**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 19** Luke 8:1-18 The Parable of the Sower (Soils)!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture and how does it apply to your life?
2. Read Wiersbe pages 103-107.
   1. What kind of hearing leads to genuine faith?
   2. How is the human heart like soil? What is the proof that a person has a saving faith?
3. Read Luke 8:1-8. A parable about true faith!

**The Parable of the Soils/Hearts (vv.5-10)**

Jesus’ earthly story with a heavenly meaning drew on a rich agricultural image with which his hearers were all familiar—a man with a seed bag tied to his waist, walking his field and rhythmically casting the seed. “Seed” was a proper and powerful symbol of the Word of God springing to life. Within every seed there is almost infinite potential for life, and God’s Word is seed *par excellence* because it can sprout forth in eternal life! The “sower” is, of course, Christ and anyone else who puts forth God’s Word, whether in preaching or personal conversation. The “soil” represents the varying conditions of the human hearts on which   
the seed is tossed.

As the sower casts his seed, some falls on the path, and the birds flutter down and steal it away. He casts it again, and it lands on rocky soil, where it quickly sprouts, only to wilt in the Palestinian sun. The sower throws seed in another direction, and it falls among thorns, where it is choked, and growth is strangled. Other seed is tossed onto good soil, where it marvelously multiplies one hundred times! End of parable.

Then Jesus called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (v. 8). Jesus was the Word incarnate, God’s ultimate communication. His every fiber longed for his hearers to comprehend his spoken words that day.

But sadly, not everyone had ears to hear. Some understood, but many were perplexed. Even some of Jesus’ followers were in the dark. Verse 9 tells us that they began asking him about the parable, and Jesus responded with one of his famous “hard sayings”: “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand’” (v. 10).

What did Jesus’ mysterious pronouncement mean? The sixth chapter of Isaiah sheds some light on this because Jesus’ words allude to it. There we find the record of Isaiah’s great encounter with God in the temple: “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up: and the train of his robe filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:12). The result of this holy confrontation was Isaiah’s call and his acceptance: “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here   
I am! Send me’” (v. 8).

This is then followed by the oddest commission ever given to a prophet (at least it appears that way on the surface) because Isaiah is told to charge the people not to understand and thus to make their hearts hard:

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)

How did Isaiah obey this strange commission? Certainly not by preaching with obscure expressions and complex reasoning. On the contrary, Isaiah’s preaching was plain, systematic, and reasoned. In fact, “the sophisticates of his day scorned him as fit only to conduct a kindergarten.”[[1]](#endnote-1) They disdained him, saying, “To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message? Those who are weaned from the milk, those   
taken from the breast? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon   
line, line upon line, here a little, there a little” (Isaiah 28: 9, 10).

Further light on what Jesus means in Luke is provided by the parallel account of the sower   
in Matthew 13:12, 13, which also references Isaiah 6: “For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” In essence Jesus was saying that the condition of one’s heart determines whether there is any receptivity to the truth. Many people, especially the religious leaders, had heard straightforward teaching from Jesus that they rejected, and thus ultimately the truth would be taken away from them. Those who receive truth and act upon it will receive more. But those who reject truth will ultimately   
lose the little they have. The parables were full of truth, but for truth-rejecting people, they became increasingly inscrutable.

This principle has parallels in other areas of life. Physically, if we fail to exercise a muscle, we will one day lose its use. If we fail to use our intellectual powers, the time will come when we will not be able to summon their full powers. The principle in hearings God’s Word, then is, “Use it or lost it,” or more exactly, “Do it or lose it!”[[2]](#endnote-2)

1. After Jesus had spent time in both Capernaum and Nain, he traveled from town to town preaching the gospel in the Galilean countryside.
2. Who was traveling with Jesus?
3. What were the women doing?
4. What lesson do you learn from this (2 Corinthians 8:1-7)?
5. What four types of soil are mentioned in verses 4-8?
6. When Jesus had finished telling this parable he said, “He who has ears to hear,   
   let him hear.”
7. What did he mean by this?
8. Do you have ears to hear? How do you know? What is the proof that you truly hear the word of God?
9. Read Luke 8:9-10 along with Matthew 13:10-17.
10. From the two texts above, explain what Jesus was trying to explain to the disciples concerning one’s understanding of the reading or hearing of the Word of God (the Bible/Holy Scriptures)?
11. What happens to a person’s heart who hears the gospel of Jesus Christ time and time again, and yet refuses to believe it? (Matthew 14:15)?
12. Read Matthew 13:16-17 again. Explain what Jesus means by these two verses.
13. Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-14. This text is all about the wisdom of God.
14. Explain verse 7: *No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has   
    been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began*.
15. Who knows the mind of God?
16. Read John 14:16-18 along with John 16:13. What is one of the main roles of   
    the Holy Spirit?
17. Read Ephesians 1:13-14. Whose Spirit have all believers received by faith and what is His name? When does this incredible event happen in a person’s life?
18. Read 2 Corinthians 3:15 along with 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.

* Who works to blind unbelievers?
* What does Satan prevent unbelievers from seeing (understanding)?
* What do these two phases mean:

“When Moses (the Bible) is read, a veil covers their hearts”

“Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away”

1. (Personal Questions) Have you turned to the Lord in faith? Can you now say   
   like the blind man in John 9, “I was blind; but now I see?” Will you share when this happened in your life?
2. Read Luke 8:11-15.
3. Knowing that the seed is the Word of God (Scripture) explain what happens to people who have the following types of hearts:
4. Hard hearts:

Life for many is no more than a sports page and a beer, or a fishing pole, or a movie magazine and an hour at the beauty shop, or a spin in the car. There may be no obvious major sin, but there is no interest in God or his Word either. Life is crowded with   
other things.

Into this world to eat and to sleep,

And to know no reason why he was born,

Save to consume the corn,

Devour the cattle, flock, and fish,

And leave behind an empty dish.

Some of the hard-hearted may be more sophisticated. They have drunk freely from a loose set of attitudes and ideas known as modernity. They are not interested in God’s word because they don’t believe objective truth can be known. They worship technology’s brilliance and substitute it for God. They rarely ever pursue the logical end of their presuppositions. They may be hostile, but very often they are simply uninterested. Their hearts are as hard as nails and dulled of all feeling by the busyness of life. As the truth bounces on the hardened surface of their lives, Satan comes with fluttering, chirping interest—some busy excitement perhaps, maybe some gossip—and flies away with life-giving seed.

This ground needs to be broken up. Most often, the plowing that is needed is some pain or stress or trial to soften the hardness of men’s lives to the seed of God’s truth. This is how grace came to many of us. Difficulties made us quit our spirit-dulling busyness, and then the Word of God fell powerfully into the broken ground of our lives. Hard hearts need to be plowed by sorrow and disappointment so God’s Word can take root.[[3]](#endnote-3)

1. Shallow hearts

Affliction, like the sun, brings growth to roots in good soil but withers all shallow profession of faith. Helmut Thielicke, one of the great minds and personalities of evangelical Christianity, aptly comments:

There is nothing more cheering than transformed Christian people and there is nothing more disintegrating than people who have been merely “brushed” by Christianity, people who have been sown with a thousand seeds but in whose lives, there is no depth and no rootage. Therefore, they fall when the first whirlwind comes along. It is the half-Christians who always flop in the face of the first catastrophe that happens, because their dry intellectuality and their superficial emotionalism do not stand the test. So even that which they think they have is taken away from them. This is the wood from which the anti-Christians too are cut. They are almost always former half-Christians. A person who lets Jesus only halfway into his heart is far poorer than a hundred percent worldling.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Certainly, authentic faith involves great emotion. An emotionless faith is crippled and may be bogus. But true faith puts down deep sustaining roots in the mind and the will. Half-Christians have had an emotional response to God’s Word, a temporary greening of the soul…But their faith shriveled when hard times came. There was no real life, and their soul still needs to come to Christ.[[5]](#endnote-5)

1. Infested hearts:

The thorns, Jesus explained, represented “the cares and riches and pleasures of life. This is a divided heart, infested by irreconcilable loyalties. This heart makes gestures toward Christ, but life’s “cares” draw it back, leaving no room for authentic spiritual concern. Life’s “riches and pleasures” lure the soul away from life in Christ. “Keeping up with the Joneses”—buying things we do not need to impress people we do not like with money we do not have—endangers our soul.

This is a lost heart. A heart that is overcome with a love for “riches and pleasures” is not a believing heart. As Jesus explained in the Sermon on the Mount, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Mathew 6:24). Many begin well, and it looks like they are believers, but love for the world and worries over the things and pleasures of this life strangle all vestiges of life from their souls. Those with such a heart need to be honest with themselves for their soul’s sake.[[6]](#endnote-6)

1. Good hearts:

Finally, there is the good soil in which the seed brings forth fruit. Jesus said, “As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience” (v. 15). The see of God’s Word does not bounce off the hard surface of this heart. Neither does it temporarily flourish in the shallow soil of emotion, only to shrivel under adversity. Nor is it divided by its competing desires and thus strangled. Rather, it is a heart that allows God’s Word to take deep root within it. It then produces a harvest of good character: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22, 23). This is followed by a bounty of good works as the heart is remade by Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 2:10).

This great parable gives us insight into what goes on with those who sit under the Word. There is no doubt as to what true hearing is—it is a heart that hears and does God’s Word. To further share Christ’s passion that we understand this, Luke links two brief supporting paragraphs to the parable.[[7]](#endnote-7)

1. Read Luke 8:16-18.
2. See Matthew 5:14-15. Explain what it means to “let your light shine before   
   the world.”
3. Verse 17 states, “For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and   
   nothing concealed that will not be made known or brought out into the light.”

Explain how this verse sheds light on the ‘secrets of the kingdom’ mentioned in Matthew 13:11 and the ‘secret wisdom’ mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:7.

1. Verse 18 states, “Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will   
   be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken   
   from him.”

Explain in your own words what this verse means to you.

1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. What do you learn from this verse? Are you a good ambassador for Jesus Christ? What might you do to become a better ambassador?
2. What is the most life-changing truth you have learned from this lesson? How so?

1. J. A. Motyer quoted in Hughes, 295. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Kent Hughes *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 294-296. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Hughes, 297-298. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Helmut Thielicke quoted in Hughes, [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Hughes, 298-299. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Hughes, 299-300. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Hughes, 300. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)