

The Four Types Of Hearers

By Todd Nibert

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Announcer: Todd's Road Grace Church would like to invite you to listen to a sermon by our Pastor, Todd Nibert. We are located at 4137 Todd's Road, 2 miles outside of Man o' War Boulevard. Sunday services are at 10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Bible study is at 9:45 a.m. Wednesday services are at 7:00 p.m. Nursery is provided for all services. For more information, visit our website at toddsroadgracechurch.com. Now here is our Pastor, Todd Nibert.

Pastor Todd Nibert: I'm speaking to you this morning from Luke 8 on the parable of the sower and I have entitled this message "The Four Types Of Hearers," and in this parable the Lord Jesus gives the four different types of hearers when they hear the Gospel so I will be describing you and I from this passage of Scripture.

I'd like to read the passage first. It is found in Luke 8. I want to begin reading in verse 4, and if you can get your Bibles and follow along, it would be helpful. Luke 8, beginning in verse 4,

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.

You know, not everybody has ears to hear in a spiritual sense. Oh, ask the Lord to give you ears to hear. He says, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? [they didn't understand it] 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:

Now our Lord is going to give his explanation of that parable.

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.

Now, the sower sows the seed. This represents the preaching of the Gospel. The seed is the word of God, the sower is the one preaching the word. The sower didn't make the seed, the seed was given to him and he sows the seed. Now, some falls on a beaten path, not plowed up ground but a beaten path and there it lays and the fowls of the air come and gobble it up. Some falls in soil that had been plowed but there was rock underneath it. It was shallow soil so when the sun comes down, the seed that was sown in the shallow soil, it comes up immediately but it can't develop any root and soon withers because it is scorched by the heat of the sun. Some falls in a place where there are weeds competing for the nutrients of the soil and the plant that did spring up never bears fruit and is choked. And some falls into the ground that has been previously plowed and it takes root, it springs up and it brings forth fruit, the purpose for which the seed had been sown. And there we have the four types of hearers: the way side hearer, the shallow ground hearer, the thorn choked hearer, and the good ground hearer and I want to know what kind of hearer that I am, and I want you to know what kind of hearer you are. Remember our Lord said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Now, the one thing that all of these hearers had in common is they all heard the same message. They heard the Gospel. They didn't hear a false message, they heard the Gospel. They heard the word of God. Now, what is the word of God? Well, it's the word of God. It's the word, it's the message from the word, the written word which reveals the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. They all heard the word of God, they heard the Gospel, and I don't want to take for granted that everybody knows what the Gospel means so what is the Gospel? The Gospel is the message from God, the good news for sinners, and the only way you can really understand the Gospel is if you are a sinner, and if you are sinner, someone who can't save themselves, the Gospel comes as good news to you when you hear of the work of God for you. You see, the Gospel is what God does for the sinner.

Now, what does God do for the sinner? Well, if you're saved, it's because God chose you before time began to be saved. It's called election. You can't preach the Gospel and not preach election. The Gospel is that Christ put away your sins. You see, those the Father chose, Christ came to represent, and he put away their sins on Calvary's tree. He didn't

simply make salvation available if we do our part, he actually saved. And the Gospel is that God the Holy Spirit comes in time in power and reveals Christ. He gives a new heart and he reveals the Gospel to you. It's not something you can figure out, it's something that he places within your heart and you believe. It's the work of the Triune God. That's the Gospel: the work of the Father in election, the work of the Son in redemption, the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The Gospel is preached and all four of these types of hearers heard the Gospel.

Now, let's consider these hearers. First there is the way side hearer and here's what our Lord says about them in verse 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." Now, you can be sure of this: Satan is always at work when the Gospel is preached. Somebody says, "Well, Satan's sphere of operation is in the bars and the brothels and all the stuff where all that bad stuff is going on." No doubt he's there but his main sphere of operation is in the pew, it's in the pulpit. Remember, he comes as an angel of light and he's always trying to work against the Gospel. Now, what about these hearers? Is Satan able to prevent someone from being saved? Not if God saves them. He is not able to prevent anybody from being saved that God saves but he's going to do all he can to prevent it.

Now, Matthew's account tells us that when they hear the word, these beaten path hearers or way side hearers, they do not understand. Now, it's not because of a lack of intelligence. They may be much more intelligent, they may have a higher IQ than the other hearers, but it's because they have no sense of their sin and they can't bring it together. They have no sense of the character of God. When they hear of the holiness of God, it means nothing to them. When they hear of the sinfulness of sin, it doesn't seem to apply to them, they don't see themselves that way. When they hear of the blood of Christ, they really see no need for it. When they hear of the freeness of God's grace, they don't see a need for it because they don't hear as sinners. The only way you can hear with understanding is if you hear as a sinner. Are you a sinner? And I mean what the Bible means by the word "sinner"? All you are in and of yourself is sin. You can't do anything but sin.

Now, if that is what you are, you are able to hear the Gospel. Now, if you don't see yourself as that way, you've never heard. You're on your own and you have no hope. You see, the Gospel is only for sinners. The Gospel is a sinner's religion and when you are a sinner, you can hear what's being said, but until you're as sinner, you can't understand the blood of Christ; you can't understand the grace of God; you see no need for election or redemption or regeneration. So the way side hearer, he doesn't understand. He's got a hard heart. His heart is like when the word comes on him, it's like snowfall coming down upon asphalt that is warm enough to just dissolve it immediately. That's what happens. There is no penetration into his heart. He is not saved. He doesn't hear. He doesn't believe. He doesn't understand. The Gospel means nothing to him so he goes away and on to the next subject. I mean, there is something else more interesting.

Well, what about the shallow ground hearer? I've seen him so many times over the years. Let me read verse 13, our Lord says, "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," just for a time, "but when temptation comes they fall away." Now, these people receive the word and they receive it immediately with joy. I don't know how many times I have heard people leave the church that come and visit and they say, "This was wonderful! I love this! I'll be back next Sunday," and my thought generally is, "No, you won't." When people make that response, I just know the way people act. They receive the word with joy, "This is wonderful!" but they have no root, they have no depth, they have no grace, is what it is. They have no real grace. They hear the word temporarily and it sounds good but they have never really been stripped, they have never been broken up. They hear but they don't hear. They say, "I believe this. I receive it. I rejoice," but as soon as any kind of temptation or trial comes because of the word, if they are going to be persecuted because of the word, it's not really that valuable to them. They think, "Oh, I didn't know this was going to happen. I didn't know this was going to take place. I'm not going in this direction." And you see them no more.

Now, they had no grace in their hearts. That shallow ground hearer, they had no root in themselves. You know, Job said, "The root of the matter is in me." That which you can't see, they did not have. They didn't have the root of God's grace in their heart. They didn't have a new heart. God had never really done something for them. And the fact that they received the word immediately with no thinking, no struggling, you know, let me say this: before you're glad, you'd better first be sad. If you have never been brought under the conviction of sin and seeing your nothingness and your need of Christ, it's bad at first. And when these people hear the word, they go through nothing like that because God has never really done anything for them. They hear it, receive it quick, but they only endure for a while and as soon some kind of persecution comes because of the word, when somebody says, "Do you believe that foolishness?" or maybe some family member says, "I can't believe you believe something like that. Y'all don't believe that?" they think, "Well, okay," and they are gone. They are like a shooting star, they are very bright for a while but they are gone soon enough.

And then there is the thorn choked hearer. Let me read about him in verse 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." Now, this is the hearer that scares me the most because I fear being this hearer myself, a thorn choked hearer. He hears the word and he agrees. It's not like he's fighting against the truthfulness of Scripture. He believes that the Bible is the word of God. He believes that God is as he is revealed in the word. He believes God is sovereign. He believes God is holy. He believes God is just. He believes God is all-powerful. He believes that the Bible teaches that men are sinners and dead in sins; he sees that in Scripture and says, "I agree with that." He even gives assent to election. "You can't read the Bible and deny that God elected who would be saved before time began." He believes that Christ accomplished salvation. The Bible teaches that, he said, "It is finished," and it was finished. He believes God's grace actually saves. He believes God's people persevere. He believes all these things. He gives assent to these things.

I don't believe this man ever leaves the church. The shallow ground hearer, he left, he was gone, but this guy is still sitting in the pew, maybe not as regularly, but the Scripture says the weeds compete for his affections and four things are mentioned. Now, remember, this man believes. He doesn't believe error, he believes. He hears the word, he believes, he gives assent, but cares, the cares of this life and, indeed, there are cares and troubles in this life: the cares of family, of marriage, of financial problems, problems with your kids, stress on the job, physical sickness. Oh, indeed, there are cares in this life that are most real and these cares compete with Christ. This man becomes consumed with the cares of this life. He doesn't call upon the name of the Lord, he doesn't look to Christ, he just becomes consumed with these cares.

And the next thing the Lord mentions is riches. Riches. Oh, men's preoccupation with riches. The love of money is the root of all evil and people are going so hard after money, more, more, more. Many of you even have preachers preaching this prosperity foolishness. "Oh, God is blessing you if you have more," and so on, and everybody is grasping for more. Covetousness. Covetousness, always needing more riches.

And then the Lord mentions the pleasures of this life and, indeed, there are pleasures in this life but are these pleasures worth coming into competition with the Lord Jesus Christ? Somebody can become so consumed with pleasures that they forget Christ. This person gets choked. You know, there are, indeed, pleasures in sin for a season, Scripture says that. Now, men wouldn't sin if there wasn't pleasure in it. But these people know nothing of what David meant when he said, "I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of the wicked." There are more pleasures in knowing Christ than any pleasure this world provides and these people never really experience that. They are taken up with pleasures. They are more concerned about material blessings than spiritual blessings.

And then we read in Mark's account: the lusts of other things. The craving, the lusting for power; the lusting for prestige; the lusting for human praise; the lusting for security. Anything that comes into competition with Christ, these things choke the word and these hearers never bear fruit. There they sit but they never bear fruit. They know nothing of love. Of joy, the joy of resting in Christ, the peace that comes from knowing that his righteousness is your righteousness before God. Long-suffering, believing that God is the first cause behind all things. Gentleness. Kindness. Goodness. Faith. Meekness. Temperance. The fruit of the Holy Spirit, they know nothing of, they just sit there without bearing fruit. Now, if I bear no fruit, that means I don't have the root. If I don't have the root, God hasn't given me any grace. I'm not a believer. Here this person is bearing no fruit.

Now, the fourth type of hearer we read of in verse 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." Now, let's camp for just a moment on this thing of having an honest and good heart. What is this honest and good heart because these people, you ask them, they have hearts that are just as bad as anybody else. You know, the Scripture says

regarding the heart of man that it is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things, and these good ground hearers that have this honest and good heart, they know they have this bad heart, this evil heart, but this honest and good heart is a heart that God gives when you are born from above. When God gives you the new birth, he gives you a new heart. He said, "A new heart also will I give them," and this new heart is called by Christ honest and good.

First, it's honest. You know, somebody once said, "Honest people don't go to hell," and that is so. People who are honest with the word of God, they don't come to the word of God and try to manipulate it to make it say what they want it to say; they don't come to it to use it to prove what they think they believe. They come to the word of God and bow to whatever God says. The Bible is God's revelation of himself. I don't come to the Bible to prove what I believe, I come to the Bible to find out what to believe. The Bible is the word of God. Now, I know a lot of people don't believe that but I do. I know it is. It's the revelation of God and if we don't have the Bible as the word of God, what do we have? We have nothing but my opinion or your opinion and what good will that do anybody? No, the Bible is God's revelation of himself and an honest heart is honest with what the word says.

It's honest with what the word says concerning the character of God Almighty. I bow to what God says in his word about himself. He's holy. He hates sin. He is absolutely sovereign. He is the first cause behind everything. He is the Creator. He is the Sovereign of the universe. He is absolutely just. He is all-powerful. He's omnipresent, he's everywhere at once. Oh, all the glorious things God reveals to us about himself in his word. We bow to it. We are honest with the word of God. We don't make up a God that we feel comfortable with, we bow to what God says concerning himself in his word.

And we are honest with what the word says about us. If I have an honest heart, I know that I'm nothing in and of myself but sin. All I do is sin. I cannot not sin. I can't look down my nose in moral superiority at anybody and I have no claims on God because of my sinfulness. I am a sinner deserving of the wrath of God and I can't do anything to save myself. I am totally dependent upon his grace. And that's being honest. Anything else is a lie. If somebody says, "I'm not like that," well, you have lied to yourself and you have deceived yourself. I'm honest. If I've got an honest and good heart, I'm honest with what the word of God says about me, dead in sins.

I'm honest with what the word of God says concerning Christ. He is salvation. His blood is my only sin payment. His righteousness is my only righteousness before God. All my hope is in him.

Now, this honest heart, good heart. You know, it's so good it doesn't sin. Not the new heart. Now, the old heart, all it does is sin, but the new heart, remember what John said? He can't sin because his seed remains in him. You know, that which is born of God is holy.

It's an honest and good heart and there are five things that are said about this honest and good heart. Matthew's account tells us he hears the word and he understands. Now, remember what I said previously: you can really only understand the Gospel as a sinner, and when you are a sinner, you can understand the message. You can understand how it is necessary for God to choose a people because you know in and of yourself you won't choose God. You're so wicked you will fall away from him. He must choose you. You understand your need of a perfect and complete atonement by the Lord Jesus Christ. You understand the power of his blood. You understand how grace must be utterly free. There is some understanding. Oh, you don't understand anything completely but you do understand because you hear the Gospel as a sinner.

Now, Mark's account tells us that he receives the word and there the word means he welcomes with approval. When he hears the Gospel, he welcomes it with approval. It's good news to him. It's not just doctrine, it's not just one man's opinion, it's not what this church believes, it comes as dew from heaven. It comes as the very word of God. It comes as good news. It's good news to me that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners because I am one of those, and what good news it is to me that he came to save sinners. The freeness of his grace is good news to me. The power of his blood is good news to me. This person receives the word with open arms. He welcomes the word.

And Luke tells us, having heard the word, he keeps it. That means he holds fast to it. Its value to him is infinite and he cannot and he will not let it go. All of his eggs are in this one basket that he can't let go. He keeps the word. It's of infinite value to him.

And then he brings forth fruit. This is the reason the seed was sown in the first place, to bring forth fruit, and that's a reference to the fruit of God the Holy Spirit. Love, love to God as he is revealed in the word in love to his people. Joy in the Gospel. Peace, the peace of knowing that God has reconciled you through Christ and that all he requires of you he looks to his Son for. You get peace from that. Oh, the joy and the peace of believing. Long-suffering, you really believe God is on the throne and that he is the first cause behind everything. Gentleness. Kindness. If God has been kind to you, you'll be kind to others. Goodness, a merciful attitude. Faith, you believe the Gospel. Meekness, you really believe that God has brought everything your way and whatever he does is right whether you understand it or not, so you bow. Temperance, control from within.

If there is no fruit, there is no grace, and the good ground hearer brings forth fruit and then Luke says, with patience, which means abiding under. He abides under God. He submits. He submits, not simply because he has no choice but he submits willingly. "Whatever God does is right and whatever he does with me is right," and he submits.

Now, what type of hearer are you and I? The wayside hearer? The stony ground hearer who immediately receives but falls away? The thorn choked hearer who hears and believes but becomes immersed in the cares and pleasures of this life? Or the good ground hearer who is honest with the word of God and receives and keeps and rejoices in the word? And may God make us good ground hearers.

We have this message on cassette, CD or DVD. If you call the church or write or email, we'll send you a copy. This is Todd Nibert praying that God will be pleased to make himself known to you. Amen.

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