

The Seed and the Soils

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles this morning, I want you to turn to Luke chapter 8.

Luke chapter 8. It is a joy to be back. I had a wedding that I had already planned and was in Mississippi doing that last weekend.

Missed being here. Missed being in my spot. But I'm thankful for the opportunity to go back. And I did my part. Now they've got to work out the rest of it. But I was able to do that.

Glad to have Dawn here this morning. We realized on this move that this would be a summer of transition. We didn't know all that would be entailed in it.

And everything is glorious except the fact that we're trying to sell and trying to buy. And so just to give you an understanding, yesterday during our picnic together, I was waiting to get a word on whether a property was for sale.

[1 : 10] And also having to make a decision of whether I was going to, we were going to buy a house on a deadline by 3 p.m.

So I was trying to get across to the person who may know about the property and find out about that. At the same time, I had the real estate agent telling me, you're running out of time.

You're running out of time. You know? And here I am greeting people, not only in our church, but throughout our community. It was kind of chaotic, quite honestly. But we paused a moment because I don't think God's the God of chaos.

And we're going to trust him either today or tomorrow or whenever it comes to work those things out. So are you all praying? I just thought I'd remind you and give you a little update in case you ask.

Sometimes when people ask them, I share kind of where we're at. And then somebody else asks, and I share again where we're at. And then somebody else asks. Anyway. I don't know about you, but I love a good story.

[2 : 15] I don't know anybody that don't love a good story. And I realize everybody's not a reader. I do read. I go through seasons of it especially. And I read stories. I listen to stories. When I walk, I listen to stories.

I also watch stories. Now, when I say I watch stories, I'm not talking about soap operas, okay? I guess they're almost gone now. But I used to hear ladies talk about watching their stories.

And if you ever went and visited somebody in their home or in a nursing home in the afternoon, you better be careful because you might interrupt a story.

They always want to be respectful of the preacher. But, man, they sure didn't want to miss out on what was ever happening to Luke and Laura or Bo and Hope or some of them people. Somebody knows who I'm talking about.

I can tell. But anyway, soap operas made daytime television become synonymous with bad television. You know, they really did. And now the craving calls for Netflix and Prime Video and we love our stories.

[3 : 18] But whether it's a secret love of soap operas or the one that reads Amish love stories that fill up too big a part of too many church libraries, everybody loves a good story.

And more than almost any story, I love front porch stories from old wise men who talk about the way it used to be, I guess. I thank God for those lessons along the way.

But I will tell you that the greatest stories are those that are shared by the Lord Jesus. He is the master teacher. And he taught in a variety of ways.

And one of the ways that he taught was to throw in little stories along the way. They're called parables. That term is used 48 times in the New Testament in reference to the stories that Jesus told.

That word parable literally means to be thrown aside or to be placed alongside. And that's exactly what he did. As he shared biblical truths, scriptural truths with folks, he would tell them a story that would meet them right where they were.

[4 : 28] For instance, this morning we're going to look at an agrarian story. It was an agrarian society in which he lived in. There were a lot of farmers that he dealt with. And therefore he related to them just the way they understood it.

I'm thankful that we serve a God that meets us where we are, speaks to us in a way that we can understand. We just have to respond in obedience.

So for most of the several upcoming weeks, when I say most, I know that Father's Day is coming up. And I bless ladies on Mother's Day.

And I beat up men on Father's Day. That's what you're supposed to do, I think. And then I believe that we have an independence in this country that we ought to thank God for and we ought to do something to protect.

And so we'll take some time to talk about what our role is as Christians in the America in which we live. But besides those matters, we'll spend a lot of this summer talking about the parables of Jesus out of the gospel of Luke.

[5 : 35] There are no parables in the gospel of John. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the synoptic gospels. Easy for me to say.

Meaning that they share a lot of the same stories along the way. And nobody retells these stories with more color or detail than Luke.

A physician by trade, he gets to the nitty-gritty details on matters and shares with us. And we begin with a very popular parable, one you're probably familiar with.

But I picked this one in the midst of the other stories because in the midst of this story and in the explanation of the story, Jesus shares why he uses parables.

Why do we even need to study them to start with? Why was he using them? So I want to begin by us seeing the story. And then here in this passage, he gives us the explanation for the story and then tells us why he'd use the stories anyway.

[6 : 38] Pretty unique passage. Luke chapter 8, beginning in verse 4, it says this. And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, a sower went out to sow his seed.

And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock and it grew up and withered away because it had no moisture.

And some fell among thorns and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good seed and grew and yielded a hundredfold.

And as he said these things, he called out, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, it is my prayer today that you will give us the spiritual ears we need to hear what you would have to say to us.

Lord, we know that the soil of our souls are different. Some days, different than others.

[7 : 47] But your seed is the same. So God, as you give us the seed of your word today, help us, Lord, to be receptive, to be obedient, to allow you to speak to our hearts and lives.

I particularly am burdened this morning for one who may be here, who's never acknowledged you as personal Lord and Savior. May today be the day of salvation, O Lord.

In Jesus' name, amen. A good question for us to focus on when we look at this passage is, is the emphasis on the sower, because it's often called the parable of the sower, is the emphasis on the one slinging the seed, or is it on the seed, or is it on the soil?

And it really depends on where you put your focus, because if you want to speak of the faithfulness of the worker, you speak of the sower. And if you want to speak of the power of the product, you mention the seed.

And if you want to speak of the one who receives it, you speak of the soil, because there's different spoils respond in different ways, and some fail to respond to the seed in different ways.

[9 : 02] But Jesus goes on immediately and explains the meaning of this story when he says in verse 11, now, the parable is this, the seed is the word of God, the one along the path are those who've heard, then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

And the one on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy, but they have no root, they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, there are those who hear, but as they go on their way, they're choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

As for those in the good soil, there are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast, in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. Therefore, there are three important parts to this story that we ought to get.

The one is the throwing of the seed, slinging seed. The seed is the word of God. It is the gospel message of Christ, and no one will hear it or have a chance to personally respond to it if it's not thrown out before them.

If the seed of the word of God has changed your life, listen to me, Christian. You have a responsibility. We have a responsibility to throw some seed ourselves.

[10:29] We don't just rely on the preacher to do it on Sunday. We throw some seed ourselves. I don't pick that up from this story, honestly. I pick it up from what Jesus said in so many other places.

I pick it up in what the Apostle Paul said often. I pick it up in what John taught us. I pick it up in what Peter said, and what each one of them did with such a passion.

They gave their lives for the message that changed their lives. And so if your life has been changed by the gospel, you gave your life to Christ.

It's no longer yours. Sow seed with it. Share with somebody what God has done in your life.

There's the throwing of the seed. There's also the potential of the seed. A farmer does not know how successful the seed will be when he throws it on the ground. He does not know. There are predictors along the way, but farmers tell me that you never know what will happen from the time the seed is thrown to the harvest time.

[11:36] You pray for the best. For the last 15 years, I pastored a church that was surrounded by soybean fields and sweet potato fields. Vardaman, Mississippi, eight miles from the sweet potato capital of the world.

Self-diagnosed. But anyway, that's what they did. And they were taxed when I left because fertilizer is high and it ain't raining enough and all those things.

I was, when I was looking at this passage of scripture one time, I text one of my farmers. I said, is there any way you know? You know. He said, well, we get hints.

But there's no way we can know the success of the product unless we put it in the ground and trust God to see what happens.

You pray for the best. And even with their concerns, they still throw in seed. When circumstances run them late, they start late.

[12:38] They stay up late, but they still plant the seed. And if the seed is the gospel here, which it is, and there will be no gospel spread unless it is thrown out by those who God has not only commissioned but empowered to do that, then we need to get busy throwing it out.

W.A. Criswell pastored First Baptist Dallas for 50 years. He's a legendary pastor. And he's known to have preached through the whole Bible, verse by verse, during those 50 years when he would get up and preach.

But one Sunday he stood up and he merely read over the proposed budget. Now, I will tell you that the proposed budget of First Baptist Dallas, there's nothing merely about it, okay?

But he stood up and read over the proposed budget. He talked about the ministry ministry that came through each line item and how the money that went into that line item would be used for ministry.

He talked about the missions that were supported through that ministry. He talked about the day-to-day responsibilities and obligations in the facility itself. He talked about the importance of faithful tithing, faithful giving.

[14:00] And when he came to the end, he gave the invitation. And a dozen people came down the aisle and got saved.

How? Why? It had little to do to nothing to do with what he said that Sunday morning. The people in the pew had scattered seed all week long.

One people to the Lord, brought them to church with them and let them come down and be recognized publicly for the decision they made privately in their heart and life.

Don't ever be mistaken, folks. What happens on Sunday during worship has as much, if not more, to do with what happened in our lives during the week than it does what happens in this very hour. We influence this hour by how we respond to it throughout the week. However, when we've grown in the Lord, when we've scattered some seed of the gospel, when we've invited folks to be here, when we've been prayed up before we come and we ask God to work and we move in our midst, God inhabits the praise of his people.

[15:13] He honors a people that is hungry and pursuant. And it's not that we deserve it. It's not that somehow we can earn it. It's not that somehow he's required to do something in response to what we do.

simply God honors it. He honors people who are willing to stand boldly and proclaim his message. You say, well, preacher, you know, I don't know that's something y'all talk about. I think about a college football game. Y'all probably know something about that.

Put those outlandish stickers on your car. You got stuff hanging out the trunk headed down the highway. The prep for tailgate is quite amazing, quite honestly.

The work that goes into that. We dress like everybody else. Go to those ball games and everybody matches, you know. You go to church and somebody has the same outfit on you, do it, kills you.

[16:15] But you go to a ball game, everybody's got the same outfit on you. You love it, you know. It just fires you up that much more, you know. Can you imagine if God's people got that fired up about worshiping the Lord Jesus?

I mean, I know that's a preacher comment. I know it is. But I mean, think about that. Think about how you anticipate. You anticipate. You anticipate and look forward to watching what's going to happen in that ball game.

Watching your team succeed and get excited about that and do all kinds of that. The reality is, can you imagine if God's people got that fired up about worshiping the Lord Jesus? Brian, I'll tell you, they'd sing different, wouldn't they?

You know? If you ever get a glimpse of the power of the seed of the gospel, not only will it change your lives, but God's going to allow you to see lives changed right before you as you share it faithfully.

And that brings you not only to the potential seed, but the response to the seed. Because the soil represents the different stages of people's mind, the different stages of people's heart, and the heart of those that hear it and how they respond to it.

[17:30] There are those that hear it with a closed mind. That's that seed that falls along the path and are trampled or eaten by birds. That hard soil represents those who hear God's word and they choose not to understand it.

They choose not to respond to it. Some people that you share with, you'll do it with closed ears. They've attended church with a closed mind.

They are determined not to do anything no matter what God says for them to do before they ever have a conversation, before they ever enter into a church building.

Their minds are closed to any suggestion that they don't want to follow. And when our minds are closed to whatever, if you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ or if you are a Christian and know beyond a shadow of it, I want you to hear me this morning.

if your mind is closed to any suggestion that God would have for you today, that anything God would tell you today, Satan can easily snatch a truth and allow you to miss that truth because you had a closed mind coming in.

[18:49] And there are those with a cloudy mind. Some seeds of the gospel fall on rocky soil and they may shoot up quick, but they fade just as fast.

Maybe they get caught up in the emotion of it and don't really mean it or maybe tragedy strikes their life. The rug is ripped out from under them or maybe sin catches up with them and they get a thrill and a chill from personal change to come but when the worship hour is over, so is their religious experience.

A lot of folks that walk down the aisle in the Baptist church get baptized but they never get saved. And that's why you'll notice that sometimes you might see somebody come down the aisle, you might see somebody baptized, you may never see them again.

There's probably people on the roll of the church that have hardly darkened the doors of the church since they ever joined the church. Why is that?

Well, I'll tell you why some, I can't tell you particularly each individual but I can tell you this, there's some folks on a membership in a local Baptist church that are lost without Christ. They never truly surrendered their life to the Lord.

[20 : 06] They're confused about the circumstances, clouded by the world in which around them and as soon as Monday comes, you know, the trial, that they fall apart and fall away because they don't know Christ or who they could be in Him.

real salvation does not roll off you like a duck's back. It is not in one ear and out the other. Some miss it due to a cloudy mind. Then there's others who miss it because of a cluttered mind.

They don't follow the Lord in their life because they've got a cluttered mind. The world's full of distractions and all those distractions can choke out the Word of God. The world promises a lot but provides nothing that really lasts and people place too much value on stuff.

stuff that will not last and it takes over their lives. Jesus said you cannot serve both God and money and it's true about the things you spend money on as well and when the mind is cluttered the thorns of the soil will snuff the seed of His promises.

And then sometimes the seed falls on those with a committed mind. That soil is fruitful because it receives the seed and lets the message grow and take root in their lives.

[21 : 31] They're the human blessings of the church quite honestly. They're the ones that encourage other people. They're the ones that witness for the Lord Jesus. They're the ones that do the work of the church. They are faithful to gather for worship.

They are faithful to grow in the Lord. They are faithful to share as they go. They are faithful to give as God gives them opportunity. These are the ones that make the church strong.

These are the ones that grow this church. These are the ones that change the world for the Lord Jesus Christ. Their mind is committed. God, whatever your seed you want to place in my life today, I'm ready to receive it.

I'm ready to respond to what you would have me to do. Oh, how I thank God for the committed minds and hearts and lives in the church of Jesus Christ. It's kind of amazing to me, quite honestly, to have lived in this area and then been gone 15 years and come back and there's a vague acquaintance.

Some of us knew each other. There's a vague acquaintance with some others. Some I don't know. Some of you have come within the last 15 years or we vaguely saw or you avoided me when I was here before.

[22 : 38] Whatever, you know. What's amazing to me to see how God is working and moving in the hearts and lives of folks that I'm just getting acquainted with and knowing and watching that that same spirit of God stirred me to be a part of this is the same spirit of God that's stirring in the hearts of those who are committed.

Their minds are set. We're going to do what God wants us to do. I don't know about you but that's exciting for me. To know that I don't understand everything about God's plan and I got some questions along the way that me and him take up every morning but to know that before the foundations of the earth God knew there'd be a divine appointment of this time in our lives where people would be joined together and be committed to do a work of the Lord and allow him to do whatever he wants to do in our midst and to get on that page together and to watch how he's prepared that before I ever got here and how he prepared my heart for it before that's exciting to me because that's how he plants seeds and the soil takes it in receives it commits to it I'm thankful for committed lives and hearts and minds in the church of Jesus Christ.

now in the midst of this story and this explanation there's an excursion Jesus tells us in the midst of this story why he uses parables and what their purpose is and it's not easy to understand but we need to because he says in verse 9 and 10 he says and when his disciples asked him what this parable meant he said to you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God but for others they are in the parable so that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand now that last phrase there in verse 10 is from Isaiah when the prophet is led by God in that awesome worship time in Isaiah chapter 6 and the message is this that the parables as did the prophetic word in Isaiah serves two capacities one is they encourage the believer he mentions here the secrets of the kingdom the secret of the kingdom is that as much as I share with you what Jesus means to me and how he's changed my life you'll never know what I'm talking about until you experience it if you jump out of planes where you're nuts number one but if you jump out of planes you can try to explain to me what that's like and I am not going to get it okay

I mean the only way you can really know that is to strap a backpack on your back and jump out of a perfectly good plane and hope everything works out on the way down that's either faith or something else but whatever there's no way I can experience that unless I do it and the reality is living for the Lord Jesus and surrendering your life to him and giving your life to Christ is the greatest decision that you'll ever make but you'll never realize that until you truly do it you'll never be able to grasp it unless you do it and the mystery of how God works and moves in lives is hard to explain but it's pretty wonderful to experience and those are the secrets are the mysteries that word the apostle Paul uses the word mystery a lot when he talks about the mystery of the gospel and literally in that language not in our language but in that language it means the same thing as a secret in other words there are mysteries or secrets the gospel there are matters of our relationship with the Lord that you'll never get until you surrender your life to follow him and trust him the mystery of how God works and moves in our lives it's hard to explain but it's pretty wonderful to experience and those are the secrets of the mysteries we're not keeping them from you if you don't know the Lord you're missing them because you don't have

Jesus and these stories just back all those truths up they help us better understand it but then he also says here that these stories are also they're missed by the stubborn it's a hard truth but it's real some people ain't gonna get it you can scatter all the seed you want to they're not gonna get it and a lack of belief can be stubborn it can be deliberate and at times it can be unchanging when people hear the word of God they're accountable to it and when they miss it they're not and God in his mercy let some not even get the parable so that their hearts would not grow more stubborn through their rejection because to whom much is given much is required if you don't understand these stories you're not responsible for them their curiosity may be aroused but they may follow him and want to know more but they will not fully grasp what he's saying through these stories and now that is tough to understand but that's what Christ is saying he's saying everybody's not gonna get it so what does that mean for us because I'll tell you there's a tendency there's a tendency not among us but among other people that because some people aren't gonna get it and because it's not gonna be welcomed by everybody let's just not bother sharing it a whole lot

[28 : 33] I mean we want the church to stand strong and testify and be known for that but on a personal basis if I'm gonna risk a friendship with somebody by approaching their spirituality I just soon just just what just what how important is your friendship how much does that matter and how good a friend are you let me tell you something if I ever do get home in Pickens and you ride by and there's flames coming out of the windows at two o'clock in the morning please don't be bothered by waking me up you know just go ahead and knock on the door just go ahead and let me know please when people's lives are in the balance sometimes we have to step out and trust the God that gave us the seed is the same God that has put me in this spot to share this truth with this person and I've got to trust him for the results you know the cool thing about it is is I'm not responsible for the results

I'm responsible for the faithfulness of sharing the testimony of scattering the seed of throwing it out I can't control the soil man I can sure throw some seed the truth of the matter is they'll be missed by the stubborn so what does all this mean for us how does this play out what does it really mean get this and we'll close food trucks waiting scatter some seed Christians share your faith the world's coming to an end and we need to get up off our worshipful premises and get out and share the love of Christ with a world that desperately needs Christ don't you think this world needs Christ I mean is that not obvious that it's dark man a little light will change the whole room really will you got to trust the message you got to trust the

God of the message scatter some seed and then trust the Lord of the harvest trust him the seed will bring forth fruit you cannot read the soil do you hear me you can't read the soil God honors the process share your faith and watch God move throw some seed on some hard ground and see what happens may not be as hard as you think it is and third don't be stubborn don't be stubborn if you don't know the Lord Jesus today don't be stubborn listen to what he's saying to you listen to how the Holy Spirit speaks to your life and you come to him today don't let your crusty heart grow harder from hearing the gospel and not responding because that's exactly what happens that's what he told us that happened come to

Jesus I am thankful that any time I stand up here and share with you that I can say with confidence that today is the day of salvation same God scattered seed told stories changed people's lives almost 2,000 years ago the other week I said over 2,000 years ago that was that's not true but almost 2,000 years ago the same God did that the same God that will use you today and allow you

to impact lives greater than your ability beyond your perspective beyond what you can imagine I don't know about you but I don't want to be a part of something that we can come up with I want to be a part of something that God gets in the middle of of people who just scatter seed and trusted for the results may God touch our heart may we respond with obedience and may he honor our efforts with every head bowed and every eye closed my burden is always that there's a possibility somebody may be in this place who's never given their heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ maybe everybody around you thinks you have but the reality is in your heart you never have I encourage you to come right now come and let God change your life we'd love to guide you in that process I promise you we got time I promise you we'll take the time maybe you're here this morning and you know you're a Christian but the reality is man your seeds in your pocket you're scattering anything possibly not even being much of a blessing to folks around you they wouldn't want to listen to you anyway maybe today's the day of renewal Lord will you change me will you change my heart will you give me opportunity God as you give me opportunity will you give me the boldness and the words to walk through those doors of opportunity God I'm thankful that I'm not responsible for what happens without I'm just responsible for what I do with it so help me to be faithful maybe God's drawing you to be a part of Pickens

[34 : 41] First what a blessing that would be for you to join us in the journey you ain't perfect neither are we we're gonna do it together until Jesus comes and so I encourage you to just simply obey God and follow his lead maybe you're made a private decision for God but you've never made it public baptism the lack of baptism in a believer's life is a hindrance in their walk with God and it's also a powerful testimony that changes other people's lives if you've never been baptized as a believer then you come let's work that out we'll plan for that together Lord Jesus I don't know what you're speaking to our hearts and lives but I know you're speaking mine and so God I ask this morning Father that you will work and move in our midst that we'll just simply obey you and trust you with the results dear God lead us right now I pray in Jesus precious name amen