

## Rediscover Jesus, 21: “Parable of the Seed”

Luke 8:4-15

Pastor John Eom

### Personal Introduction

- TGR: Please turn your bibles to today's text in Luke 8.
- JKT: Hello everyone! My name is John and I am glad that you are joining us today. Please turn your bibles to today's text in Luke 8.

### Sermon Series & Scripture Introduction

Today, we are continuing in the sermon series called Rediscover Jesus as we study the Gospel of Luke.

### Scripture Reading

#### Luke 8:4-15 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, <sup>5</sup> “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. <sup>6</sup> And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. <sup>7</sup> And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. <sup>8</sup> And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

<sup>9</sup> And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, <sup>10</sup> he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’” <sup>11</sup> Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

<sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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.

This is the Word of God. Amen.

### Sermon Introduction

#### Show picture “Taking Notes.jpg”

- As we prepare our ears to hear the Word of God today, I would like us to imagine this scenario. Imagine that you could have a special one-on-one meeting with anyone in the world. Pick someone you respect. Pick someone who you look up to and aspire to become like. Someone who is an expert in your field of interest: successful, experienced and knowledgeable. And imagine that they actually give you the opportunity of a lifetime to sit down over coffee. The privilege of 1-hour talking with that person. How would you spend that hour? There is no way we're going to rush through that meeting. More importantly, how would you prepare to spend that hour?
- We would do well having questions prepared in advance that we want to ask, printed and ready. We would make sure to bring pen and paper, or even set up a voice recorder or video, to make sure we hold on to every bit of information, wisdom and insight that we could possibly squeeze out from them during that hour.
- Well, do you know that all the more we have a greater privilege, a more marvelous one-on-one available for us? It is a gracious opportunity with our Almighty God. And it's not just for 1-hour a week

when we gather on Sundays, but we get a lifetime of learning the wisdom and knowledge of God. He has made himself available to us anytime, anywhere, whatever season we face. God invites us to his one-on-ones as he has given us his truth through scripture, through the Word of God. For those who consider themselves God's people, we all the more cannot take the bible for granted, for we have the words of eternal life given to us. And so, as God's Word teaches us, we cannot rush through it or make quick judgements on it. This is what we'll be talking about in this sermon from the Parable of the Seed.

## The One Thing

So, the One Thing for us today is this:

*Jesus gives us God's truth graciously  
so hear the Word and hold it fast patiently.*

## Overview

We'll look at Luke 8:4-15 in two functions that Jesus' parable served. With this parable of the seed and soils, we see how:

1. Jesus calls out to the people to hear his words (vv.4-10)
2. Jesus cautions his disciples to hold fast to his words (vv.11-15)

## Prayer for the Preaching of the Word

Scripture says that your Word is to be desired more than fine gold (Psalm 19:7-11). That your Word is sweeter than honey from the honeycomb. May we realize and experience that today, how good your Words are.

May your Word open our blind eyes, revive our weary souls, cause our discouraged hearts to rejoice. May we also be warned by your Word, that we may hold fast to your Word and be guided on your path of righteousness. So speak to us today. Word of God, preach through me, and help us all to truly hear your Word.

## Sermon Outline

### I. Jesus calls out to the people to hear his words (vv.4-10)

#### Luke 8:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup>And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable,

- Though it seems that Jesus' ministry is "successful", Jesus interestingly responds to his growing fame with a parable.
- In the previous verses, we saw how Jesus was continuing to carry out his gospel purpose with great commitment. He went from city to city and town to town, proclaiming and bringing the good news of God's kingdom (Luke 8:1).
- Now in verse 4, we learn that there was a great crowd gathering around Jesus. So, initially, it seems like Jesus' ministry is very "successful" at least in the ways the world defines success. It's natural to evaluate success by fame and popularity. If a famous musician or a famous speaker could fill a large auditorium of people, or even a stadium full of people who want to come and see and hear them, the world will say that they made it in life. So it was like Jesus was on his world tour. He had this huge crowd coming out to him. Not just people from one town, but from many towns, coming out from their homes and neighborhoods, gathering around Jesus. But Jesus responds in a strange way to this crowd coming to him. It's a strange way to handle fame and popularity because Jesus intends to teach them that while there's a huge crowd now, this group will sooner or later decrease in size. But for now, Jesus begins to share with them a parable.

- Jesus used parables as a story or saying to illustrate a spiritual truth by using comparison, hyperbole (exaggeration), and symbolism.
  - A parable is a story or saying to illustrate a spiritual truth by using comparison, hyperbole (exaggeration), and symbolism. Jesus used parables to bring people from the familiar things of life and to move them into the unfamiliar, which are the spiritual truths of God. And so, the content of parables might be easy to understand. But, understanding the meaning and significance of a parable to apply it will require diligence to study and effort to live it out. Some parables are quite simple and direct, while other parables of Jesus are a little more involved. Because of this, parables will be easy to misunderstand and misinterpret Jesus' meaning of this parable. So with fresh ears, let's hear this parable one more time. And afterwards, I'll walk us through one guide of understanding parables I found helpful, and apply it to this parable.

#### Luke 8:5-8 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup>“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. <sup>6</sup>And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. <sup>7</sup>And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. <sup>8</sup>And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

#### Show this list:

- A guide to understanding Jesus' parables:
  - 1) Understand the cultural context of the parable.
  - 2) Consider the audience of the parable.
  - 3) Determine the teaching points of the parable.
  - 4) Check for repetition for the emphasis of the parable.
  - 5) Identify the common symbolisms that are used in the Bible.
  - 6) Note the conclusion of the parable for the significance of the parable.
- Here's a guide to understanding Jesus' parables:<sup>1</sup>
  - 1) Understand the cultural and historical context of the parable as necessary.

#### Show image "Broadcasting Seeds.jpg"

- In this parable of the seed, there might be some norms of how farmers sowed their seed that we might not be familiar with compared to the people during Jesus' time on earth. The residents of the city of Galilee would be very familiar with sowing and farming because the land was known for the fertility of the soil. So for us today, if you're not in the agricultural industry or not into gardening, then the only way we have interacted with seeds is when we attend a wedding or a party and we receive a gift in a box. And inside that box is a small pot of soil and seeds for us to grow. And if you're like me, then no matter how well you follow the instructions, those seeds never grow into a plant.
  - But in the parable the assumption and common understanding of that time was that seeds do grow when sown by expert farmers and yield a crop. In those days, a sower would carry a bag of seeds, take a handful, and then scatter them with a flick of the wrist as he walked across the soil.
  - But as the sower is scattering seeds, what is known as "broadcasting seeds" around the field, some seeds will be carried by the wind and land around the good soil. And these seeds will fall into unideal places where they will not grow at all or not grow properly. But for the seeds that land on the proper soil, the good soil, it will grow. And as all healthy plants grow, it multiplies, where one plant from one seed can easily produce a hundredfold times that seed when it matures.
- 2) Consider the audience of the parable.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from David Seal, "Parable," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

- The identity of the audience is important to note because it will help guide us to the proper meaning and message that the parable intended to communicate.
  - In this case, we note that Jesus was continue to proclaim the good news of God's kingdom in every city and village, we saw that he had a growing team of disciples who were following him, which included the twelve apostles and also many women who provided for the ministry out of their means (Luke 8:2-3). So this group of disciples were part of the audience.
  - The other part of the audience is the growing crowds that were coming out to see him. We're not exactly sure what is everyone's motivation to come out to see him but throughout scripture, the crowds are never described positively, as they are willing to experience Jesus' miracles and follow him, until following Jesus becomes more difficult to the point where they leave him. So Jesus is speaking to his disciples as well as the crowds.
- 3) Determine the teaching points of the parable
    - The teaching points will often be linked to the number of main characters or elements in the parable. In this parable, there is a sower, but the focus seems to be on the seed he sows and where the seeds are sown. This becomes more clear as we consider the next point, which is...
  - 4) Check for repetition for the emphasis of the parable.
    - There is repetition of where the seeds fell: "some fell along the path, some fell on the rock, some fell among the thorns, some fell into good soil." So this repetition emphasizes that it is important for the crowds to note where the seed fell.
  - 5) Identify the established symbolisms that are used in the Bible.
    - Some well established symbols used for God are father, king, judge and shepherd.
    - In our parable today, the life of a growing plant is often used in the bible to symbolize the life of people in their relationship with God. For example, in Psalm 1, the blessed man is the one who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night. Then, it says that he is like a tree planted by a stream of water, a fruitful tree, and that its leaves do not wither. So identifying established biblical symbols will help us understand this parable. And lastly...
  - 6) Note the conclusion of the parable.
    - Often the last person, the last action or final saying will highlight the overall significance of the parable. In our parable here, Jesus ends by talking about the good soil and how those seeds produced a great harvest.
    - But after what seems like a plant biology lesson, Jesus' closing words on the parable is at the end of verse 8 where Jesus adds a final line. He calls out, saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." So there is a significance of "hearing" in the meaning of this parable.
- More specifically, when Jesus "called out" to the people, this means he literally spoke with more volume. He said this part louder: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." This was the line that people should not miss. Obviously, Jesus is not just teaching people first how seeds work and then now how ears work. He is again using another parable. This time, it's a quick statement about ears, using what is familiar to bring attention to an important spiritual truth.
- These two parables back to back probably were leaving people scratching their heads and wondering what in the world Jesus is talking about. Maybe people were thinking that Jesus just wanted to hold a biology class that day, teaching about plants and then about ears. Maybe others thought that this was an introduction to a miracle he was about to do. Maybe Jesus would heal someone who lost their hearing with a handful of seeds. Or maybe they didn't care much for what Jesus said, for his spoken words. And maybe they were there to ask Jesus to perform other signs and wonders. No matter what the motivation was for the crowds to be there, we don't see many people here doing what they ought to be doing, except Jesus' disciples.

Luke 8:9 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, <sup>10</sup> he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’

- Throughout Jesus’ ministry on earth, his disciples were known for not fully understanding what Jesus was teaching them. But at least in this moment, they didn’t just let this teaching go in one ear and out the other. They heard and did something more than just hearing. In verse 9, the disciples asked Jesus what this parable meant, which is the next best, active step to take.
  - I want to take a moment here and encourage everyone that it is 100% ok for you to ask about the bible, especially the parts that are hard for you to understand (2 Peter 3:16). Yes, this includes those of us here who have not yet put our faith in Jesus Christ yet—please ask us in this church to help you study the bible. But also, for members of our church and disciples of Jesus Christ, we all the more should be asking. You can always ask your pastors, your leaders, and one another. I don’t always recommend asking Google because honestly, the internet creates too much space for too many unbiblical ideas. But ultimately, ask Jesus in prayer for insight and understanding as you study the scriptures. And he will graciously answer that prayer, and the Holy Spirit will guide us along. Even John the Baptist, the last human prophet who saw Jesus with his own eyes, also asked Jesus from inside prison. Even he asked Jesus when he could not reconcile what scripture said about Jesus and what Jesus was doing (Luke 7:18–20).
  - So just to be extra clear: “Knowing the bible” is not a milestone someone accomplishes one day. No, it is a lifelong journey of discovering who Jesus is and what he has done for us. It is a great privilege to continue in the process of searching the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God: While all of God’s judgements and ways are impossible to grasp, unsearchable and inscrutable (Romans 11:33), God reveals what he want us to know and grow in deeper understanding. This is why we often find prayers written in the New Testament, praying that believers would grow in God’s grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). And that believers would continue by the Holy Spirit’s power and guidance to grow in the wisdom and revelation of the knowledge of Christ (Ephesians 1:16-18). It’s ok to ask, all the more as disciples of Christ, as we develop a culture and hunger for scripture together.
- Jesus explained that his purpose of teaching in parables is to both reveal and conceal truth.
- So as the disciples asked Jesus, Jesus replied, explaining the ear parable first. In verse 10, he says: “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’” Jesus explained that his purpose of teaching in parables is to both reveal and conceal truth. And this seems like such a difficult saying to accept on the surface. But this is why we must take a closer look.
  - First, we note here that spiritual truths of God’s kingdom are secrets to limited, sinful human beings. It is assumed that we have no inherent ability to find out the truths of God left to ourselves. And so, these secrets of God, these mysterious truths of God must be a gift. A gift that is given by God’s grace to undeserving sinners like you and me. If it were not for the bible that God provides for us, there would be no way for us to know about God, our sinfulness or how we can be saved. Therefore, Jesus is not saying some people deserve to know these secrets while others do not deserve. No, for everyone, the truths of God are a gift.
  - Second, we should note that what Jesus says here is in quotation marks. And specifically, he is quoting from Isaiah 6, where God called and commissioned Isaiah from among the people of Israel to be his prophet. A prophet is a messenger of God, representing God and relaying the messages of God, word for word, to the people. And so, Isaiah was called to proclaim the truths of God to the people of Israel. But the irony is that this very message clearly declares that people will not understand this message. See what God told Isaiah to say:

Isaiah 6:9-10 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> And he said, “Go, and say to this people: “ ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ <sup>10</sup> Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes;

lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

- Imagine Isaiah communicating to people: “To the people of Israel, I have an important message from God for you. The message is, that you will not receive this message. The message is, that you will reject this message. Your heart will grow hard, your ears heavy, and your eyes blind. If you accepted this message I am clearly saying to you, you would see, and hear and understand with your heart. If you understood this message, you would turn to God for healing and salvation.”
- This ironic message was proven to be true over and over again. The rest of the book of Isaiah are filled with clear messages like this from God, the people of Israel would again and again reject those messages. Their ears were just itching to hear what they wanted to hear. And they only wanted to hear messages that confirmed their sinful and rebellious way of life. They rejected messages that were calling for repentance and turning away from sin and turning to the one true living God. And those repeated rejections did indeed make their hearts even harder, their ears even duller, and their eyes even blinder to God.<sup>2</sup>
- Going back to Jesus, Jesus did not only teach in mysterious parables. Most of his teachings were plain and clear. But those plain teachings were also rejected by many people: Jesus taught that he has the authority on earth to forgive sins but only those who saw how great their sins were understood that message (Luke 7:47-49).
  - So this is not an issue of unfairness in any way. No one deserves to have the knowledge of God that will save them from their sins. And those who reject his truth, that truth remains concealed to them, even when they hear it. And rejecting Jesus’ teaching is to reject Jesus. And any person that remains in rejection of Jesus remains in condemnation and will face God’s judgment. This is the heart-breaking reality that many people have chosen.
  - But even in light of this, our hope is that Jesus graciously has revealed the truths of God to those who seek him. To those who desire to understand. As we accept Jesus’ word and allow his word to abide in us, Jesus says, “You are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31–32).
- So I have to ask each one of you, where do you stand? Do we oppose any truths that Jesus Christ has been teaching us this entire sermon series on Rediscover Jesus? Or as we have heard, do we desire to understand and live according to all of Jesus’ teachings, no matter how difficult they may be? Even when many will turn away from Jesus, I pray that we can say together with the disciples, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,<sup>69</sup> and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68–69). As we hear his words, may we continue to seek him to learn, to understand and to accept his words of life.
  - So, we saw how Jesus calls out to the people to hear his words. Next we’ll see how...

## II. Jesus cautions his disciples to hold fast to his words (vv.11-15)

### Luke 8:11 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

- Jesus explains the five symbols he uses to describe how people’s hearts respond to hearing God’s Word: the seed, the path, the rock, the thorns and the good soil.
- Jesus provides his disciples extra grace in the rest of these verses as he plainly explains the meaning of this parable to them. Jesus explains the symbols he used to describe how people respond to hearing God’s Word. There are five symbols in focus. The first is the seed. The seed symbolizes the Word of God. And it is the perfect symbol that points to the life-giving power of God’s Word.
  - The Word of God are the literal words of God that he makes known to people. His words reflect his character, who he is, and his works. The Word of God is also synonymous with the good

<sup>2</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Crossway, 2013), 196.

news of the kingdom of God (Luke 8:3), the gospel message that Jesus is the one true king and that his rightful rule and reign has entered into the world. God's Word also teaches us about who we are, our problem of sin and our only solution in Christ. And all these words are contained and made available for anyone to read through the scriptures, through the Bible. So it makes sense that God's Word says about itself, that we do not live by eating food alone, but that we live by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3). If everyone understood the life-giving power of God's Word and how it frees us from the bondage of sin, then everyone would gladly accept his Word. But, sadly, it is not the case.

- This is where the remaining four symbols come in: the path, the rock, the thorns and the good soil. These are all places where the seed fell. And each place symbolizes a heart condition. The first three bad hearts reject God's Word and only the last good heart is the only one that accepts God's Word. And this entire parable is about how someone hears the Word of God. So here is Jesus' word of caution for his disciples, because how you hear the Word shows you what your heart condition is. Jesus says in verse 12...

#### Luke 8:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup>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.

- The path symbolizes a hardened heart and an outright rejection of God's Word.
  - Like a seed that would bounce right off the surface of the hardened path, so the Word of God never enters this heart. It's a heart that rejects the Word, and upon hearing the Word, this heart continues to reject. And the more it rejects the Word, the more hardened it becomes.
    - What's interesting here is that while each person is responsible for his/her own rejection or acceptance of God's Word, Jesus teaches us that there is another, very real, very active character involved. We cannot be ignorant of him. He is the devil, or Satan, and he is the Adversary, the Enemy. His very purpose is to keep ears from hearing, eyes from seeing and hearts from believing God's Word (2 Corinthians 4:4). He takes away the word from their hearts so they may not believe and be saved.
    - And his most effective tool that he uses is a lie. Scripture says that he is the father of lies, using lies to deceive and to tempt (Matthew 4:3). And he prowls around like a lion hunting for its prey, seeking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). When he picks one, usually the one that is already hurting, the one that is already angry, the one that is already tired, the one that is already lonely. And he enters as sly as a serpent. He feeds off our selfish desires when our flesh is already weak.
  - And all that he really needs to do is just cast doubt on one of God's promises. Just make people question one verse of God's Word. Just convince you of one verse that you think does not apply to you. And Satan would have done his job. Because believing in just one lie has already started the hardening process of the heart. We must be aware of this sobering reality.
    - (i) I hope we caught the promise of hope here, the gospel hidden in plain sight in verse 12. It is through hearing God's powerful Word that people may believe in God and be saved from their sins. So while the devil prowling around like a dangerous enemy, we believe that he is a defeated enemy heading for his final days of deceiving. He was defeated when Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross for our sins (Colossians 2:14-15), removing Satan of his power and authority. And when Jesus rose again in three days, his ultimate rule and reign as King in God's kingdom was firmly established, and he now has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18).
    - Not only that, Christ has given us hope that by faith in him, the devil can be resisted, and the devil will flee from us (James 4:7). We can't get into all the details now but remember the time that Jesus was tempted by the devil at the beginning of his earthly ministry. Satan came to tempt Jesus in his hunger, in God's care for him and in the desire for all authority on earth. But how did Jesus respond each time? He responded by reciting God's Word. And the devil left him.
    - All that we need to stand against Satan's schemes and lies—all that we need has already been graciously given to us in God's Word. So as we look at the path in this parable, may we be convinced and ask God that our hearts will never be hardened like this. And that we would

hear His Word in a way that overcomes Satan's schemes.

- - The next place where the seed falls is the rock. [Read v.13]

#### Luke 8:13 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> 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.

- The rock symbolizes a dried-up heart and a delayed rejection of God's Word.
- This rock is the bedrock. There is a thin layer of soil where the seed could germinate and sprout quickly. But underneath, there is solid rock so the plant cannot develop roots to take in water. Without moisture, there will soon come a time where the sun's heat will no longer be beneficial for growth, but instead it will dry up the young plant and it will wither away. These hearts initially look like they are doing fine, even joyful when hearing the Word. But this isn't true joy. It's a temporary joy that lasts only until fiery times of trials and testing come. And these hearts quickly realize that God's Word will not eliminate such difficult times in their lives. They expected that emotional joy and happiness would last but become disheartened and discouraged that God's Word teaches us to expect trials. God's Word says we should not be surprised when fiery trials come to test our faith (1 Peter 4:12). But rather to embrace trials, to count such trials as all joy because the testing of our faith produces steadfastness (James 1:2).
- We have to ask ourselves, if this could be us. We have to ask because, if you are like me, then our first reaction to trials is not counting it as joy. For me, it is especially the case when my life does not go according to plan. My plan. My perfect life, sinfully speaking, is having perfect control. Where I set out my week's schedule and my life goes according to schedule. No interruptions, no sudden or unexpected problems, no relational conflict or tension, no drama among our extended families. This is my sinful desire. So how would God address this in me? By giving me control over my life? By making everything go the way I want? No. God, in his Fatherly love, disciplines me. Lovingly, in order to make me see, he orchestrates my life to go exactly the way I don't want it to. My faith in God is then tested at those times: Will I go to God, even in my complaining and questioning? Or will I turn to another message that I am itching to hear? Messages that make false promises of true joy and satisfaction apart from God?
- Jesus' warning for us here is that in such moments, where we must choose to believe in God's Word during our trials, if we do not, our hearts are drying up. And hearts that were once so excited for God could fall away.
  - Please don't misunderstand what falling away means here and in scripture. We shouldn't jump to the conclusion that falling away means losing your salvation. This is not what falling away means because once God has granted salvation, he will not take it back. Scripture teaches us that we can be fully assured of our salvation and that once eternal life is granted to a believer in Jesus Christ, it is forever (John 10:29; Philippians 1:6, Hebrews 6:4-6). But at the same time, scripture is clear that falling away refers to those who are so close to having true faith, who might have even been enlightened with spiritual knowledge, later choose to reject Christ as their Savior. It's a delayed rejection, but in the end, it's a rejection like the hardened heart. Jesus' symbol of the seed on the rock reveals another sobering reality that it is possible to receive the Word and not truly be saved because that initial reception never grew into faith.
- So as we look at the rock in this parable, may we be convicted that it is better to face trials with God's Word than to avoid trials and fall away from him. May we hear the Word in a way that withstands even the fiercest of trials. The next place is the thorns. [Read v.14]

#### Luke 8:14 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> 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.

- The thorns symbolize a choking heart and a confused rejection of God's Word.
- This is a kind of hearing that maybe even goes through some trials and testing. It's more than just an initial, temporary joy. But this seed grows among the thorns. The thorns grew up with the seed and it chokes out the plant and it never bears fruit. Jesus says that the thorns symbolize the cares and



riches and pleasures of life. And because the thorns are there, this means, in that heart, there was never a complete surrender of the pleasures of this world.

- Jesus taught his disciples that in order to truly be his disciples, means to truly follow him alone. It requires denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Jesus. “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 16:24-26). Jesus teaches us that there is nothing worth gaining in the world in return for our soul.
  - This is the irony of the cares and riches and pleasures in life. On one hand they are extremely and sinfully satisfying. So these things “feel” right and “feel” good. So when our love for money replaces our love for God, when our comfort and pleasures remain as idols that we worship in our hearts, we may not even realize that these things are choking us out. You could fill in the blank with any desire, even if it’s a good desire, that are competing with the place of God to be our ultimate desire. Just think about what you run to after having a terrible day where nothing went according to plan, after sitting in traffic for hours, after you are physically, mentally and emotionally drained, what do you run to? It’s a struggle for me as well and I don’t always run to God’s Word, to bring myself into God’s presence, to cry out to God in prayer. I run to family, I run to friends, I run to a quiet evening where I can YouTube coffee and car videos, I run to a nice, satisfying meal. Obviously, none of these things are bad in and of themselves, but that is also the danger. Even if we seek out comforts that are not “evil” persay, they become evil when they try to dethrone Jesus as King over our lives. We each need to know that the call of following Jesus demands “my soul, my life, my all.”
- The irony of such worldly desires is that we think that they are our ultimate good, our ultimate benefit, when all the while, the thorns of these desires grow bigger and sharper. But still blind to these thorns, those who never see that they are choking will never ask for help. If only they would see that the end to worldly pleasures is disappointment, dissatisfaction and finally, destruction for their souls, not only in this lifetime, but in the final day.
  - This warning is so important that Jesus repeats again later in Luke 21:34. So listen carefully, he says, “watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation (indulging in pleasures) and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.” That day is the day of Judgment, when all will stand before the Lord. We will be judged by what we have done in our life (2 Corinthians 5:10), whether it was good works by faith in Christ and in full surrender to him. Or if we have lived for ourselves, satisfying the sinful desires of our flesh, caught up with the cares and riches of this world.
- I hope none of us are in this place. Because out of all these three bad hearts, this heart—the thorny, choking heart—is the most miserable compared to the other two. Because these hearts are confused. They’re the most miserable because they are half-way “Christians” with one foot in the desires of the world and the other foot in the desires of God. They have heard the Word of God, they have affirmed some truths of God, but they have never fully stepped over into God’s kingdom by surrendering their lives, losing their lives to receive the eternal life Jesus offers. They have never fully submitted to Jesus as King, as Lord, as Savior. Because they have these other lesser, lower case kings, lords, saviors in their lives. In this sense, they are torn between the two worlds fighting for their hearts. They have rejected God’s Word but they are confused as to how they have rejected God’s Word. And they are deceived into thinking they can actually go on their way in life in this half-way confusion.
  - But if this is you, if you see now by the power of God, I extend Jesus’ call to you. I ask, I exhort, I beg of you: Surrender the idol of worldly satisfaction, turn to Jesus in true faith and full surrender that your soul may be safe! And do not be confused about this: It’s not enough to hear the Word and accumulate the Word in our minds. We must believe, not just picking out a few lines and verses, but we must believe all the Word of God by faith and, and by that faith, we must obey and carry out all that the Word asks of us.
- Now, as we have looked at the three bad hearts that reject God’s Word, and if you are realizing now that your heart might be like the one along the path, or on the rock, or among the thorns—if you are seeing more clearly the condition of your heart, then there is good news for you. The good news is that Jesus is opening your spiritual ears to truly hear, and your spiritual eyes to truly

see. And the good news is that it is not too late for you. There is hope for you. And that hope is explained in verse 15. [Read v.15]

### Luke 8:15 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> 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.

- The good soil symbolizes a good heart and full acceptance of God's Word.
  
- Like when seeds are planted in good soil grow fruitful and multiplying seeds a hundredfold, so it is when God's Word plants itself within a good heart. A good heart is not a sinless, perfect heart. All of us have sinful, dirty hearts because all of us have fallen short of God's standard of holiness and righteousness. But this is the hope that we have in Christ. As Jesus teaches us God's Word, opening our ears to hear, he gives us a good heart. A good heart that is marked by an honest evaluation of itself, and therefore responds properly to God's Word in full acceptance. To a good heart, believing in God's Word is not just an addition to life, but believing in God's Word is like a lifeline.
  - A good heart realizes it has been drowning in the ocean of sin, doubt and worldly pleasures, and seeing there there is no other solution, no other Savior, this heart clings to the words of eternal life of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's hearing in a way that the devil has no power to cast doubt on you. It's hearing in a way that perseveres through the trials and testing of our faith. It's hearing in a way that is wholly surrendered to Jesus Christ. It's hearing in a way that holds fast, clings to God's Word. It's hearing in a way that fully trusts and believes.
  
- To be clear, we must realize and confess that we cannot change our own hearts. Scripture says we are dead in our sin. Dead hearts cannot come back to life on their own, no matter how hard we try. All the more our greatest problem is that we have to stand before God one day. And even if anyone tried to explain to God, "God, look at all my good works that I have done for you," sadly, it will not be enough. The weight of sin will outweigh any good works that the entire world could do. And each person will be held accountable by God on Judgment Day and every sinner will rightfully be given a guilty verdict and receive eternal judgment under God's wrath.
  - But, God's Word teaches us the gospel, the good news, of Jesus Christ. God's Word teaches us that in his love, mercy and grace, while we were still dead in our sin, God gave himself in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ who came to earth as our substitute. He lived the perfect life we were supposed to live. He died on the cross in our place to take upon himself the punishment for sins that we deserved. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice from God for the forgiveness of all sins and to satisfy God's wrath. And as Jesus rose back to life three days later, Jesus offered the gift of forgiveness and the gift of new life in him. So that now, whoever repents of their sin and believes in Jesus alone as their Lord and Savior, and follows him, holding fast to this gospel for the rest of their lives, they will be saved.
  - Do you receive this gospel in a good and honest heart? With trust and full surrender? Do you receive this gospel expecting trials will come and yet God's Word will strengthen and guide you? Do you receive this gospel as truth pushing aside every deception and doubt that Satan casts upon your heart? God I pray you do this work in our church, so that every one of us can confidently say, Amen. Give us the ears to hear and the hearts to believe in your Word.
  - So, now, do you see more clearly? That following Jesus and hearing his Word with an honest and good heart will not be a quick and easy task. It will be a life-long, patient process. Patiently holding fast to God's Word by faith through Satan's schemes, through trials of testing, and through many temptations of this world.

The One Thing:

*Jesus gives us God's truth graciously  
so hear the Word and hold it fast patiently.*

- Life Application #1: Evaluate your current approach and interaction with the Bible.

- This will be important for us to take time and evaluate because, how we relate with our invisible God is reflected in how we interact with his visible words. God graciously provides for us in the bible, in the 66 books of scripture. God's own words that he has made available to all people, in a growing number of languages.
  - So do we spend time personally studying the bible throughout the week? Because that's how we personally spend time with God. Do we make efforts to obey by faith what is written in the bible? Because that's how we obey God. This means, if we don't spend time in the bible, it's very hard to see that we are spending time with God. If we don't do what is written in the bible, it's very difficult to see that we are obeying God. Scripture says that to despise the word of God is to despise him (cf. 2 Samuel 12:9).
  - If we come to realize that we do not approach and interact with the Bible as we should, then that realization is a form of God's grace as well. Be encouraged because it is God guiding you, through your hearing of His words preached now and seeing His words in scripture. God desires to reveal himself to those who are seeking him. He says, "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). May His grace motivate us to seek him as we spend time studying the Bible this week.
- Life Application #2: Cultivate the habit of expositional listening to the preaching of the Word.<sup>3</sup>
- *Meditate on the sermon passage during your personal quiet time with God.*
  - *Make use of helpful bible study resources (like the ones in our church library).*
    - *"The Message of the New Testament - Promises Kept"*
    - *"The Message of the Old Testament - Promises Made"*
  - *Talk and pray with friends about the sermon after church.*
  - *Listen to and act on the sermon throughout the week.*
  - *Address any questions you have about the text.*
  - *Continue to approach God's Word with humility and teachability.*
- Pray for your pastors as well. As we must also listen to the Word before we prepare to preach it. We pour our days into a single sermon. I try to unlock every corner of my limited brain to understand the passage and then synthesize a sermon that is clear and compelling because that is the responsibility of preaching God's Word. But my wife has to pray for me every time I am writing, that I can approach this great privilege with joy. She prays that Satan does not take that joy from me and turn this beautiful thing into a burden. Please join her to pray that for me. Pastors have to fight the temptation to want to sound intelligent and eloquent, but once we go down that road, we start getting choked up by the pleasures of this world, to be recognized.
- Something we pastors never want to hear our members say is this. We never want you to say, "Wow, I could never see that nugget of truth in the passage for myself. My pastors must have some special gift to be able to see it." There is a gift to understanding scripture but it's not only given to pastors but to everyone who confesses faith in Jesus Christ and lives by that faith. That gift is the Holy Spirit, and he enables us to understand all scriptures now in light of Jesus Christ. Every truth in the Old Testament makes sense in Christ, every truth in the New Testament is found in Christ. And every word of God that is yet to be fulfilled will be when Jesus returns again.
- 1 Meditate on the sermon passage during your personal quiet time with God.
  - 2 Make use of helpful bible study resources (like the ones in our church library).
    - "The Message of the New Testament - Promises Kept"
    - "The Message of the Old Testament - Promises Made"
  - 3 Talk and pray with friends about the sermon after church.
    - Sermon collab
    - Disciple one another in the Word
  - 4 Listen to and act on the sermon throughout the week.
    - Setting aside time
  - 5 Address any questions you have about the text
  - 6 Continue to approach God's Word with humility and teachability.

For TGR: Can we all stand together as we close?

<sup>3</sup> Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *What is a Healthy Church Member?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2008), 22-25.

For JKT: I'll close us out in prayer before P.Eric comes up to lead us in response.

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Potential Closing songs: