

Series: The Gospel of Luke – Jesus: the God man
Preached @ ECCC by Grant Peers on 30th October, 2011

Scripture: Luke 8:4-18

INTRO

Read [Luke 8:4-15](#)

The consolation, of course, is that the people closest to Jesus didn't get the meaning the first time the story came past and so Jesus explains it to them. I'm always happy when the people who actually got to see, touch, and feel Jesus are regular sinners like me!

FOUR SOILS (4-15)

Jesus describes four kinds of soil. The seed is the Word of God and it is sown upon the soil of the heart of man. And there are four different responses

1. HARD HEART (READ 8:5B, 12)

This path is not fallow ground for the seed, it has not been ploughed, but some seed still falls on it. Two things happen – people trample it, birds fly down and gobble it up. Jesus says that is like the sway that Satan comes and steals away the word so that it can't have its desired effect.

And Jesus will say further on, 'The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand' (8:10). Now those are some difficult words, but you have to see two things: on the one hand it is Satan that steals the Word away; however every time the Word of God is preached it either has a hardening or a softening effect on the human heart – it will soften some, but others will be hardened! And you and I both know those people (Jesus is just telling us how it works) – they mock, they belittle, they trample on the truth. And that is just sad! If you know these people pray for them.

Sometimes God will aggressively break up this hard soil with difficult circumstances in a person's life. And that is his grace to them. This is what we mean when we say 'salvation is the gift of God; salvation is God's work; we respond with faith'. No one chooses to respond to God before He opens the soil of their hearts. [If you want to know how this works – C4A we're talking "free will versus forced will"]

Here is the point: watch and pray. Watch for what God may be doing; pray for him to open eyes and ears!

2. SHALLOW HEART (READ 8:6, 13)

Again this is a difficult one because this has been the experience of so many people, and we have watched it happen in our church. People make a superficial response to Jesus - they spring up and

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there appears to be life, they put up their hand at the meeting, they walked to the front, repeated a parrot-fashion prayer.

Salvation may be accompanied by emotion, but it is never an emotional response. I'm never looking for a snap response to the gospel. I want people to think carefully and make an informed response. *I not only saw this happen – I did that at youth group. And man, were we so stoked! So-and-so got saved; he prayed the sinners' prayer. But two weeks or two months later there is no change, or they have disappeared.*

Is this a Christian? A very difficult question to answer! I think people like this respond to the idea of salvation – who doesn't want to be saved from their sin – but they do not count the cost. Jesus is NOT a get-out-of-jail free card. Salvation is not fire insurance. The gospel is: I was made to worship, and instead of worshiping God (1st commandment) I have worshiped other things, I have made an idol out of other things, I have placed my hope on something else – money, career, relationship, status, etc. But Jesus shows me who God truly is, that he loves me (at the cross) and that he is worthy of dedicating my whole life to. So salvation is about reorienting and building my life around God – getting roots that grow deep into him.

When we we're build our holiday home at the mouth of the Breede River I remember cutting down and digging out these huge Rooikraans trees that were in the way. We had to dig deep down, chop and saw off as many roots as we could and then chain it to a huge Landie. Those Rooikraans trees don't fall over. That's what a true response to the gospel grows into.

There can also be a mirror of this in Christians – a shallow response to the Word that is preached or read each week in church or at home. It's the kind of response that goes: 'man I wish so-and-so was here to listen to this – they are SO blind to this in their lives... I really hope my wife is listening because this message is SO for her, this is such good stuff for her!' If the message is always for someone else...

3. INFESTED HEART (READ 8:7, 14)

I'd like to out my neck out there are and say that I think this could be a Christian – but it is **not** the kind of Christians that you want to be – this is the guy whose heels are going to be licked by the flames of hells as he gets into heaven (1 Cor. 3:15).

I think the truth is that there are at least shadows of this kind of response in all of us – we all struggle with the worries and riches and pleasure at times! But the difference between this

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kind of soil and the fruitful life of the forth soil is the condition of the heart. This kind of Christian does not automatically and willingly respond to the Word.

The third person either says 'no' either because it is too difficult – it is going to require too much sacrifice and change. Or they say 'no' because they don't want to. They submit the Word of God to their own evaluation and their own wisdom – they place their own opinion above the Word and only submit to it when it makes sense to them.

Basically they trade intimacy with God for stupid things like money, sex, power, fear, control. They act as if God is the enemy of please, joy, and peace. For example:

- Choosing you job over God is a bad trade, "No, my job and more money will make me happy; give a R100 and watch me smile". Really...
- Choosing the momentary pleasure that pornography offers is better than the intimacy of sex within marriage. Really... Pornography is a good trade for intimacy with Christ.
- Choosing to nurse a grudge against someone is better than the release and freedom that there is in forgiveness. Really...

When you choose these things you just chokes you out of the deep and passionate and fulfilling life that God has promised. You say, 'I'll do it my way' and God says 'fruitless'. Why would you not want to sovereign, good, gracious and powerful God of the universe to tell how best to live your life?

4. GOOD HEART (READ 8:8, 15)

When the Word lands in this kind of heart it finds a heart that is good and honest and upright. And I love what it say: they retain it (or hold fast to it) and by persevering in applying it (in other words, it is not just natural: Jesus said forgive – no problem; Jesus said don't envy – who wants a Ford Mustang when they can have a Ford Capri!

The honest upright heart doesn't start playing games with God – justifying why this does not apply at this specific time in your life to this specific situation, for this specific moment in time. Isn't it amazing what your heart can do to twist, manipulate, and hide from the scriptures! No, an honest heart just says, 'Yes Lord I have been sinning in that area, I have been disobedient, I repent'. And if you need help with accountability and counsel then ask!

We need to have hearts like this: do you really want to be the guy or gal that is struggling with that same dark thing in 10 or 20 years time. Will you deal with it then? Jesus is like: that is

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not why I died on the cross! There is the blessing of much greater intimacy and fullness and joy in your relationship with God!

Here's the point: if God touches your heart now, you hold fast to that and preserve, dealing with it NOW! Not: I'll get to that next time!

INTIMACY (16-18)

Now here comes the difficult part of the text: read [Luke 8:16-17](#)

Jesus switches to the picture of light and a lamp stand. Immediately you read this you want to import the meaning of Matthew 5:14-16. But it does not make sense that Jesus starts to talk about the light of the gospel shining from our lives as a witness. It makes far more sense that this light is the seed; it is the Word; it is the revelation from God; it is the teachings of Jesus.

So Jesus is saying: My teaching is light and it reveals the way we should live and the dark ways we should avoid. In fact it is going to bring light to everything – even the things we would prefer to stay hidden in the dark! So you can't escape the truth – it will find you out!

And then he concludes: Read Luke 6:18. What does that mean? Those who follow and respond to the light, those who hold fast to the Word, who are honest, reap a harvest in their lives: fruit will be added to their lives; intimacy will be added; peace will be added to them; joy will be added to them. Those who have this heart will have more and more and more. But those think they possess real life, even that is a temporary haze will evaporate!

Like the book of Matthew says:

[Matthew 7:21-23](#) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord...!' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Who would have thought that such great things were at stake in this building week in and week out? People are hearing the Word of God preached again and again – but there is a superficial, emotional response; a mental agreement that changes nothing in the lifestyle; a fobbing off of the command onto someone else's plate. This is terribly weighty – be careful how you hear!

APPLICATION

Have you been on that ten or twenty year track and you really need to deal this morning? Do you have those areas in your life? Is the intimacy of your Christian life just been choked by worry riches and other pleasures? Do you understand what it would mean for you to NOT respond this morning? Be careful how you hear!