

## **How well is your hearing?**

*Luke 8:4-21 (11.25.12)*

I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving this past week. I was able to spend some great time with my family (Leigh's parents came up from NC) and I enjoyed a typically Thanksgiving day: 1) Food, 2) Football (flag football, reference local rivalries - Medford/Malden, and NFL games), and 3) Black Friday. What you don't know about me is that my parents are crazy and I love them to death. But it was tradition for our family to get up early on the Friday after Thanksgiving and to go shopping for most of the day. Nowadays, you don't even have to wait till Friday to start shopping. With Leigh's parents in town, Leigh and I decided to have a date night of shopping so we headed out Thursday evening, and believe it or not, we drove to New Hampshire (no laws about working on Thanksgiving - live free or die). We decided to go to Walmart because they had published some great deals in their catalog. We might even call this "good news." "\_\_\_\_\_" costs "\$\_\_\_\_\_" and goes on sale @ 10pm and is guaranteed till 11pm. If you want this deal, you must **listen** and **follow** the rules. Inevitably, there's that person who either a) thinks the rules don't apply to him - he sets the rules himself or b) is totally ignorant of the rules. Once you get to Walmart (with the rest of New England) at the right time with the right amount of money, you realize that you've still got to follow a certain set of directions in order to get the deal (look for the balloon with your deal, get a ticket, wait in line, etc.) and if you choose not to follow these directions, you forfeit your rights to the deal. If you want to get the "deal" you must **hear** rightly and **obey** and **follow** rightly.

### **Transition:**

When we come to Luke 8, Jesus tells some parables highlighting the necessity of **hearing** and **obeying** and the consequences of not hearing and obeying are much greater than that of missing a Black Friday deal, eternal life is at stake. If hearing and following is so important to get that Black Friday deal, how much more important is it to hear and follow concerning the good news of gospel.

Read Luke 8:1-21

### **The point: True disciples persevere in hearing and obeying the word of God.**

Warning: take heed how you hear! Don't be cavalier in the hearing of God's Word week after week. If it is not softening and saving and healing and bearing fruit in your life, it is probably hardening and blinding and dulling your eyes.

### **1. True hearing results in transformed living (8:4-15).**

#### **Explanation and Observation:**

- Why did Jesus speak in parables? Focus on 8:9-10

"And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' 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." (Isaiah 6:9-10 ESV)

- Parables yield their meaning only to those who are prepared to search for it. They separate the sincere from the casual hearer.
- Parables are a part of Jesus' revealing and enlightening and saving ministry
  - They reveal truth to the genuine seeker and are a mine of information.
- Parables are a part of Jesus' concealing and hardening and rejecting ministry.
  - They conceal truth to the casual listener and cast judgment on them.
  - This explains the reason why so many fail to become disciples. The responsibility is placed on their own shoulders while affirming that this is not outside of God's control and plan.

- Even when Jesus' preaching (and consequently ours) doesn't save, it is not necessarily ineffective. It may be doing God's terrible work of judgment.
- The disciples and the secrets of the kingdom ("to you...")
  - It was no secret that God would bring his kingdom. All Jews looked for it.
  - What was the secret: the kingdom was already at hand in the ministry of Jesus, even in advance of its apocalyptic manifestation.
- Parable of the Soils, not Sower
  - The focus is not on the sower but on the soils. The sower is only mentioned once.
  - There is nothing in this text about the effectiveness of preaching. It is all about the effectiveness of hearing.
  - The focus is on the various kinds of soil on which the sower sows his seed and the fruit (or lack thereof) produced from each.
  - The text is implicitly challenging you with this question: what kind of soil are you? Another way to ask the same question is: how do you *hear* the word?

### The 4 Soils:

#### 1. The Path (8:12)

- The result: paths are too hard to receive the seed so birds devour it and people trample all over it with their feet.
- Spiritual warfare is real:

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:4-6 ESV)

- Faith is the means for salvation
- Some people hear the message but do not let the truth penetrate their hearts and before they really understand it the devil has taken it away.

#### 2. The Rock (8:13)

- The result: seeds need moisture for growth but this soil has too many rocks thus limiting the moisture in the soil. As a result, when the unrelenting heat of summer comes, plants aren't deep enough and strong enough to withstand.
- They believe for a while and receive the word with joy.
  - They do a little better than the first soil.
  - Intellectual faith is not saving faith.

"So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" (James 2:17-19 ESV)

- Saving faith perseveres
- Some people hear the message but external pressures, trouble, and persecution (like sun beating on a rootless plant) leads them to fall away.

“And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray...they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death...But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Matthew 24:3-13 ESV)

### **3. The Thorns (8:14)**

- The result: seeds need sun and nourishment to grow but thorns grow vigorously and choke and deprive the plant.
- Cares of life (Luke 12:22-34; 21:34-36)
- Riches of Life (Luke 12:15, 21; 16:1-13, esp. 13; see 1 Tim. 6:9-10).
  - Matthew refers to the “deceitfulness of riches.” These thorns are so subtle that you may not even be aware of how it is choking out your spiritual life.
- Pleasures of Life

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11 ESV)

- Their lives are filled with so many good things that there is no room for spiritual fruit.
- The reason you do not hear the Bible as the Word of God is because you are listening to so many other things and giving them authority in your life.
- Some people hear the word by never let it control them. They are controlled by other commitments in life that choke out the word. Worries about worldly things and devotion to wealth choke out spiritual life.

### **4. The Good Soil (8:15)**

- The result: the soil is good and therefore the seed bears fruit
- Only fruitfulness indicates spiritual life (cf. John 15:1-8; see Acts 14:21-22).
- “With patience”: this shows that fruit-bearing in God’s kingdom often requires much work before significant results are seen.
- Did this 4<sup>th</sup> group not have the concerns/trials/testings/temptations of the other 3? What’s the difference?

#### **Application**

- A person must hear the word in order to believe. All four soils heard the word yet they responded differently (see Rom. 10:13-17).
- Evangelism.
  - Only 1 of the 4 soils responds appropriately.
  - “What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” (1 Corinthians 3:5-7 ESV)
- What is hindering you from believing with perseverance?

### **2. True hearing should not be taken for granted (8:16-18).**

#### **Explanation & Observation:**

- Light enables people to see. Light brings secrets to light.
- What is the light?
  - The “word of God” is like light.
  - It shines for people to see life and it also brings to light wicked deeds and casts judgment on those who do them.

- The point: “take care then how you hear...”
  - Luke is saying: “Paying attention to the word and grab hold of it.
- Granted more or taken away
  - This parable shows how God reacts to one’s response to the word.
  - The wise person will take heed and listen to the word because the one who has gets more.
    - The one who has knowledge will understand it better
    - This is not referring to more “riches”
  - The fool will despise the word
    - The one who doesn’t listen will lose even what he has heard (cf. Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:25-28).

**Application:**

- The purpose of this whole section is to appreciate the word and be responsive.
- Increase your gratitude to God.
- Do not be like the seed that came to nothing in the parable.

**3. True hearing identifies you with the family of God (8:19-21).**

**Observation & Explanation:**

- “his mother and his brothers”
  - This refers to Mary and her children with Joseph.
  - This is contra the Catholic tradition that Mary was perpetually a virgin. There is little evidence that this is referring to children of Joseph by an earlier marriage.
- Is Jesus disowning his earthly family?
  - These verses are not a confrontation between Jesus and his family. He actually says nothing directly to them.
  - Jesus shows great concern for his mom while he was on the cross by asking John to take care of Mary (John 19:26-27).
  - So don’t take this as an excuse to disown or ignore your own family.
  - These verses are less a confrontation and more a statement about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and to be completely committed.

**Application:**

- How do you know if you are a part of the family of God?
  - You become his nearest and dearest by hearing the word of God and doing it.
  - We are not all God’s children in a the same sense. We are all created in the image of God and he is the creator of God.
  - But in a salvific sense, only those who hear the word and do it are a part of God’s family.
- How do you become a part of Jesus’ family?
  - Clarify gospel vs. religion: doing the will of God doesn’t make you a child of God. You can’t earn sonship! You have to be adopted. Doing God’s will rather *identifies* you as his mother, sisters, and brothers.

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

- Further, you can't claim to be a child of God and not do what he says. Jesus doesn't leave this option open to you.
- When you become a part of the family of God, God (your heavenly Father) becomes your ultimate authority.
  - Jesus in the Temple: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49; see also Luke 14:26).
  - Our duty to God takes precedence over everything.

Questions for Reflection:

- How sure are you that you are a part of the family of God?
- How is your relationship with your earthly family? Some people don't know who their mom, dad, brothers and sisters are. Do you long to be a part of a family?
- Is God the complete and ultimate authority in your life? Is there a pattern in your life of hearing and doing the word of God? We don't get to pick and choose which parts of the Bible we want to obey. All Scripture is his and we obey him completely.