

Take Heed to How You Hear (Luke 8:1-21)

Jesus' Four Examples and Illustrations of "Hearing and Doing":

1. The Two Soils (v.4-15):

A. The Unreceptive Soils:

Unreceptive soil #1 (v.5, 12): while this person may hear the word of God (seed), it does not take root due to a hardened heart, trampling of His word, and demonic activity (v.5, 12).

Unreceptive soil #2 (v.6, 13): while the word of God (seed) is received with joy (initially), it is shallow (soil) and does not persevere because of trials and persecution (Mk. 4:17).

Unreceptive soil #3 (v.7, 14): while the word of God (seed) takes root, and the soil appears to be healthy (no shale or limestone beneath the shallow surface; soil #2), there are competing, worldly affections which affect its loyalty to God. Ultimately, there is no fruit. Worldly-mindedness has "choked" the life out of this seed (Matt. 13:22; Mk 4:17; Lk. 8:14). Though it gestures toward Christ, it never bears fruit because of its irreconcilable loyalties. It dallies with the idea of following Christ, but when it comes to obeying Him, He is one of "many lovers."

B. The Receptive Soil (v.8, 15):

- It is called "good" soil and holds the seed (word) with integrity and goodness. The Greek words for both "honest" and "good" (v.15) refer to the inward and outward quality of ethics and wholeness derivative from the DNA of the seed.
- Unlike the other three soils, which either reject the seed (word), "fall away" (Heb. 4:4-6) or have the life "choked" out of them, this seed in this good soil perseveres.
- The Greek word for "patience" should be translated as "perseverance" (Heb. 12:1; Jas. 1:3-4; 2 Pet. 1:6). It is the ability and capacity to "stand" despite the pressures that would otherwise cause collapse and ruin. The trial, weight, and pressure that caused the seed to fail in the other three soils had no such devastating impact on the good soil.

2. The Lamp (v.16-18)

- It primarily represents the lamps in ancient Israel, which were pieces of pottery like a saucer with the front of it pinched together. Inside this saucer was oil. The front of the pottery that was pinched contained the wick, which floated on top. The wick was then ignited, fueled by the oil, illuminating the room.
 - Secondly, it may be an allusion to the lampstand in the Tabernacle that illuminated the interior of the Tabernacle (Exod. 25:37). The priests who "entered" the Holy Place would be able to "see."
- The "light" demonstrates three truths: discipleship and evangelism, the fruitfulness of the proclaimed word, and Jesus' teaching that illuminates the way.
- In concert with this light is the future time of "manifestation" (v.17). It could refer to those who reject the word (v.5-7), which will be made evident either in this life or on the day of judgment. It can also refer to the truths of the kingdom that are not hidden but are in the process of being revealed and made public. The disciples are to proclaim openly what Jesus has shared with them in secret. What was previously "hidden" is revealed to those who listen and obey.
- Those who listen to His words with a believing, obedient heart will be given a deeper and more intense insight, while those who remain passive and indifferent will lose what they have. This is not a forfeiture of salvation, but a sober warning to heed His words.

- This is manifested in slothful, clouded, obfuscated care and concern for "doing" what you "hear." The "taking away" of the light is another way of alluding to the three unreceptive soils. It is a "loss" of what is heard. Jesus warns the disciples and the "others" who came around Him (Mk. 4:10-11) of the temporal and eternal importance of hearing and doing.
- Sanctification is closely connected to both animation and illumination. Growth in holiness and Christlikeness never occurs passively.
- Those who "listen" and "hear" are growing in inward holiness and exuding it outwardly. As a result, they cannot remain hidden from the dark world around them.

3. The Women Who Are Fully Committed to Jesus (v. 1-3)

- Three women are described as "healed of evil spirits and infirmities." Luke demonstrates the kingdom of God's reign in the physical and spiritual healing and restoration of men and women (Lk. 1:53. 78-79; 4:18-19). All synoptic accounts inform us of these women (Matt. 27:55-56; Mk. 15:40-41).
- A. Mary, called Magdalene (v.2): Mary Magdalene is mentioned first, probably because she was the leader of these women. She was not the sinful woman who wept, wiped Jesus' feet with her hair, and anointed His feet (7:36-50). Despite how she is often portrayed, there is nothing in Scripture that alludes to her in any way being a prostitute. She is also first on the list of those present at Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection (Matt. 27:56, 61; 28:1). The "seven demons" cast out of her may be literal or figurative to demonstrate the totality (fullness) of the demon's possession.
- B. Joanna, the wife of Chuza, who was the manager of Herod's household (v.3): Chuza, her husband, oversaw the affairs of the household of Herod. This "Herod" is the same tetrarch of Galilee who imprisoned and executed John. As a Herodian, she would have faced rejection from many Jewish believers. After Jesus saved her, we can only surmise the tension between her and Caesar's household. We are unsure of the spiritual condition of her husband, Chuza, including his disposition toward her newfound faith. He may have been a ministry partner with her, opposed her commitment to Christ, or been indifferent. Regardless, as a wealthy aristocrat by marriage, she possessed the funds to help finance the ministry of Jesus and His disciples.
- C. Susanna (v.4): no additional description is given about her other than her devotion to Jesus' ministry.

These women embody the second (good) soil (v.15) and illustrate an element of the lamp. These remarkable women served Jesus to the very end. Many of them were there at His crucifixion (Lk. 23:49; Matt. 27:55-56; Mk. 15:40-41; Jn. 19:25), the tomb (Matt. 27:61; Lk. 23:55), and the resurrection (Lk. 24:1-12; Matt. 28:1-8; Mk. 16:1-8; Jn. 20:1-18).

4. His Family, Who Hears Him and Follows Him (v.19-21)

- Jesus' biological mother and brothers desired to "see Him" (v.20) yet were unable to because of the crowds. Luke is using ironic wordplay to demonstrate, in part, that the crowds were in some ways closer to Him than His own family. Mark informs us that His family interrupted His ministry, as they wanted to seize Jesus because they thought He was out of His mind (Mk. 3:21).
- While Jesus still honors His mother and family, those who are His true family are those who "hear the word" and "do it" (v.21).
- Hearing and doing are not only a matter of spiritual life and death but will also result in sanctification, illumination, and future glorification (v.18).