

Luke 8:1-15

“The Sower, The Seed, The Soil”

It's a good reminder: Jesus sees beneath the surface. He knows *in detail* the “goings on”, what it is that's happening in the human heart. Not just in the heart of people *generally* as if to say He knows the “pulse of the people” but each heart *individually*, your heart personally. Jesus sees beneath the surface, (what it is that you show everyone else) and searches the deep recesses of your heart, of my heart. David said it like this, “*O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.*” Ps 139:1-4 Jesus sees beneath the surface.

As we enter in to Ch 8 make no mistake multitudes of people are following Jesus everywhere He goes. It would seem (on the surface) that His ministry was a tremendous success; but Jesus has never really been impressed with #'s for the sake of #'s. Does He want to reach as many people as possible? Absolutely; but does simply having large #'s mean that everyone is following Him whole heartedly? Absolutely not; there are varying ways that people respond to the message of the gospel. Just because a lot of people show up, that doesn't mean that all those people are going to receive it and respond to it in a fruitful way. As a matter of fact that vast majority of people won't. Jesus is going to speak to that today.

Perhaps you've wondered why it is that you can share the gospel with some people knowing what it's done *for* you; how the Lord has ministered *to* you and yet they seem indifferent toward it, or not really interested in it or easily distracted from it. God has given you new life, yet it seems that so many others that you share with just don't seem to have the same zeal for the things of God that you do. Human response to spiritual truth is an interesting thing; Jesus is going to address that issue in our text today.

We left off in that moving scene of a “sinful woman” ministering *to* the Lord out of her overflow of love *for* the Lord having been forgiven of her sin *by* the Lord. However don't think that she's the only woman who ever ministered to the Lord; there were several. Jesus was not biased in his ministry. He would heal, deliver, raise up and restore anyone who had need of Him who would come to Him.

Other times He would move in someone's life as a simple result of His sovereign grace. The point is that Jesus didn't worry if you were male or female (though His culture catered primarily to the male). Jesus didn't come to minister to men. He came to deliver and to save sinners...which includes us all.

Vs1-3

Few things we want to draw attention to in these Vs. We note that this is Jesus' 2nd Galilean tour as He goes through the various cities and villages, this time with the 12 apostles with Him.

What I want to highlight is obviously what He was *doing* on this tour, He was "preaching (that is 'proclaiming') the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." Which is to say that He was getting out the good news; He was spreading the gospel; the "glad tidings." That's what the gospel is, it's good news, it's glad tidings; *your life* is empty, *your life* is miserable, *you're* enslaved to sin; *you're* discontented, disillusioned, and dissatisfied with life. But Christ holds the key to life's mystery for you, in Christ there's forgiveness of sin, there's fullness of joy, there's freedom and true liberty, contentment and satisfaction. Praise God for the *glad tidings* of the kingdom of God and for those who are willing to preach and proclaim those glad tidings...

I'm so thankful someone was willing to share the good news with me; aren't you? That someone was willing to come *to* me and share *with* me what was available and waiting *for* me in Christ. As the bible declares, "*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!*" Romans 10:15

The next thing I want to highlight is the attention that's given to the fact that there were a # of women who were ministering to the Lord and His entourage. Do you realize that the gospel records only record *men* as being enemies of Jesus? We don't have a record of any women who were hostile toward the Lord. We note that there were women from virtually every social strata there *with* Him ministering *to* Him. We have Joanna who was the wife of a man who worked for Herod personally; didn't get a whole lot higher than that socially. We also have Mary Magdalene out of whom the Lord had cast 7 demons; her bondage to darkness and the demonic was emphatic, she was in bondage completely. Yet they were both brought to a place of *equality* in Christ. Whether you live in poverty, in prosperity, are in the dregs of society or are of the most upstanding morality there is a unity, an equality at the feet of Jesus.

As Paul the apostle said, “*...there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*” Col 3:11

3^{rdly} you might notice or perhaps underline that final phrase in Vs 3 in reference to those who followed Christ, who walked closely *with* Christ, “who provided for Him from their substance.” There’s more than 1 thing about this phrase that arrests our attention. Perhaps most obviously is the fact that these people didn’t give to the Lord out of their *cast offs* and things they could live with out *generally*, but they provided *for* Him and ministered *to* Him out of their *substance personally*.

What that means is that it cost them to minister to Him. Make no mistake genuine ministry always involves sacrifice. Be it a little, at times a lot if it’s your heart’s desire to minister to the Lord, sacrifice *will be* involved. It will cost you time, it will often times demand sacrificing convenience that you might demonstrate commitment, it will many times drain you of your energy and like here there are sacrifices financially. It’s just the nature of ministry.

You might jot down 2 Sam 24 where you discover the heart of David in refusing to minister *unto* the Lord or bring an offering *before* the Lord with that which cost him nothing. Inherent/embedded with in the concept of ministering unto the Lord is the principle (somehow and on some level) of sacrifice.

This is basically the 1st women’s ministry group supporting missions for the propulsion of the gospel.

Which brings me to the other thing I want to draw out of this picture of people giving *to* and providing *for* the Lord; you guys this is the Lord of all creation. He could’ve had any amount of money He chose to; He didn’t need to be dependent upon anyone’s charity in order to propel His ministry. But He willfully humbled Himself and lived upon the offerings of love given *to* Him from those who’d been redeemed *by* Him. Now we know that having sown into their lives spiritual things it was only right that He should reap of their material things; that’s what the bible teaches (1 Cor 9:9-11).

What blows us away is that the One who worked miracles to meet the needs of and provide for others made *Himself* dependent upon the offerings of love that would come from others. Jesus said, “*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*” Matt 8:20 We read in 2 Corinthians 8:9, “*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*” That’s the humility of Jesus Christ the Creator of all things willing to receive the meager support of those who love Him and desire to be a blessing to Him.

Vs4-8

This is probably one of the most popular parables our Lord ever taught. It’s known as the parable of the sower though it more accurately depicts not so much the sower as it does the soil that’s being sown into.

Of course when we study parables we do well to understand exactly what a parable is. It’s a word that means, “to cast alongside” and what it basically amounts to is the taking of a practical picture and using it to teach a spiritual truth. It’s setting a spiritual truth alongside a practical picture from daily living.

Israel being primarily an agrarian culture it would be a very common picture for them to see a man out working his fields, casting seed and tending to crops. It would also be a common reality for them to not get a yield from every seed they sowed, it would depend on the soil on which it landed. They didn’t have \$100’s of thousands of dollars in agricultural equipment, they used crude instruments to clear their field the best they could, cast the seed from a satchel of sorts on their side and then would work the soil over so that the seed might settle a few inches underneath. There was no real way of knowing if there was a limestone bedrock a foot under the ground, or thorns that would come up in that area.

Some of it would land on the paths that were used to sojourn through the fields so it would never get beneath the surface and like seagulls on a beach the birds of the air would amass around the farmer casting seed and anything that didn’t make it beneath the surface became their dinner.

Now what we note about this parable is that both the sower and the seed are constant, the variable is the soil on which the seed landed. 3 out of 4 areas that the seed landed in it did so with out lasting success: the wayside (or the hardened trails used for traveling) the soil with bedrock underneath it, and the soil which was inhabited by thorns. However the seed that fell on good ground yielded a fruitful harvest, even a hundred fold, Jesus said.

So, 3 potential dangers to a fruitful harvest from the seed planted: birds, rocks and weeds. Then Jesus cries out to the multitudes, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” The people are kinda scratchin their heads going, “What is He talking about?...” “It’s another day in the life of an Israelite” and they’re left to try and discern the message that He’s seeking to get across. Jesus lets them know that there’s more to this story than initially meets the eye; that’s what He meant by, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” He was saying that there was a spiritual truth tucked away in His story; His illustration/riddle of sorts and if you had the right “key” if you sought the Lord whole heartedly it would be revealed to you. But if there was really no interest from you, then it’s a neat story I guess and that’s about it.

Vs9-10

The disciples begin to ask Him exactly what was meant by the parable and Jesus is going to tell them. But before He tells them *what* He was saying He tells them *why* He was saying it in a parable. He says, “To you it’s been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest I speak in parables so that as the scripture says, ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may no understand.’”

Now as for a biblical mystery it’s not something you figure out by putting the clues together. A biblical mystery is something that’s impossible for man to know apart from God Divinely revealing it. If God didn’t lift the veil on it, we would never know it. How is it that the veil was lifted on this parable? Those who belonged *to* Jesus inquired *of* Jesus until understanding was granted. They just asked Jesus and He told them; here’s the idea. There is spiritual truth to be found in a parable that the Lord taught. But if you weren’t interested in it, didn’t care to discover it, it would just be a story to you. If you wanted to dig for it and seek after it, it would be given to you. Even in that the Lord was being merciful to the hearer. If you perceive this as the Lord playing games with people making them dig for it you couldn’t be further from the truth.

Listen; to whom much is given much more will be required. If these people heard these things and then decided to turn a blind eye and leave it at just being an interesting story then for them their judgment would be much, much lighter than in hearing a clearly understood truth and rejecting it. A parable would *reveal* the truth of God to those who desired it and it would *conceal* the truth of God from those who had no interest. Jesus moved in humility and in *mercy* lest His hearer fall into greater judgment.

If you want to understand a spiritual truth than you need to respond to the Holy Spirit's moving in your life; if you won't respond *to* the Spirit than you won't gain understanding *from* the Spirit. Again as Paul told the Corinthians, "*These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" 1 Cor 2:13-14

I underlined their question, we do well to seek the Lord for understanding of His word. To ask Him, "What does this mean?" As we seek Him *for* it, we trust Him to give us understanding *of* it.

Vs11

Instantly Jesus gives us a key. The seed represents the word of God. Peter said that we've, "...*been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,*" 1 Peter 1:23 The seed does not change nor does it receive any fault for any failure of growth. Now the sower would be the Lord, or beyond Him *anyone* who is sharing or "sowing" the word, casting it into the heart of the hearers.

Now check it out, most of the time people have a tendency to criticize the preacher saying that it's *his* fault. It's to his credit if there's growth, his detriment if there isn't. Here Jesus doesn't criticize the preacher, the proclaimers, the sower, but the hearer, the receiver of the word, of the seed. There is both power and life inherent with in the seed of the word of God. The bible declares (Heb 4:12) that the word of God is both living and powerful. It contains with in it the power to produce spiritual fruit, but 1st it has to be planted and take root that it might bear fruit.

When you hear and understand the word, it's planted in your heart; what happens from there depends upon the nature of the soil. That's what we're about to discover; the soil stands to represent the condition of the human heart that receives or rejects the seed of the word of God.

Vs12

Check it out, Satan and his cohorts like to be around the preaching of the word of God. Because his agenda is to steal, to kill and to destroy, he wants to rip you off from anything good that God might have for you; and a hard heart on our behalf makes his work easy. #1 The word doesn't penetrate it but lest it run the risk of eventually making it beneath the surface he comes along and instantly snatches it away.

Because he doesn't want you to (notice) "believe and be saved." Even as I speak there those of you who are being ripped off refusing God's word access to your heart and the enemy is simply snatching it up. Notice he's *punctual* in that Mk (4:15) tells us he takes it "immediately", he's *powerful* in that he has the ability to take God's word from your heart and he's *practical*, his reason is "lest you believe and be saved." He's waging war over your soul and your hard heart only helps him. How important it is to break up the fallow grounds of our hearts that the seed of God's word might take root.

Vs13

The "flash in the pan" the "fireworks show" this guy, this gal is the emotional hearer who acts on impulses, impressions, intuitions and instincts. They're circumstantial in their nature, the sermon is good, the melody was sweet so they're on for the ride; but when frustration sets in, when temptation hits they fall away. These are the ones who say things like, "Look I tried God; He didn't do anything for me, didn't work for me so I'm out." What they tried (generally) was what they thought was a "get out of jail free" card and an all expenses paid vacation. They tried coming to church or jumping through what they thought were biblical hoops. The problem is that they never fell broken before Jesus so as to genuinely receive Him. This guy, this gal is all about self and what benefits them in the moment. The problem (Jesus says) is that they have no root; Vs 6 tells us they lack "moisture". Which is to say they never tend to their root system, they don't worship with the body, spend time in the word, their prayer life is hit and miss. Underneath the topsoil of their heart is a layer of circumstantial bedrock that refuses to allow roots to take hold. Therefore the heat of temptation/frustration and persecution burns them out; tend to the root (Jeremiah 17:5-8 Ps 1:1-3).

Trust *in* the Lord, stay in the word *of* the Lord that you might be *rooted* in the Lord.

Vs14

A good gardener can't only love flowers; they've got to hate weeds. This heart is the "crowded" heart, open to everything, the things of God *and* the things of this world.

3 weeds that Jesus makes mention of here that will choke the word of God out of your heart so as to prevent it from ever bearing fruit. "Cares, riches, and pleasures of life," the more my life is concerned with or overwhelmed by/worries, money, or the pursuit of pleasure the more my spiritual growth will be held back.

Some see "cares" applying to poverty, "riches" applying to prosperity and "pleasures" applying to us all. The bottom line is that this person is earthly minded, consumed with the things of this world trying to serve God and mammon and it can't be done. No one can serve 2 masters; you can be loyal to your own wants, or loyal to Christ but you can't have it both ways.

Seems to me that the 3 fruitless hearts encompass the 3 things that work against you in this life. The devil (hard heart), your flesh (shallow heart) and the world (crowded heart).

Vs15

Now there is hope for every type of heart there is here; but this is the type of heart we're fishing for. The heart that will hear the word; keep the word and as a result of patience they'll bear fruit to the glory of Jesus Christ

You guys, "patience" is a huge key. We all know that you can't plant a seed and have a harvest overnight, you've got to pull weeds, water it, tend to it, cultivate it and eventually it buds forth, then you have to water it more, pull more weeds, keep the bugs off, the who bit until you enjoy the fruit. But for some reason we fail to allow that to apply in our walk with the Lord. We're taking in the seed of God's word, we've got to water it *by* the word, by fellowship, through prayer. If you think you're going to enjoy a mighty harvest in a week or 2, or a month or so and if not it's "What's the point" then you're only deceiving yourself; we've got to be patient and not lose heart.

Let God's word have His way in your heart today; don't harden yourself *against* it, don't be shallow *toward* it or allow the things of this world to *crowd* it; be patient and so bear fruit to the glory of God as the result of it?

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for how practical Your word is and how directly You speak to us, Your word isn't clouded in ambiguity or uncertainty but You speak clearly to our hearts. Help us to respond appropriately; not to harden ourselves against it or be open to it only if it serves our own self interest. But rather that we crucify our flesh and submit our lives to You; that we be rooted and grounded in Christ.

Glad tidings of good things, that's the gospel message. That Jesus will bring you life, peace and the forgiveness of sins, if you will come to Him, surrender your life completely before Him His blood will wash over you and cleanse you of all your sin. You can find healing and hope in Jesus Christ today.