

The King is our Teacher

Luke 8:11-15

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You who are in Christ are so because you have been born of God (John 1:13). While you were yet dead in trespasses and sins, God acted so as to birth within you, new spiritual life. And the means by which the Spirit of God brought about your spiritual birth, was the preaching of the word of God. The apostle Peter says it this way,

Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because, ‘All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you (I Peter 1:23-25; Isaiah 40:6-8).

And James tells us,

Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures (James 1:18).

So, you have been born of God through his eternal word of truth, with the result that you are now among the first of the new creation. And this life did not come about as a result of liturgy, sacraments, or the eloquence of a preacher, but by the preaching of the word of God. Of course, this life-giving word came through human agency; first, through the incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then through those who heard him (Hebrews 2:1-4). For instance, Paul told the Thessalonians,

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe (I Thessalonians 2:13).

It was by believing the preached word of God that you were saved from the wrath to come, and made children of the living God, in Christ. It is not by philosophical debate or human wisdom, but by the preaching of the word of God that hearts are changed from stony hearts to hearts of flesh which are good soil, which in turn yield what our text refers to as, “a crop a hundredfold.” But, even with this great blessing of the preached word of God, there are those who hear and do not respond in a saving manner. It is both this wonder of spiritual birth, and the tragedy of hardened hearts which is revealed in the parable of the sower

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So, Jesus has gone throughout Galilee with his royal proclamation: The saving reign of God has come. But the King is being met with unbelief and even murderous opposition. In response to the growing unbelief, Jesus has veiled the truth of the kingdom through the use of a parable. However, in private, Jesus explains this and all other parables. From this we learn two important truths: (1) That our King is also our Teacher. And he teaches us freely, from the least to the greatest. (2) That understanding the spiritual truth is a gift.

Jesus told his disciples they had been *given* to know the “mysteries of the kingdom of God.” Jesus did *not* say, “Because you are more righteous than the others, you know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.” Rather, he told them that understanding spiritual truth had come to them as a gift from God. “Unto you it is *given*.” Here then is a core principle of the gospel: to understand spiritual truth is a gift. And the second part is vital: you know you understand it because you apply it — this comes later in the text.

But let’s consider now how it is the Lord Jesus teaches his church. While Jesus was with the disciples, he explained this and all parables to them. And after Jesus returned to the Father, they received the promised gift of the Spirit of truth who continued the teaching ministry of Jesus *within* them, and through them. And all Christians today are recipients of the gift of the Spirit of truth. In the church, pastor-teachers are given by the Lord of the church to explain the word of God, in accord with the work of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:11-13). This also means no pastor-teacher has any inherent authority due to education, credentials, experience, or title, or even ordination. All the authority in the church lies with the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. And there is truly only one Teacher in the church, and that is Jesus Christ. It is through the ministry of the word preached that Christ continually teaches and cares for his church.

Therefore, the *primary* ministry of every pastor-teacher is not visitation, weddings, funerals, baptisms, presiding over the Lord’s table, nor does he have the power to bless or curse; the primary ministry of the shepherd-*teacher* is to teach. He is to faithfully reveal the truth of the word of God by explaining its meaning. The meaning of the Scripture *is* the Scripture.¹ The point is that Jesus was a teacher, and his ministry continues in the church through the preaching of the

¹ See “The Consequences of Non-expositional Preaching” by John MacArthur, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TYtzEDuhvA&t=177s>

Scriptures, in the power of the Spirit. There is no more revelation to come. In these last days, God has spoken in his Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). If we are to hear from God, it will be through his Son, *as found in the Scriptures*. Those who tell you they hear directly from Jesus today, are delusional at best, and wicked deceivers at worst. If you want to hear from Jesus, open your Bible.

This is why it is so very important to have mature, skilled, and passionate expositors within the church; men who (1) read the Scripture, (2) explain its meaning, and (3) exhort from that meaning. What you need daily is a word from God. No matter what the crowds like, you still need to hear from God, and that only happens when the preachers faithfully expounds the text before them. There will always be a multitude of charlatans telling you something Jesus told them that you cannot find anywhere in Scripture — avoid them like the plague.

Finally, this parable is also foundational. Jesus once told his disciples if they could not understand this parable, they would not understand any other parable (Mark 4:13). There is therefore something in this parable that is necessary for us to grasp if we are to understand any of the other parables of Jesus. This is the parable of all parables. And that foundational principle is this: genuine conversion produces the fruit of holiness. There is no path to salvation within the religious schemes of men. There are no ascended masters. There is only the sovereign work of the triune God in creating good soil from bad and bringing forth life from death. Once you understand that regeneration precedes saving faith, you will be able better to understand all parables, but until then, you will be lost in a fog of speculation and confusion. And you will be better able to understand that God saves you in order that you might partake in his holiness (Hebrews 12:3-24).

The Parable of the Sower

While this parable is most commonly referred to as the parable of the sower, it may also be understood as the parable of the soils. It is a story of bad soil and good soil. To be sure, the sower is the central figure, but the soils are the central issue. I told you in the last sermon that the word sown is the word of the kingdom of God (see 8:1 and 10). The royal proclamation was that God's sovereign reign was again active in saving power. The issue is the quality of the soil upon which the sower spreads his seed. I have told you that the first three soils, those on the wayside, the rocky or shallow, and the thorn laden, represent three variations of the one unregenerate

response. These three soils are not three differing aspects of a process of conversion which culminate in the fourth. The first three soils have nothing to do with genuine conversion. Nor do these three soils represent so-called “carnal Christians.”² What these three soils tell us is that there are various ways people seem to respond to the word sown, when in fact, they have not at all been truly converted.

This is very important to note: *the first three soils are variant responses of those who merely seem to hear the gospel, but are not truly converted.*

The problem today is most church leaders are all too quick to affirm these responses as genuine conversions. But only the fourth soil represents genuine conversion, for this reason: *only the fourth soil bears fruit.* I could end this sermon right here, and you would have come into possession of gospel truth. Let me say it this way: Only the fourth soil represents “an honest and good heart,” the kind of heart which can *only* be brought about by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. That God places his Spirit within his people and grants them a new mind and heart of obedience is central to the message and promise of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-32). Therefore, the central point of this parable is that under the New Covenant, *genuine conversion produces fruit.* What kind of fruit? That which comes forth from an honest and good heart, a heart regenerated by the Spirit. In short, genuine conversion produces holiness. Holiness of life is central to the saving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who hear the word of God and fail to make progress in holiness have not actually heard the gospel, and their souls are yet in grave danger.

An Exhortation and Warning to Believers

One of the realities with which every believer must contend is the presence of remaining sin in the flesh. And while the works of the flesh are evident (Galatians 5:19-21), they must nonetheless be put to death in the believer. For while it is true that every believer is now a person of the Spirit, it is also true that the flesh has not been eradicated in your present body. The old self still has a home in the old body, and so we must therefore discipline our bodies and put to

² This is one of the most damnable doctrines of the Dispensational scheme, for it assures people who are not converted that they are because of some superstitious “sinner’s prayer” or other nominal response to the gospel. The Bible only uses the term “carnal” in the absolute of those who are still in the flesh, that is to say, those who are not born of the Spirit (Romans 8:5-11). In Corinth, Paul only compares the Corinthians to carnal men, he does not conclude that they are Christians who are in a “carnal” state. These were Christians stuck in spiritual immaturity and thus behaving like unsaved, or carnal people (I Cor. 3:1-4)

death the desires of the flesh (Romans 8:12-13). Now, here is the point: one of the chief ways the remaining flesh seeks to influence us is unbelief. It is unbelief that underlies every fleshly act. Therefore the Christian must banish unbelief. That's a good word: *banish*. Unbelief ought not be negotiated with, nor ignored, for it is a deadly influence. Unbelief must be banished from your thinking and your actions. Unbelief is a thief and a murderer. It robs you of the joy of your salvation, and causes you to make choices that lead you only to death (James 1:12-15; Romans 6:20). Remember, it is holiness to which God has called you, don't let unbelief rob you of this blessing. I will say more on this in the next lesson. **AMEN.**

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