

How Does Your Heart Respond to God's Word?

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[0:00] Please join me in Luke chapter number 8. If you'll please join me in Luke chapter number 8. Oh Jesus, I will hide in you. Thursday night, the theme for Psalm 91 is finding refuge in Jesus.

Sometimes when you're studying God's Word, it makes you enjoy songs better. Or we should have the kind of music that studying the Bible would help you enjoy more. So it's a doctrinally rich song. I have up here, before I get into Luke chapter number 8, starting in verse number 4, just a few quick announcements. I don't normally have the opportunity to have the baptism in the morning.

I usually make the announcements then. When I was in the hallway, somebody in the 3, 4, and 5-year-old said, We have 20 kids in here, 3, 4, and 5. I said, That is awesome. And they said, You know what that means?

I'm like, What? It means you need the end on time. I said, Okay. I said, If you'll do that, I'll try my best, the end on time. But a bunch of little kids in our church, and what a joy today to get to see Hamilton and Madison baptized.

[1:01] Had the joy of baptizing their mom, Whitney. The grandparents are already baptized, so I won't be baptizing that generation. So we're going to have to wait a little bit of time before we baptize the next generation for that family.

But it's so fun to be part of a church that's multi-generational. So I have in my hand here my second favorite book outside of the Bible. And Ms. Shannon, who formatted Brother John that wrote our discipleship material, said, Well, that is quite the claim.

All right. Well, not only is this my second favorite book, this our church's discipleship material, but the one I'm holding in my hand is very special to me because this is the one that Caroline Penrod takes my daughter Tinsley through on Thursdays.

And Tinsley does not want to miss getting here early so she can sit with Caroline. And I was just looking at some of these things that she has filled in here. And it was quite easy. Okay, here we go. Looking at 2 Corinthians 5.17, fill in the blank. A saved person is now a new creature. All right. He now has everlasting life. He is no longer, fill in the blank, under condemnation.

[2:06] He has passed from death unto, underline, fill in the blank, life. John 5.24. If you're a parent in here, you know how special it is to have somebody helping your kids learn to love Jesus and helping them through the Bible.

It's the great pursuit of our lives to know Jesus and to teach the next generation in our home. And so when you have people helping you do that, how appreciative you are. And so today at 4.30, we're going to have our volunteers meeting.

And the focus will be on our church's discipleship, how you can be involved in it, help make sure your kids are involved in it, make sure you're involved in it as a student and as a teacher. And I would encourage all of you to come out and be part of that.

And we've had just such a great weekend. So many visitors to our church here on Friday night. And then tonight we will have our fourth fall festival that we have helped with. Last night there was 500 at Jackson County Baptist Church.

One of our interns was at that. Believers Baptist will have a fall festival tonight. That's in Lawrenceville. And if you want to talk with Greg, if you could go over there tonight and help them out, you would have a blast and you would help a church out that is revitalizing and that's growing again.

[3:13] I would really like to encourage you to prayerfully consider going there tonight. You're not going to hear me often say, don't come here tonight, okay? This is where I like for people to be. I like to be here.

But I would encourage you, if you could go help with that fall festival, you would be blessed and so would they.

Before I read in verse number four, getting down to verse number 15, let me remind you where we left last time. It's an incredible story about Jesus Christ. And so the woman comes before Jesus after the Pharisee invites Jesus into the home.

The man doesn't provide water for Jesus, doesn't wash his feet, doesn't give him any oil for his head, and doesn't do anything that would have been hospitable to a guest.

He's a skeptic. He invites Jesus in, which was customary, and in this outside area that they would have met in and they would have been eating, we see the difference between two groups of people. John the Baptist was in jail in chapter number seven, and he said, are you the coming Messiah? He sends word to Jesus. Are you the one we've been waiting for? Jesus does a series of miracles, and then he talks about the contrast between those that were baptized by him, that realized they were in need of a Savior, and those that weren't.

[4:24] And then in the next chapter, we kind of see it lived out. The Pharisees were people who didn't see their need of the Savior, but this woman did, and it was incredible. She comes, and it wasn't that she wasn't allowed in the room, because at the table they were at, there would have been people sitting on outside against the wall, but her problem came in.

She couldn't stay on the sideline. She said, I can't allow this to happen, and she got there. She put perfume on his feet. With her tears, she washed his feet, and just the response to recognizing that this was the word of God, the expressed image of God.

This was him. This is who we've been waiting for. And so we ended asking ourselves a couple questions. One was, do you recognize how that we should deal graciously with people that the world would treat differently?

You shouldn't see where that woman was at in life. You ought to see how she's been changed by the gospel. That was our sister in Christ. That's who we want to identify with. That is who we should be, not as the Pharisee.

But another question we said was, how would we respond if Jesus was here among us? How would you respond to the word, which is what he's called in John chapter number one, Now we move into this story, and the same question is asked.

[5:38] How would you respond to the word of God? It says so much about the matter of your heart. In that story, we saw the heart of the woman. We saw the heart of the Pharisee, how she responds to Jesus.

And then now we get to a parable here in Luke chapter number eight, verses four through fifteen. If I told you, John, I was wrong earlier. We're in Luke chapter number eight. Let's look at Luke chapter eight, verses four through fifteen.

And when much people were gathered together and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable. A sower went out to sow a seed, and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as he sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. And others fell on good ground and sprang up and bare fruit a hundredfold.

And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables that seeing they might not see and hearing they might not understand.

[6:49] Now the parable is this, The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear, then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

They on the rock are they, which when they hear receive the word with joy, and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among the thorns are they, which when they have heard go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. Heavenly Father, I pray that you will give us understanding and hear the day.

I pray that all those that have ears to hear would hear your word and be changed by it. And those in here, Lord, that do not have a heart or ears to hear, Lord, would recognize their position today and come to you and accept you as Lord and Savior.

Father, I ask that you would give us understanding. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. So we get to a parable here. This is going to be the custom that we will find, that when a large crowd gathers around that Jesus is going to share a parable.

[8:02] In Mark chapter number four, parallel passage, it says, and it speaks about how the crowd gathered so many at this time that Jesus got into a boat and pushed off from the shore because he didn't have any room there on the shore, a large crowd had gathered.

As I've said before, more than your flannel graph taught you as a kid, there's probably hundreds of people there on the shore wanting to hear Jesus. We know 4,000, we know 5,000 at a time, but this is a very large crowd.

And when they had gathered together, he spoke to them in parables. And moving forward, this is going to be the norm, that when a crowd would gather him, that Jesus would speak in parables. Matthew 13, 34, and these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables, and without a parable spake he not unto them.

So it would do us well to take a moment to talk about parables. We already saw when last week he gave one of two debtors, about one was forgiven a greater amount than the other, but he always gives an explanation of it. In the book of Luke, as we continue in it, we will see the parable of the sowers today, the parable of the good Samaritan, the parable of the rich, the parable of the mustard seed, the parable of the great dinner, the parable of the lost sheep, lost coin, prodigal son, a dishonest manager, a widow and an unjust judge, a Pharisee and a tax collector, and many more parables.

It will be common that Jesus will speak in parables, and he will speak about those without ears to hear. So you hear that expression, and it's quite odd.

[9:31] If we were in Children's Church today, I would make you all reach up and see if you had any ears with you today, right? It's hard to wear a hat without one. They're very convenient to have, right? And so all of you have the ears in here to have, but when Jesus speaks about having ears, he's meaning something much more.

Luke 8, 8, And other fell on good ground and spring up and bear fruit a hundredfold, and when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. When he is giving a parable, he will often make that expression and say, Those that have ears, I hope you will listen.

I hope you will hear. And he divides people in the two groups, those that will hear and those that will not hear. Some of you will be given the mysteries, but the rest of you will be given parables.

Luke 8, 10, And he said unto you, It is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. When we think mysteries, don't think Scooby-Doo and the mystery machine and the van and all that. Don't think of something mystical, but it's just something that wasn't known in the Old Testament that has now been revealed and known in the New Testament.

Some of you are going to get this mystery revealed to you, but others will get parables and you might not see and hearing, you may not understand. So if you don't understand the key to the parable, if you don't understand what he gives you and he doesn't explain it to you and you don't go further with him to understand the parable, then you're just not going to understand.

[10:52] I just read to you a parable, right? A sower goes out to sow, spreads out the seed, and it takes in one place and not in another. Can you imagine the people that didn't understand the parable? To the farmer, he's telling me that I have to be more careful in the way that I cast my seed.

I guess I have been very wasteful at times. To the politician, he's telling me that I need to begin a farm education program to help farmers more efficiently cast their seed. This will be a big boost to my re-election campaign.

To the newspaper report, he thought he's telling me that there is a big story here about the bird problem and how it affects the farming community. That's a great idea for a series in the paper. For the salesman thought, he's encouraged me in my fertilizer sales.

Well, I could help that farmer more than he knows if he could only be used my product. But none of these people could understand the spiritual meaning until Jesus explains to them what the key is. You're not going to understand it. You're only going to have this earthly understanding unless Jesus explains the parable to you. So we need to understand why he uses parables.

[11:57] Has anybody ever told you that Jesus used reverse psychology? And you say, no, he didn't. Well, let me tell you how it's often said. In Mark chapter number 9, verse 9, Do you believe that Jesus is using reverse psychology?

Of course not. Do you think Jesus is telling a group of people, I'm going to tell you something, but I don't want to, don't go tell anybody. And in knowing that they would tell people, he told them not to. That doesn't sound like what God would do, does it? Because it isn't what he was doing. And so the question you've got to say is, why would he want it to be hidden? Why would he not want it to be known? Why was he hiding the fact that he was the Messiah from a group of people?

If you understand this rightly, you'll understand that Jesus is not attempting to keep people from knowing or believing in him and following him ultimately, but instead, it's a temporary means that Jesus employed to accomplish redemption on Calvary so that all might be saved through faith in him after his plan was fulfilled.

Let me show you that in the scriptures. First Corinthians chapter 2, verse 8 and 9. This is how God used Paul to explain it. Which none of the princes of the world knew, for if they had known it, they would have crucified the Lord of glory.

[13:29] Then in John 6, Jesus knew that if they were to make him the king, it would mean no cross. John 6, 14 and 15. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, this is the truth that the prophets should come into the world.

When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. Mark 4, 12 says, that seeing they may see and not perceive and hearing they might hear and not understand.

The purpose was this temporary blinding for these people for a purpose. And what was that reason? It wasn't because they were rejected by their maker before the world began.

It is about being born. It wasn't about being born incapable of responding to God's appeal for reconciliation. But they were temporarily being blinded. They were already callous condition so that he would accomplish redemption in this world.

He was acting in a way to demonstrate his love for every individual. Romans 11, 11. I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid. But rather through their fall, salvation is coming to the Gentiles.

[14:34] For it provoked them the jealousy. In his divine wisdom, he knows that it's best accomplished through cutting them off rather than enabling them in their rebellion. He was headed towards the cross time and time again.

He says, the time had not yet come. Jesus dies on the cross to make salvation available to all men and women, Jew and Gentile. But as he goes there and he would speak in parables, and if you wanted to know more, it was available to you.

But if you weren't wanting to know more, then it allowed him the opportunity to continue in the ministry. And so he's speaking to those that have ears to hear. And so Romans 11, 32.

For God has concluded them all in unbelief that they might have mercy upon all. 2 Peter 3, 9. Not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance. And so you may ask, why did he keep it a secret for some time?

You'd also ask, why did Jesus pay taxes when it was unfair to? Or why did Jesus run away sometimes, but at another time be captured? And Romans 11, 33 explains. Oh, the depth, the riches, both to the wisdom and knowledge of God.

[15:40] How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out. We trust in what he did. And it took him to the cross so he could die for those that were taking him to the cross.

And it was important. It was necessary. It was vital that he would do that for you and for me. Some of you that are teachers in here, occasionally you'll say, I'll say this in the training center. We were talking about the incarnation this week and I gave a book assignment for them to read. And I said, if you'd like some additional reading on the topic, and many of them had already shut their computers, they'd shut their notebook.

Nobody had a pencil out. Nobody was taking down the additional reading on the topic. Every now and then somebody does, you get excited. Every time Jesus taught, it was an open invitation to go farther in that parable.

And those that had ears to hear, they got the answer. But those that just came to see the show, those that just came to be fed, John chapter number 6, they came, they were called disciples, they were called learners.

[16:36] But he gave a hard saying and they said, this is too hard for us. And they walked away not recognizing that the Messiah had come. So we have these parables. And today we have a parable.

And I wanted to talk to you about parables because as I told you, we have many more parables coming to us today. And you might wonder, why did he speak in these parables? And so the word parable, it has the word para in it, right?

Which would be alongside, Holy Spirit, the paraclete, alongside. And so running beside a story. So a story is told that contains a truth. It's not giving a truth and then illustrating it.

It is telling a story and then explaining it to them, laying the parable down beside the truth so that people could understand it. So the parable here is not primarily about the seed.

There's variables in the story. The variable is the heart. The seed is the constant. The word of God is the eternal constant. It is always the same. The seed is always the same.

[17:37] Jesus is speaking to his disciples, those who are listening, Matthew 13, 16, but blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear.

And so they're listening and Jesus is explaining some things to them. He doesn't explain the sower. There's no definition of the sower. Don't get your parables mixed up together. You don't take one to compare the other.

But we know that Christ is ultimately the sower of all sowers. If anyone sows the word, it is through his power. 2 Corinthians 5, 20, Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech us.

We pray you in Christ that be reconciled to God. But anybody that's sowing the seed, anybody spreading the word is the sower in this story. And we know very plainly that the seed, in verse 11, now the parable is this, the seed is the word of God.

In any place, it is the gospel. In any country, at any time. The Witt homes, which I asked Brother Eric to give an update tonight, they were up in Dawsonville at the Moonshine Festival.

[18:41] Today we have people in New York City looking for a church building. There's ministry in South Africa. There's ministry in London. We have ministry all around the world. And the seed is the same.

It is the gospel. It is the word of God that is being shared. It didn't get shared differently with the people in Dawsonville than another part of the world. Maybe a different language. Maybe a different way of explaining yourself.

But the seed is always the same. 1 Peter 1.23 says, Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.

We should have full confidence in the seed that has been given here. It does not change. It is the constant in the story. And God's message found is in God's word.

Romans 1.16, For I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God and the salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. The power of the gospel right here, that God's word, we should not be ashamed of it because it has the power to take dead people and make them alive.

[19:48] That the word of God, you can trust that the seed, the seed doesn't, we should have full confidence in it. So what we're looking at in the parable, it's not highlighting the difference in seed. It's not saying one man does a better job when he shares the gospel and another man doesn't do as good a job sharing the gospel.

The gospel is the same. It remains the same. It will always work in any conditions if it's received by the heart that it should be received by. Charles Spurgeon, a young pastor, came to him after three months.

He hadn't seen a single conversion. And Spurgeon said, Do you expect that the Lord saved souls every time that you would open your mouth? Embarrassed, the man answered and said, Oh, no, sir. Then Spurgeon replied, That is just the reason why you would not have conversions.

According to her faith, be it unto you. Is that every time the gospel is preached, we should believe that it's going to land in soil and take root. Today, if you do not know Jesus Christ, I believe that the gospel could save you.

Today, I have full confidence in the word. It is the eternal constant. It is what saved me. It's what saved everybody through history. It never changes. It will never let you down.

[20:56] The decision will be through you and your heart. So we can throw the seed in full confidence. The word broadcast is used before. It was used in the media. It was used here in throwing out the seed.

And so people can believe and be saved. Plant God's word and nothing else. 2 Peter 1.16, For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, for when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

Don't be planning anything else. The seed of God's word, the gospel, is what people need. Not cunning fables, nothing else, not self-help teaching. They need the word of God, which will help us recognize our need of a Savior.

Jesus nine times said the word here. Nine different times is very concerned about how and what you hear. So the word is the constant in the story. The sower is anybody that will share the seed. So now we have to see what the key is to the application, which is the heart. Verse 12, Those by the wayside, or they that hear, then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

[22:06] Parable is given, it speaks about soil, then when it's explained, we now know when it was saying soil, that it's really speaking about the heart. The parable is not of a response to the word at any given moment, but it sums up the different ways that the word is received over a lifetime of exposure.

The question you should ask yourself today is, how do you respond to the word when you hear it and when it's taught? Now we're given four different groups here, four different examples.

The first one is the soil of the road that represents a hard, unresponsive heart. Verse 5, A sower went out to sow a seed, and he sowed, and some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the thowls of the air devoured it.

So not being separated by fence posts, but the garden is here, and then there's a little walkway between them, between now there's another garden. And as you would imagine, not having all the modern machinery we have, it would take a lot of walking around your garden, a lot of work.

And so this road between the gardens would be trodden down. It hadn't been cultivated, they didn't come through it, it was very hard. As the sun would come upon it, and as people would walk about it, it would be basically like a sidewalk, right?

[23:18] As the seed would go on it, it would have no chance of going into the soil, because it had been made so hard. And so all of them know that. You know, all of them grew up. We joke in here, sometimes people talk about growing, pastor or gardener would talk about growing up on a farm, right?

Some of you did, and some of you didn't. And that day, everybody grew up on the farm, right?

There wasn't any other option, but to understand agricultural terms that were being used.

Verse number 12, in case you didn't understand that, it says, those by the wayside are they that hear, then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

And so as you know that, the wayside soil represents those that never heard the word, those understand that Satan came, and he did the work that he does. He took the seed. That's Satan's work in this world.

2 Corinthians 4, 3 and 4, But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, and whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them, which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel,

which is the image of God, should shine unto them.

[24:20] It was not received. It is laid there on top. It never went into the heart. And you've seen that before. You've probably shared the gospel before, and you knew that you just laid it upon a hard heart, and it wasn't being received.

The second one is, a rocky ground represents a shallow and pulse of heart. 6 and 7, It fell upon the rocks, and it sprung up, but it withered away, because it lacked moisture among the thorns, and it sprang.

And then he goes on, Jesus explains it, and he says, They fell among the thorns, verse 14, which when they heard it go forth, and they choked with the cares, and the riches, and the pleasures of this life. This superficial understanding of our Lord.

And it explains what it was. Gave a little knowledge to it. Maybe it's made part of their life, but it never took real root in their heart. Never really changed who they were. The next one is, Infested with thorns represents a divided, worldly heart.

Fell among the thorns, and sprang up, and it was choked, as I just read. And it said, What was it that took them? And so you have the heart here, the superficial understanding, and then you have one that's divided.

[25:23] And what was the thorns that grew up, and what were the weeds that came in the yard? It said, The cares of this world, the riches, and the pleasure of this life. I don't really have time to think about this, because the things of this world are, they're just too pressing, and they're too important.

It's the person that says, Yeah, yeah, I know what you're talking about, but at a better date, I will think about this. I don't really have time for that in my life right now, because the things of this world have grown up, and choked it out.

And so what is a genuine response, will, when we hear God's Word? It's that we will bear fruit. How do I make a true assessment of my spiritual condition? How do you make a true assessment of your spiritual condition?

The question is, how do you listen to, and respond to God's Word? Take care on how you would listen. This kind of listener, and the kind of hearer that will tell you, that will tell your spiritual condition.

Some people, they'll be distracted immediately, and the Word will never take root. And others, there's this initial response of joy, but then all too brief a time, it is completely gone.

[26:28] And still others, there's a response to the truth, but what happens, the cares, and the riches, and the pleasure of this world will choke it out. What Jesus is telling us here, is that Satan himself has a real interest in you not listening to the Word of God.

That listening to the Word of God is a spiritual battle. Who was it that came, and took the seed that was on the ground? But it was the devil. Because there's so much at stake, when you decide how you're going to respond to God's Word, so much is at stake.

How should you listen to the Word of God? Like your life depends on it. How should you listen to the Word of God when a guy is doing great, he is waxing elephantly, that's not how that's said, right?

He is waxing eloquently, how should you listen to a sermon like that? Like your life depends on it. How should you do it when a guy is stumbling around and teaching the Word? Like your life depends on it. I am very much okay with this.

When you invite somebody to church and say, hey, you should join me on Sunday, and they say, is your preacher any good? Say, not really, all right? He is not that great of a speaker, but I'm a very good listener. And he reads the Bible and I listen to it well.

[27:35] You should be a good listener. There's a responsibility to you to listen and to hear the Word of God. So what's at stake here? Fruit bearing.

And they fell on ground, verse 8, and they spring up and bear fruit a hundredfold. If the Word of God does not abide and take root in your heart, it cannot bear fruit. The fruit Jesus had in mind here in this story and that Paul would speak about later on, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,

only the abiding Word of God taking root in the heart of the believer can give rise to these spiritual traits and attributes.

You'll never be transformed if you're not transformed by the Word. If the Word does not have a place in your heart, then you'll never have these fruits. John 17, 17, Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy Word is truth. This is what will transform us as a people. His Word finding a place in our heart and we will bear fruit. Another area is in the areas of discipleship.

Persistently fruitless hearing of the Word cannot be a disciple of the Lord. Verse 23, For a good tree bringeth not fruit of Luke 6, corrupt fruit, neither does a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

[28:46] The abiding Word is key to fruitfulness. Discipleship is at stake if Satan takes the Word away from us. If the Word is taken away from our hearts, we cannot be a follower of Jesus.

John 8, 31, Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in my Word, then are my disciples indeed. What would be a test of a good discipleship material is how much the Word of God is being taught.

And what would be so exciting for me is that the Word of God is taking root in my daughter's heart as she's being disciplined by another believer and I see fruit that is growing from her life.

That she's being conformed to the image of Jesus. So could you see why it's so much at stake? How dangerous it is that believers would read and study and obey the Word of God?

It goes against everything that Satan would have for us. Then lastly, and so important, salvation. Without the Word of God abiding and taking root in our heart, we cannot bear fruit, be disciples, inherit eternal life.

[29:49] John 15, 2 and 3, Every branch in them that beareth not fruit he taketh away and every branch that beareth fruit he purges it that may bring forth much more fruit. Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you.

No abiding word, no place in your heart for the Word, no abiding fruit, which means that there's no salvation. And so how do you respond to the Word? How do you respond primarily to the Gospel? The story of the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The fact that when you read this, you learn that you were cursed, that you had fallen underneath the curse because you were a sinner, and that Jesus Christ took that curse to the cross and he died in your place.

And the question that I would ask you is how do you respond to that? Are you hardened to that truth? Are you bored because it's irrelevant? Or do you think of it as a novelty that deserves the stay here at 355 Windy Hill or some other church and that's just something they talk about?

Or have you been transformed by the knowledge that forgiveness is offered to you for your guilt and your shame? The woman, in verses 2 and 3 of this chapter, because she saw herself as a sinner, she saw herself in a need, she had ears to hear.

[31:06] And so what does Satan want to make sure that you don't do when you hear the Word of God? He doesn't want you to see your sin. He wants you to come in and listen to a sermon and to think about everybody else's sin and say, boy, they sure needed that.

Boy, I know somebody else that really needed the Word. Not bring it in. Lay it upon a hard heart, an uncultivated heart. Let it be choked out. Believe that it's always for somebody else.

Next Sunday, we will look at how we should listen to God's Word. But today, I want you to consider what a privilege it is for you to hear what you have heard.

Matthew 13, 17, For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see and have not seen them, and to hear those things which you hear and have not heard them.

Many people in the Old Testament would love to have heard what you heard and what's explained to you. They get to hear what Jesus said. You see your Bible there in front of you?

[32:11] All of them from the very beginning to the end, if they're in black letters, if they're in red letters, they're all the Word of God. And today, we read red letters. These are the words of Jesus.

What an incredible privilege to get to hear Jesus. You think about being in that time to get to hear Jesus and what the honor would be, but it's preserved for us today, and we get to hear from God.

And what a joy that we should have. And so I ask you in here, how do you cherish the Word of God? How do you treasure it? And what value have you given to it in your life?

The answer to that is going to tell the condition of your heart. It's going to tell what kind of variable is there in the story. What is the soil? Maybe you're in here today and your heart is hard.

But you're not receiving God's Word. It's just been hardened. Maybe it was circumstances. Maybe it was the busyness of life. But when the Word of God is taught, there's no place for it in your life because the busyness of this life is that path that is constantly being busy and being hardened by all the things in life.

[33:17] There's so many things that pull us away from it. It's an amazing thing that we do in the world where we come into a room and we sit down and not move for an hour, right? It doesn't happen hardly any other place in this world, but we give a priority to the Word of God.

Or maybe it's choked out. In your personal life, you know the reading of God's Word that once had a very prominent place in your daily schedule. It was once there, but now your heart has come to a place where these things are choked out.

That's not who you are as a believer. You're a person who has a heart that's ready to respond to God's Word that is there. And I want to know, are you bearing fruit? Are you being transformed? The best part of our sign when you leave that says, be doers of the Word and not hearers only, when you leave the day, is what you're hearing in here, what you're hearing in your life groups, what you're reading in the Word, is it bearing fruit in your life?

Is it changing you and transforming you? And the way that you go about answering that question will tell you the condition of your heart today. Psalm 40, verse 6, sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened, burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

He wants your ears today. God wants to speak to you, not just busyness all the time, not just serving, even if it looks like you're serving Him, not just like being Martha in the Bible, but He says, I want you to sit down at my feet and I want to speak to you.

[34:48] He desires to have your ears. And I ask you, have you had ears to hear God's Word? And then in closing, Matthew 13, 51, the same parable, Jesus saith unto them, have you understood all these things?

And they say unto Him, yea, Lord. How wonderful, isn't it? That group of people that got to know the mysteries, Jesus would explain a parable to them.

He says, hey, do you understand what I was saying? And they would say, yea, Lord. When I tell you that Jesus died in your place and He went to a cross, He died, and now you can have salvation.

And I say, hey, do you have ears to hear?

Do you understand that? And you would say, yea, we do. Yea, Lord, as that was being answered.

So I would ask you today, what is the response of your heart to the Word of God?

And it's something that I can't know. But what I can do and I will do is that you would have an honest evaluation by the Holy Spirit in your life and say, this is where my heart is today.

[35:51] I am bearing fruit because the Word is being brought in and received or no, I'm not. My heart has been hardened. My heart has been choking out the Word when it comes into it. And make a decision today as a disciple and follower of Jesus that you love the Word and you want to embrace the Word and you want to live according to it today.

As a believer in here, you still have the same question to ask today. You know where your heart should be and it's been there before and I'd ask you is it there today? As an unbeliever in here today, I want to ask you how have you responded to this gospel message?

What does it mean to you? Does it mean what the Pharisees saw as he was a skeptic? It was something that could be part of your life but nothing that would transform you? Or have you heard the gospel and say, my life should be fully given over to Jesus?

I want to follow Him with everything that is in me. That's what the young believers today decided. Madison and Hamilton, they decided today that they wanted to let you know they were a believer and they want to be walk in newness of life.

That Jesus Christ gets to lead and guide them. Have you made that same decision in life? Are you responding to God's word? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I'd ask that you be with us right now, Lord.

[37:03] A very important time, Lord. One that I would not want to rush past. Lord, I pray that every person in this room, every man, woman, and

child would make it as, would ask some questions.

that they would evaluate the condition of their heart based upon how they do or do not receive your word into their life.

With every head bowed and every eye closed and continue to pray in your seat or if you would like, you could come to an altar. As a believer, you may decide to come to an altar and say, God, your word has not had its place in my life, but today, I want all those things taken out.

I come to you asking you to bear fruit. In my life. And if you're in here today and you've never responded in faith to him, if the word has never found a place, that incorruptible seed has not created a new life in you, would you allow me the opportunity to give you some instructions to go to a counseling room so that you could hear the infallible word of God and it could take you from death unto life?

If you're in here today and you say, you don't know what your position is, you don't know if you're a believer or not, if you've ever put your faith and trust in him, would you raise your hand so I could give you some instruction? Speaking to those who've been here that are believers, I would ask you, the response to the word says something about your heart and that's between you and the Holy Spirit.

[38:26] But I pray that whatever he would tell you, as he would say in the book of James, as you look upon the reflection, that you would do business with the Lord and be honest with him today. Heavenly Father, as believers continue to pray at the altar in the sea, I pray that you would allow them to see their heart as it truly is and that they would come to you and ask you to remove the things that would choke up or distract or cultivate their heart from the hardness that is there so they could receive your word and bear the fruit that we are meant to bear.

Amen. Amen.