

# The Parable of the Sower

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*Main Thing*

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Luke chapter 8. As you're turning to Luke chapter 8, if you're a guest, if you're a visitor with us, or maybe you haven't worshiped with us in some time, I want to welcome you to a study of the person of Jesus Christ while walking through the gospel of Luke. Now, anytime you're in an environment such as this and you hear somebody say, we're walking through a respective book of the Bible, you would expect to, quote, begin at the beginning. Rightfully so. At the beginning of what we know as the gospel of Luke, we find the manger scene, the Christmas story. We work our way through the life of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Eventually, we end up on Mount Calvary and an empty tomb. However, the last few weeks and months, we've actually been a little unorthodox, so to speak. We actually started at the end. We started with the resurrection. We started at Calvary. And the reason for doing so is that each and every week that you and I gather here, we have a perspective that is so different than those that watched the miracles of Jesus and heard the parables, the stories, and the sermons. Today, we're not sitting here curious could this really be the guy the prophets spoke of, we know, we have confirmation because for two millennia the tomb has been empty. So today we have a distinct privilege, we see the life, we see the ministry, today we hear the parable of Jesus through the lens of the resurrection rather than quote leading up to it.

So today as we turn to Luke chapter 8, 30 plus parables that Jesus teaches and preaches, yet in the Mark 4 passage of this one, it says that if we can understand this one, we can understand all of them. Today in Luke chapter 8, beginning in verse 4, we have the famous parable of the sower. It says,

4 And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: 5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. 6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. 7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. 8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. 9 And his disciples asked him, saying,

What might this parable be? 10 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. 11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13 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. 14 And that which fell among 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. 15 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.

Again, a very famous story, very famous parable that Jesus communicates to us about a man who goes out, he takes this quote seed, he spreads it out, and it falls upon four different types of soil. What we're going to discover today is this, that each and every one of us at some capacity is one of these four individuals and we're going to determine which one of these describes our heart and our lives to the hearing, the teaching, and the preaching, quote, of the word of God because that's the object.

So what is the key object of this passage? Look in verse 11. It says the seed is the word of God. Why is it so important? Because what the Bible is communicating to us is very clear, the only thing that can change our heart, the only thing that can make us right with God is the word of God, and the reason that we need to spend a little time clarifying this is because we live in a culture, we live in a society today that oftentimes we think if somehow we just have an environment that looks a little churchy or it looks a little godly, that somehow, some way that'll take care of it. I got news for each and every one of us, there has nobody ever been saved because of the building they were seated in. And don't get me wrong, I love to worship but you don't find anywhere in scripture where we're saved because of the songs we sing. Tonight at Fall Fest, nobody ever has gotten saved because of a food truck. This never happens. Or a jumpy for the kids. In other words, the environment may be whatever it may be, but it is only the word of God that can lead a heart to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

And I'm going to share something with you. I have the privilege every now and then I get these calls and I love it when it happens, coaches call me, football coaches, baseball coaches. You know what? Basketball coaches never call me because I mean seriously, am I going to give one of those? They'll call me and say, "Hey man, I need you to come in and give a little encouragement, a little pep talk," whatever it may be. And I'll go in and I'll tell some stories and such and we'll have a good time but you do understand that a quote unquote sermon is not a pregame pep talk. They are two different things. And we've become a culture day where sometimes, and I hate to say this, maybe even a lot of times, quote unquote, people gather in a place like this at a time like this, and it sounds more like they're about to go play a football game than they are going to the foot of the cross.

It says here that the seed is the word of God and there are two objectives. Anytime the word of God goes forth, anytime it is proclaimed, anytime it is as the seed, it is spread out there's only two objectives, salvation or sanctification. Let me qualify what that means. Salvation means it goes forth so that those that are lost, those that are in their sin, those that are, as the Bible says, headed toward hell and not toward heaven, they will, quote, come to their senses, that's biblical, Luke chapter 15, they will repent of their sin and they'll believe on Jesus Christ as their Savior. That's objective number one when it goes out for people to be saved. Objective number two is sanctification. Sanctification is kind of a big Bible word that basically means for those that are already saved, for those who have already called upon Jesus to save them, that they will grow, that they will mature, that they will appear to be more righteous and more holy and more like Jesus Christ. That's what sanctification is. So anytime we communicate the word of God, there's really only two objectives, for the lost to be saved and for the saved to be sanctified. That's it. It's pretty simple. Here's the problem. Each and every time the word of God is proclaimed, each and every time it is communicated, each and every time it is taught, each and every time it is preached, there are, shall we say, some obstacles that come in the way. There are some things that enter our lives that we struggle with.

Now, before we look at these obstacles, I want to make just a casual observation of the four grounds by which the seed landed on. Beginning in verse 12, we have the four grounds and there's a lot of discussion, there's a lot of debate. Are these the saved ones or are these the sanctified ones? Because in a moment when we talk about the obstacles, it's not going to be an either/or, it's actually going to be a quote unquote both/and. So let's go back into verse 12 and let's just do a little analysis here. Let's just read what the text says and see what we got. It says, those by the wayside are they that hear. Then comes the devil, takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. I think we can be pretty conclusive here these are the lost group, right? These are those there is no faith, there is no salvation. They are lost. It says, lest they be saved. So that's in that category. Now, go over to verse 15 for just a minute toward the end of the passage. It says, but they that are on good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, they hear the word, they keep it, they bring forth fruit with patience. I think we can all agree that these are saved, right? No question there, right?

So we know that the first group are lost. We know that the last group is saved. It's the two in the middle that cause such discussion and at times such debate. Go back to verse 13 for just a moment. That second ground, it says, those that are on the rock, they hear. They receive the word with joy. They have no root, for while they believe in a time of temptation, they fall away. I think the key statement that Jesus makes there is that they have no root and one of the statements that I've heard throughout the years is that the fruit reveals the root, but if you have no root, you cannot have fruit. So in other words, what we see here, there are people who they hear the word of God, they hear the message of Jesus and salvation, and on the outside, there may be some excitement, there may be even some type of display of anticipation of a response to, but nothing is solid. Nothing is rooted. Salvation has not taken place.

Let me share with you how that happens in our culture. You say, how can that happen? Because we live in a culture today, and I'm just going to call it for what it is, we have become saturated with what we call the health and wealth prosperity gospel. You say, "Well, what does that mean?" You go and look, and by the way, this is going to be a strange exercise, but I'm going to give it to you, go to any large store, Walmart, OK, go to a store that quote unquote sells Christian literature and look at the titles. You know what it's about? It's how to have a better life. It's how to have more money. It's how to have better relationships. I got news for you, you can have all the money, all the purpose, and all the relationships in this world and still blow open the doors of hell every single time. And there are too many people, they hear the quote word of God, they go, "Oh, oh, Jesus is my lucky rabbit's foot. I get to rub it and get whatever I want, whenever I want, however I want." Guess what? It says when temptation comes, man, there was no root there in the first place. They had the trappings of the faith. They may have even had, listen, they may have even had the language of the faith, but they didn't have Jesus. Why? There was no root.

And so I think we can show biblically first group lost, second group lost. We know the fourth group is saved. It's the third group that at times causes us a little bit trouble. Verse 14, it says, those that fell among the thorns, when they've heard they go forth, they're choked with the cares and the riches and the pleasures of this life and they bring, listen to this last phrase, no fruit, quote, to perfection. If you go to the Mark 4 account, that's the parallel passage here, it talks about that they were fruitful at one point and then ceased being fruitful. You say, "Why is that important?" Well, growing up in the state of Texas, it's a little bit different than here, everywhere you look, it's just flat, brown, and hot. I mean, that's all it is. Every now and then, you get a tree. OK, we joke about that. But nonetheless, growing up in my home, in our backyard, we had a pear tree. That's what we had. Now, in my neighborhood, all the guys played baseball. So that was our batting cage, is basically what it was because you know a pear is about the size of a baseball, right? And so every time the pear tree would begin to bear its fruit, we got excited because, I mean, that's just, we're gonna go out and blow up some pears. I mean, we're just gonna have a good time. You might be surprised how much fun that can be, just to be honest with you. But you know what? Something happened one year. Something happened. One year, we were getting excited. That pear tree was gonna bloom. We were gonna go out and blow them up. And it didn't bloom. There were no pears that season. Now, there had been some climate issues as far as meteorological and with nutrients of the ground and weather patterns and such. Can I tell you what my dad did not do? My dad did not go out there with a chainsaw and cut it down and say, "Well, I guess it wasn't a pear tree." You know what he did? He said, "We're going to need to treat the soil. We're going to need to make sure that it has what it needs so that we'll bear fruit again in the future." I think what we've got in verse 14 are those who are genuinely saved, they're redeemed, they're children of God, they're going to heaven one day but look what happens in verse 14: riches, pleasures, and cares. You do realize that none of those are inherently evil things, but they creep up in our lives and they choke us and here's what it does, we're saved but our sanctification isn't where it needs to be because it gets, quote, choked out.

So what we discover here on these four grounds is that we have four ways that you and I can respond to the message of the word of God anytime it's proclaimed, preached, taught, read, etc., which leads to the obstacles. Every time we find ourselves face to face with the word of God, these obstacles creep up in our lives. Now before we walk through them, I'm going to take what we just spoke about and I'm going to divide into very clear segmentation. There are some of you here right now in this place, watching online, listening on the radio, there has never been a time where you've acknowledged your sin. There's never been a time where you've confessed your sin. There's never been a time where you believed on Jesus to save you. You're what the Bible calls lost. These are the three obstacles that will keep you from getting saved. These are the three things that will keep you from calling on Jesus. Now, the other group are those of you that are already saved. You're the sons, the daughters of God. You're the, quote, redeemed. You're headed to heaven. You've got a seat waiting on you right there. But you know, these three obstacles will keep you from sanctification? These three things will keep you from being the believer that God has designed you to be.

So let's walk through the obstacles. Obstacle number one. Go back to verse 12. It says that the devil, what does he do? He takes the word of God from the heart. In other words, he supernaturally makes it to where you may hear it, you may be in the presence of it, but you never absorb it. You never take it to heart. You never make it a part of your life. Let me share with you two ways that the devil is really masterful at doing this in our life. One way is we hear the word of God, whatever it may be, and we hear it spoken, and we say, "Well, I know that's for some people, but it's not for me because that's not talking about me. My life is..." and what we do is we start to compare to other people. We start to say, "Well, my life isn't as bad as somebody else's, so I must be okay." And so what happens? The word of God never germinates in our heart, never impacts our life, because we think the message is for somebody else and not for us.

But do you know there's another way that he does it? There's another way he keeps the word of God from germinating our hearts is he convinces us that our life is so messed up, so sideways, so wretched that not even God himself can fix it. Do you see the two extremes? In fact, in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, it says that Satan's goal in our life is to blind us so we cannot see what we need to see. In other words, there's those of you here today, the word of God is showing you things in your life that need to change, things, and you say, "Well, my life's better than the person on the other side of the room. This is for them, not for me." You're blind. But there's some of you here today saying, "Man, my life is so messed up. There is no way God can fix it." You're blind. Because there is nobody in the Bible that is beyond the need of salvation and there is nobody in the Bible that is beyond the ability of salvation. In other words, every single one of us find ourselves here in the healthy middle, either A, we need to learn from and respond to, or B, we need to believe that God is capable and able of doing so in our lives.

But one of the obstacles is we listen to the lies of the enemy who blinds us to the truth of God's word for our life. The second one is what I call this sensational one. Now this goes back to verse 13. It talks about the one that kind of spring up. and there is no root and kind of the picture that we have there is there's some type of an excitement, there's some

type of response, but it's not solid. There's no root. You say, "What do you mean the obstacle of the sensational?" I'm going to share with you two words that are not synonyms even though our culture has made them this: facts and feelings. I know some of you think, "Oh boy, here he goes." Oh yeah, I am. I don't know, those of you that are guests and visitors with us, I don't know if you know this about me, I have the spiritual gift of sarcasm. It's not in the Bible, but I have it. All right? And let me give you my Meyersism. This is a sarcastic remark. You ready? Don't let the facts get in the way of your feelings. We have a society, we have a culture today that is so enamored with feelings that we allow it to supersede what the basic facts are communicating to us. Let me put it in very simple terms, we're in the midst right now of what we know as the World Series, okay? I know it's football season in the South and we forget that baseball exists, but it is. Did you know that home plate is 17 inches wide but there are times, if you've ever watched a baseball game where a guy who's at the plate loses his mind based on what the umpire says, because it felt like it was a ball but he called it a strike. You know, the facts are, if it crosses the plate at the right point and the right height, it's a strike and it doesn't matter how you feel. And yet sometimes, in fact, I might say quite a bit of the time, in our culture and in our society, we have become people who say, "Well, I just don't feel that that was for me, or I just feel like that was for somebody else, or it just doesn't feel right to me." If I lived my life according to feelings, I'd be in a wreck. Why? Because I got news for you, rarely do I hear the alarm clock and feel like getting up. What are the facts? I got to get up. Right? In other words, feelings should not supersede the facts, whatever they are and guess what? In that verse, verse 13, there's a whole lot of feeling going on but the facts were there was no root.

Last but not least, it's what I call the secular, the sensual. Go to verse 14, the cares of this world, the riches of this world, the pleasures of this world. You say, "How is that an obstacle?" It's not that Satan has blinded you. It's not that you've allowed feelings to supersede facts in your life. It's just there are so many things happening in life they become a distraction to the word of God for your life. Now I want you to look at verse 14. None of these things are horrible things. There's nothing wrong with pleasure in life. There's nothing wrong with riches in life. There's nothing wrong with the cares of this life. But I've got some news, can I share some facts with you no matter how you feel? Here are some facts: no matter how much you love your wife and kids or your husband and kids, whatever your family structure is, you know, no matter how much you love them, the facts are God comes before them no matter how you feel. No matter how much you enjoy your job, your occupation, whatever it may be, the fact is God should come above it. That's why Matthew 6:33 says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you." Sometimes the obstacle to us hearing the word of God is we're so concerned with our family, we're so concerned with our job, we're so concerned with this, so concerned with that, that we never hear what God's trying to communicate in our lives.

And so today it's real easy to say, "Well, Satan hadn't blinded me." It's real easy to say, "Man, I believe the facts. I don't get caught up in feelings." Let me ask you a really hard, difficult question: are there times in life, not just here on Sunday, but other times when you're in the presence of the word of God, that you're so consumed with stuff out there

that you never hear what's in here? Understand those things are fine and there's nothing quote wrong with them as long as they're put in the right place and with the right priority. See this parable that Jesus shares is so powerful. Why? Because every time the word goes out we have the privilege, we have the opportunity to respond and the question is this, no matter what side of that equation you find yourself needing to be saved or needing to be sanctified because you're already saved, the question is this, are you allowing one or more of these obstacles to keep you from responding to the word of God? Or is today that day you say, "You know what? I know what God's saying, I know what he's been saying, and I need to respond appropriately"?

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. As we come to this time in our service, a time where there is actually a quote unquote call for decision, you might be that person that the Spirit of God took the word of God and made it very clear. This is how you need to respond. Maybe for some of you, the Lord's been working on you for days, for weeks, for months, for years, whatever it may be. Maybe today's that day, or whatever it is that God spoke to you through his word, you just simply respond to. You don't let feelings get in the way. You don't let other priorities get in the way. You just say, "Okay, God, you spoke it to me. I'm here to respond." Maybe today you're on that side of the equation where you're lost and you need to be saved. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Maybe today's that day where you confess your sin condition, you ask Jesus to save you. Let me remind you what the Bible says, the Bible says whoever calls, it doesn't say whoever does this or stops that, it doesn't say whoever joins the church, whoever gets baptized. It doesn't say any of that stuff. It says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved and maybe today that's you. Can I encourage you to call? You don't have to use the same words I would use. You don't have to say anything out loud. Maybe your heart's cry would go a little something like this. "God, I've got a sin problem. God, I've been places I shouldn't have been. I've participated in activities I had no business being a part of. God, I have spoken words I wish I could get back. And God, you alone know the thoughts that I've had between my ears. And Lord, I know and I believe that your word is true, the wages of my sin is death. So God, today I believe that my sin problem, the only way it's going to be solved is through Jesus Christ. God, today I believe, I believe Jesus is the answer. I believe Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came on my behalf, he lived a sinless life on my behalf. God, today I believe that when he allowed himself to be nailed to the cross of Calvary, he was bearing the pain, he was bearing the punishment of my sin and rebellion and God, today, I believe that three days later, when he rose from the grave, he made it possible, he made it feasible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today, I don't have the answers to the issues, struggles and conflicts of this world, but I know Jesus is the only answer to my sin problem. So the best way I know how, I'm just asking you to forgive me and to save me."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today, maybe you're that person today to the word of God, to that seed that we talked about in the parable, you responded calling out to be saved. In a moment, we're going to stand after our prayer. We're going to sing together. I want to invite you wherever you are just to step out and step forward. I'll be here. We'll have others as well. We'd love the privilege of celebrating with you, praying with you, and praying for you. But maybe today, maybe

you're already saved and maybe it's about the sanctification side of this story. Maybe you've never followed in believer's baptism as we had demonstrated here. Maybe today the Lord is saying, this is your church home, you need to make it official. Or maybe just maybe there's a decision to be made that doesn't require you to step out or step forward at all. You know exactly what it is, you know what needs to be done. You've been delaying it, you've been putting it off and you haven't followed through yet. Maybe today, the sanctification decision isn't walking forward, it's walking out of here, listening and following the word of God more than the cares, the pleasures, and the riches of this world.

*Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, God thank you. Thank you that you don't leave us wandering. You don't leave us in the, quote, wilderness of life. God, that you've given us direction, you've given us clarity. God, you've given us your Holy Spirit to communicate the truths of your word. And God, I pray today, whatever voices may be speaking to us contrary to what your word has said, may they be silenced and may we listen to yours alone. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*