

Message #33

Luke 8:4-21

As we begin a new year, let me suggest that we all should have one main collective resolution. We are going to totally give ourselves to accurately understanding and applying the Word of God. This seems so simple, but this is the key to everything. The most important thing we can do in the time we have left on this earth is to give ourselves to understanding God's Word.

We live in a world in which all kinds of people from all kinds of religions claim they are right with God. People claim they are spiritual and try to convince you to follow them and their religious system. How do we know whether or not it is true? There is a very simple objective observation that Jesus taught that can answer that question of who actually is right with God:

ONE WHO IS REALLY RIGHT WITH GOD WILL LOVE THE WORD OF GOD, WANT TO UNDERSTAND THE WORD, OBEY THE WORD AND COMMUNICATE THE WORD.

If you watch someone over some time, you will truly see who loves the Word and who doesn't. You will see who is serious about the Word and who isn't. Time will tell it and one's attitude toward God's Word will show it.

In **verse 4**, we see that a large crowd was coming to Jesus Christ from various cities. The present tense of the participle "coming" indicates the people were continually coming and coming. Dr. Luke uses the noun "crowd" some 41 times in his gospel. Jesus was drawing big crowds of people. They continued to grow. Luke is the only writer who points out that the crowds were growing from a variety of cities. People from all backgrounds and all places and all cities and villages were following Jesus Christ.

In fact, according to **verse 19**, it was impossible to even get near Him. This caravan of people wanted to see and hear one specific person. The one Person they wanted to see and hear was Jesus Christ.

Jesus was surrounded by phony Pharisees and Scribes, by hundreds and hundreds of fickle people who claimed to be His disciples and by huge crowds who wanted to see Him perform some miracle. It would appear from the pure size of the numbers that His ministry was a huge success. But He saw the heart and He knew the real truth about every one of these people and most of them were not there because they loved Him and loved God's Word. Most were not there because they wanted Him to save them from their sins and because they wanted to know God's Word so they could do the will of God.

So what Jesus did was address the people to show who was right with Him and who wasn't. **It all comes down to this, how serious are you about understanding and applying the Word of God.**

What Jesus does is speak to the crowd with a parable (v. 4, 6). The actual word “parable” (παραβολη) is one that means to use a figure of speech or an analogy or comparison of something to communicate a point (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 338).

It has often been said that a parable is an earthly story or comparison for the purpose of teaching or illustrating a heavenly truth. Most of the time the purpose of the parable is to reveal truth, but in this case there were two purposes. **One of the purposes was to reveal truth and the other purpose was to hide truth (Luke 8:10).**

God did not want everyone to know this formula that truly does show who is right with Him and who isn't. God is sovereign over who truly understands His Word and who doesn't. The ability to understand God's Word should never be taken for granted because that is truly a grant from the Sovereign God of the Bible.

Many people go to churches and even carry Bibles into church. But frankly, comparatively speaking, the numbers who actually grasp the Word and apply the Word are few. This section breaks down nicely into three component parts, all of which are designed to show the importance of analyzing the way a person relates to the Word of God:

COMPONENT PART #1 – The parable of the sower and the soil. 8:5-15

In **verses 5-8**, Jesus told a story about a sower who went out to sow seed. Some seed fell beside the road and was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it (**8:5**); Some fell on rocky soil and appeared to grow but it quickly withered because of no water (**8:6**); Some fell among the thorns and was quickly choked out (**8:7**) and some fell on good soil and grew up and produced a crop a hundred times as great (**8:8**).

According to **verse 8**, as Jesus was telling this parable, He would call out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” You must admit this does seem a little odd. You are preaching and in the middle you yell out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Jesus did this to stress the importance of understanding what He was teaching and responding now. Frankly, at this point no one understood, not even his own disciples, who, according to **verse 9**, were wondering what this means.

Now before we move on, we need to make two observations. **First**, to have ears that actually hear and understand God's Word, we need God to sovereignly work not only in our ears but in our hearts and minds. All of these people heard the audible teaching; they just didn't have the ears to know what it meant. **Second**, the proper response to any teaching is to ask God what it means. That is what the disciples did. If we are to understand God's Word, we want to actually know what it means and ask God to enable us to know what it means.

Now before Jesus gave His disciples an interpretation of what the parable meant, He said to them in **verse 10 that the purpose of a parable is to reveal truth to His people and to hide truth from those who are not His people. There are two purposes of God's parabolic Word to reveal and conceal.**

Now the parabolic instruction is designed to reveal or conceal truth about the "mystery of the Kingdom." A mystery in the Bible is not the same as when we think of a mystery. A mystery in the Bible is something not previously revealed until God gives the interpretation. A mystery in Scripture must be revealed by God giving the insight and interpretation to it.

The specific mystery here has to do with the Kingdom of God and the Word of God. In fact, the seed is the Word of God (**8:11**). Specifically, the mystery here is what God's Word is doing and will do in regard to His Kingdom program. The Word of God will generate responses in God's Kingdom program and those responses are spelled out here:

Response #1 - God's Word will be responded to with Satanic rejection. **8:5, 12**

When God's Word goes forth honestly and accurately, Satan is there to take away the Word "from" the heart. The preposition "from" (apo) means from beside, not from within. Whenever God's Word is accurately taught, Satan wants to cause people not to respond to it in their hearts. In fact, when there is a failure to respond to the Word of God, it "is the devil's work."

One way that Satan does this is through proud and arrogant rejection and opposition to the truth. Pharisees would hear the truth, but proudly and arrogantly rejected it, which was Satan's work. People who are right with God humbly receive the Word and seek to obey the Word.

Satan is out to blind hearts and minds from responding to the Word of God (II Cor. 4:3-4). It is so easy to equate Satanic things as being witchcraft and Satan worship. But quite honestly Satan does most of his work at church services where the Word of God is accurately taught. He is there to snatch that truth away from people's hearts and minds.

Do you see this point? This is critical. The real battle between God and Satan is in regard to your heart and the Word of God. The Word of God has the power to transform your heart and Satan does not want that.

This is especially true when it comes to salvation. Satan does not want anyone to invite Jesus Christ into their hearts. His goal is to keep a person believing they are okay and can save themselves.

If you are here without Christ, you need to realize that Satan does not want you to go to heaven. His desire for you is that you burn in hell forever and ever. He will try to convince you that you are good enough for God without Jesus Christ in your life. He is a liar.

A wise thing to do when coming to church is ask God to allow His Word to get into your mind and heart and not allow Satan any ability to take any truth away from you.

Response #2 - God's Word will be responded to with false emotionalism. **8:6, 13**

When God's Word goes forth, some people have a shallow, emotional response to it. It is like seed that falls on rocky ground; it looks like it is going to take off, but it really isn't. It is superficial and shallow and has no roots. A real key to spotting this is seen in Luke 7:38. A real emotional response is to weep over sin. A true response to Jesus Christ and our sin is sorrowful, not joyful (**8:13**). Emotional responses may seem real, but they are not real. True faith is not determined by emotional responses. It is determined by one's commitment to understanding the Scriptures.

Dr. William Hendricksen told the story of a woman who used to come to him after most of his messages with tears in her eyes and tell him how wonderful the message was. Then she would go right back to her old sinful ways.

I saw a minister emotionally manipulate a large crowd into an emotional frenzy to the extent that they started jumping up and down and waving their hand and crying. The man kept yelling "I will pour out my Spirit on you," which he never did explain what that meant. These people were not responding to the true Word of God because it wasn't being preached; they were responding with some shallow false emotionalism.

I want you to notice something from this text. Jesus Christ does not try to emotionally motivate this crowd in any way. This is why we don't either. Frankly, we put no stock in manipulative, emotional tactics to try and sway an audience. We don't have the organ play and ask people to bow their heads and raise hands and walk aisles because that proves nothing. **Emotional responses prove nothing unless those responses line up with the Word of God.**

Response #3 - God's Word will be responded to with worldly preoccupation. **8:7, 14**

There are those who come hear the Word of God and they will never change and they never intend to change. This person comes for a while and appears to be really interested, but it is temporary.

There are Demas-types who do go to church. They listen to the Word of God but the cares of the world chokes off any real commitment (II Tim. 4:10). They love the world too much.

According to **verse 14**, there are three things from the world that choke off real commitment to Jesus Christ and the Word of God:

- 1) Worry - worldly anxieties and worldly cares (*Ibid.*, p. 284).
- 2) Riches - worldly wealth at an abundant level (*Ibid.*, p. 367).
- 3) Pleasure - worldly hedonistic pleasure (*Ibid.*, p. 198).

People with these priorities will bear no fruit and they will not come to maturity.

Response #4 - God's Word will be responded to with honest commitment. **8:8, 15**

The first three types of people do hear the Word, but they aren't right with God. But this last response is the right response. The "good soil" refers to a heart that has truly been prepared by the Spirit of God.

There are four critical keys to those who are truly right with God:

- 1) They have the right kind of heart - it is honest and good. They are honest with themselves, their sin and God's Word.
- 2) They hold fast to the Word of God - they want to hear, learn and defend the Word of God.
- 3) They bear fruit. Over time these people will bear much fruit.
- 4) They persevere. They patiently stay the course and they bear fruit.

This parable will cause those with right minds and hearts to do honest self-analysis.

COMPONENT PART #2 – The parable of the lighted lamp. **8:16-18**

Those who love God's Word and are responding to it don't hide it. True disciples have a responsibility to herald the true Word of God, specifically concerning Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world.

The Word of God exposes everything. The Word of God exposes which one of the four types of people you are and ultimately it will expose everything about you, including your secret sin.

If you are wise you will invite Jesus Christ into your life to be your Savior and not permit anything from keeping you from understanding God's Word.

In **verse 18**, Jesus warns all to carefully hear the Word of God. If you take the Word of God seriously, you will learn more and more of it. There will be spiritual growth.

If you do not take the Word seriously, there will be spiritual destitution. There will be consequences for how one responds to the Word of God.

COMPONENT PART #3 – The application of Christ's real family. **8:19-21**

Jesus' mother and brothers came to Christ but could not get near Him because of the crowds. It was reported to Jesus that they were there.

Jesus said, "My mother and brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it."

This all comes down to the Word of God. If we use this parable as a basis for our math, we could assume that 75% of the people who go to church are not really right with God. Only 25% are.

Which category are you in?