly isn't a pass for us as preachers to get lazy on how we preach we work hard and pray for us that we would preach the word faithfully and powerfully but take seriously maybe your responsibility to be prepared here as you come week in and week out to hear the word of God proclaimed so the questions I leave you with what part of my life is not informed by the Bible and what does it say about that how can I let the roots grow deep am I reading the word of God regularly do I need to be equipped to understand it more do [ 42 : 20 ] I need to seek out someone else to help me read the Bible well and how and where am I pursuing a community of and engaged with the word with others let's pray Lord we thank you for your word we thank you that it does have power to save us Lord be with us as we continue to worship you Lord in communion and in fellowship afterwards Lord may the word of God dwell richly in us for your glory we pray in Jesus name amen well friends today we are celebrating communion as well let me ask those who are serving to come forward and