



## The Powerful Purpose of Parables

Luke 8:4-10

June 10, 2018

Let's take our Bibles in hand and turn over to Luke 8. Luke 8. As I've said, we're going to be looking at the first part here of the Parable of the Sower, Luke 8:4 through 10. And then we're going to get to the rest of that parable, the explanation of the parable that Jesus gives, we'll get to that next week.

As you heard when we read in Scripture reading just a moment ago, the Parable of the Sower is about one's response to the word of God. Jesus tells us plainly in verse 11 that "the seed that the sower sowed is the word of God," the word of God. He pictured then the receptivity to the word of God in the way that the four different soils received the sower's seed. It's a very simple story, very easy to understand, doesn't take a lot of extra exegetical skill to understand the story itself.

But in the simplicity of the story do not miss the incredible profundity of the lesson that Jesus is teaching. It is vital for us to understand how different people receive God's word and then what explains those different responses that we see. Have you ever stopped? Just in your own heart, in your own mind, in your prayer, prayer life, have you ever stopped to wonder? Why we as Christians find Christ so precious? Why we taste and see that God salvation is so sweet.

Why it is that we find forgiveness of our sins to be such an incredible relief, such a burden removed from us? Why we find that a clear conscience before God is more precious to us than any possession you could offer us? Why is it that for us, that the question about how a guilty Sinner can be reconciled to a holy God is the single most important question in the world. Bar none. Why is that?

By stark contrast, why is it that we are in such contrast to everybody else in the world that we meet? Why do others seem so indifferent to those matters, as if they're untroubled? Why are others frankly bored by spiritual matters? Spiritual

conversation. Why, why do they get irritated with us when we want to keep on having that conversation? Or worse, why are they even hostile, offended at the gospel? Why do people come into a church like ours and roll their eyes, look at their watches, yawn, scratch their head, look around wonder when is this going to end?

That's the normal response. If you look, if you call what this world is as normal, that is the normal response to everything we're doing here. Why do so many reject the word of God outright? Why do some seem really interested at first, but then very quickly fall away? Why do some seem to go along well for a time but then they drift in and out of Christianity, in and out of the church, only to eventually depart permanently.

Well, those are the questions that are answered by one of Jesus' most important parables, the Parable of the Sower. If you're one of those Christians who's actively involved in evangelism, you have a heart for and you are praying for lost people in your life by name, friends, coworkers, relatives, even



strangers you meet that you don't know their name, you're praying for them too.

Well then, this parable you understand is part of Evangelism 101 because what we learn in this text is really the gateway into all the parables that Jesus told. Teaches us how to discern between false and true conversion. And that's why Jesus told this parable, and that's why he explained it then to his disciples. In a climate of growing hostility, Jesus was getting ready to send his disciples out to complete his kingdom proclamation to the towns and cities of Galilee.

And his disciples needed to discern the difference between the true and the false, and not to become overly excited by any external response. External responses are deceptive. Man looks on only the outward appearance. It's God who sees the heart, but we're stuck with what we see on the outside. We need to understand that here in our church as well, beloved, because we're continuing the work of the apostles that Jesus sent them out to do, to evangelize, to make disciples.

So the Parable of the Sower, it's no accident that it's recorded in all three of the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And it is one of the earliest of Jesus' parables, if not the earliest expansive parable. It is also rightly considered to be the chief of all his parables, since this is the only parable where Jesus provides the reason for speaking in parables. And that's what we're gonna learn today. Why did Jesus teach in parables? As we learn about the powerful, powerful purpose of Jesus' parables, you beloved, are going to grow strong in discernment. Discernment the, the ability to see between this and that to understand the difference between light and darkness, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, you're going to be able to discern.

Discernment will not only instruct you in your gospel ministry to others. That is, it's gonna for you set right expectations. It's gonna help you avoid discouragement. It's gonna help you to trust in God's hidden work by his spirit in the heart, in the life of somebody you don't know because you can only see the surface and you're going to trust God to work.

But discernment also is gonna provide you with a profound sense of gratitude and encouragement because you're gonna know that by God's grace he has blessed you with ears to hear, with eyes, to see, and with a heart to understand. And there are not many who have it.

Let's get into our outline for this morning. Point one in your outline, it should be printed in your bulletin. But point one is about the gathering crowds. The gathering crowds who had the eyes to see something spectacular. They had eyes to see something spectacular, and you say, "Doesn't everybody?" Yes, that's the point, everybody does. Luke sets the scene here with Jesus' growing popularity as Jesus has been passing through the towns, towns and the villages of Galilee, he came to them not only teaching, but also healing, casting out demons, performing mighty, mighty works.

The crowd could barely believe what their eyes were seeing. Look at verse 4 again. It says there Luke 8:4, "When a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him." Stop there. We wanna remember what that Jesus had been

traveling around through the hamlets, and villages, and towns, and cities of Galilee for quite some time. He's been preaching, he's been healing, verse 1 reminds us of that, there in Luke 8 that Jesus went through the cities and the villages proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And when he proclaimed he proclaimed with power, power that made a difference, it made a physical difference. But he wanted the physical lessons that they saw and learn, the spectacular power that he was displaying to point them to his deep power to get to the deep issues of sin and righteousness in coming judgment.

So the twelve there they accompanied Jesus along with female disciples as we learned in verses 2 to 3. But this itinerant ministry, as he went along, it seemed to be emptying the other towns and villages of Galilee. As people said, You know, what? I don't care what I got to do today I'm going there. I'm going to follow that guy. People started to leave home to go where Jesus was.

And according to the parallel accounts in Matthew 13 and Mark 4, Jesus, it looks like, he appeared to, to have returned

to Capernaum, which is kind of his home base where they kind of set up their evangelizing kingdom-of-God-preaching headquarters. But as they get back there, there's no rest to be found, there's no time for recuperation, because the crowds they're on their heels; they're following close behind. And no, no sooner had Jesus and, and his entourage arrived in Capernaum, not only did a large entourage arrive with him, who'd been traveling with him, the 12 apostles, the female disciples, presumably a number of male disciples, as well.

But there was also a great crowd gathering around him, too. This huge multitude is gathering and Luke pictures this as a crowd. It keeps getting bigger, the ranks are swelling, the people are thronging as people not only have followed him but just keep arriving day by day from town after town after town. And in the parallel accounts over in Matthew and in Mark tells us that the crowd becomes so large that it was presenting a challenge to the effectiveness of Jesus Ministry. His ministry is being hammered by the size of the crowds.



He's no longer able to ministry effectively by standing among them and preaching. Instead, he had to step into a boat and "put out into the water," according to Matthew and Mark, not just to avoid being crushed by the swarm of bodies, but also to minister to them effectively; he needed to find a way to make sure his teaching could be heard. Because it wasn't just his miracles, it was his teaching that had to be heard because they could live with a healthy body, demons cast out, and everything else, but if they die and go to hell, what's the point? It's the teaching they need to hear.

So as Matthew and Mark tell us, Jesus, he sat by the Sea of Galilee to teach the crowds, but the number of people became so large he had to get into a boat while the rest of the crowd stood on the beach. He spoke to them from the water, seated in the boat, taking the position of a teaching Rabbi. And when as he spoke to them from the water, there was kind of a created natural amphitheater effect as his words traveled across the water. Maybe even propelled by the wind and up onto the shore as the people were staggered up the hillside and everybody could hear.

Not only was the crowd size creating a practical logistical challenge for him and his teaching, something more important was at stake. The popular excitement about Jesus presented a spiritual challenge as well. The multitudes of people signaled something of a crisis in Jesus' mind. And it's important to understand this, that the large crowd did not encourage him. It didn't excite him in the slightest. If our Lord's not encouraged by big crowds beloved, neither should we be. Many are called but few are chosen.

When Jesus here is concerned that his few disciples, a relatively small group in comparison with the throng of people surrounding him and following them, he's concerned that his disciples, his twelve, the men, the women, that are following after him. He's concerned that they're going to be come to some very wrong conclusions about the path of discipleship ahead of them. That it's going to be all popularity and happiness.

And looking at the crowds around them, Jesus knew that in a relatively short period of time these same people would turn on him. They'd turn on him. They would stop coming to him to call

out for his mercy, and instead they would start rejecting him and cry out for his blood. Not only that, but they'd say, "His blood be on us and our children." These people, these crowds, he knew these people only had eyes to see something spectacular, but nothing truly spiritual, no eyes to see something of eternal significance. One day soon they would eagerly trade the spectacle of Jesus' Ministry for the spectacle of Jesus' crucifixion.

So the mixed nature of the massive crowds was really a confusion. That's the spiritual challenge that Jesus saw in front of him. It was a confusion about the clear message of the gospel. It was a confusion about the nature of the kingdom. It was a confusion about the true citizens of the kingdom. In contrast to all the false pretenders.

Jesus knew some sifting was required. He needed to cull the crowd a bit. As Frederic Godet says it, he says, "If on the one hand it's necessary to draw the spiritual into closer attachment. On the other hand, it is of importance to keep the carnal at a distance." That's what's happening in our text.

Jesus is not fooled here by the size of the crowd. He's not fooled by its apparent outward external interest in him and his ministry. He's not deceived one bit into thinking popularity represents legitimate, sincere seeking.

And so Luke 8:4, Jesus here makes a strategic decision. Look at Luke 8:4, "When a great crowd was gathering and a people from town after town came to him. He said in a parable," or through a parable. Yes, they had eyes to see the spectacular. They were curious, they were interested in seeing more miracles. They're eager to see, receive more healings, nothing special about that.

But Jesus here expose the heart by teaching them in parables by speaking spiritual truths to them, yes, but veiled in a cloak of familiarity. Because, point two, they did have ears to hear something familiar. They had ears to hear something familiar, and so he gave them something familiar. Look at verses 5 to 8. "This is what he said, '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 as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundred fold.'

"As he said these things he called out, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'" On the surface, that sounds pretty straightforward and quite simple. But it is a parable as Luke has told us it's a parable. The word parable is an English transliteration of the Greek word *parabole* which comes from the verb *parabalo*. *Parabalo*, the verb means, to cast alongside of and that's what a parable is. It casts a truth alongside something that is familiar.

It's interesting because the parable that he tells us about, a sower that's casting, casting, casting and that's what he's doing here. He's casting a truth alongside something familiar. Parables by design are simple, but the closer you look, the more carefully you study them, you come to see that Jesus' parables are something profoundly brilliant. They are evidence of a divine mind behind them. They're memorable, but

understanding the meaning that they teach is something that's granted only by the Holy Spirit. That's why you can see, hear so many unbelievers, so many people in the world quoting Jesus' parables, they got no clue what it means.

That's why Jesus spoke to the truth to the spiritually mixed crowd. He was hiding the truth from the casual and the lazy listener, but he's provoking the interest of the spiritually enlightened. Both things are going on, hiding from the unbeliever, revealing to the believer. I like how the commentator, James Edwards, explained parables. He said this, quote, "Parables," are liked, "are like stained glass windows in a cathedral. Dull and lifeless from the outside, but brilliant and radiant from within." End Quote.

That's exactly right. That's a great word picture. The difference in perceiving the beauty and meaning of a stained glass window is, when you look at the window from the inside, when it's illuminated by the outside sunlight. When you look at it from the outside, with no illumination, you can't tell what it is. You do not, you're not really overawed at that stained

glass window, and the difference is all in where you're standing, whether you're on the inside or on the outside.

Same thing with parables to those standing inside of God's favor, looking at the parables with light shining through, Jesus parables are brilliant and radiant. But for those who are on the outside without the light, Jesus' parables just appeared dull and lifeless. Nice sayings, good proverbial quotes. Great morals for our kids. But they're standing on the outside, looking in, and they really see nothing profoundly important.

That's exactly how most of the crowd heard Jesus' Parable of the Sower on this occasion. Let me tell you what most of them heard on that day. Apart from any spiritual insight, absent any spiritual sense, they heard Jesus speaking about something to them that was very familiar with the only ears that they had, physical ears, natural perception, nothing but natural born insight. Jesus here in the parable is talking about the fate of seed. Different seeds that fell into, well, it's all the same seed, but it's different seeds that are sown into four different kinds of soil.

And in fact, he uses, if you'll notice there in the text, he uses prepositions to highlight the different kinds of the soils. There's in verse 5, "the seed that fell along the path." And then in verse 6, "the seed that fell on or upon the rock." That's a preposition. In verse 7, "the seed that fell among the thorns," and then finally in verse 8, "the seed that fell into the soil, penetration into good soil." There's, along, and upon, and among, and into, all those prepositions.

You say, Why are you so thrilled with prepositions? Yes, I am a grammar geek. That's true, but you also care about prepositions. It makes a very big difference whether you are on the train or under the train, right? You need to pay attention to prepositions when you see them in Scripture, cause they signal something important.

Most of the people listening, as I said, missed a deeper meaning. But they did hear this: "A sower went out to sow his seed." It's actually likely that if they looked beyond Jesus out where he was sitting in the boat and looked onto the shore or



looked around them that they would have seen men walking through the fields, sowing seed, casting seeds around. Broadcast sowing so that you get the most spread with the most seed, sowing fields.

So Jesus here continued, "The sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path. It was trampled underfoot. The birds of the air devoured it." Not hard to figure that out, the path, that refers to pathways that bordered the farmers' fields kind of like sidewalks surrounding the crops. Hard packed, baked by the sun. The seed that fell along the pathway by the sower was not intended by the sower for the pathway. He didn't intend to get it there, it just happens. That pathway is hard packed by all that foot traffic that pounds along baked by the sun. The continual watering, kind of, would bring water to the soil. That hard packed soil, and then it would dry up and the sun would bake it. Just turn it into veritable cement.

So while sowing the, the field using this broadcast method of casting seed, some of the seed was inadvertently going to

fall along that pathway. Passersby, they could watch people walking by trampling on the seed beneath their feet, trampling it, destroying it. It's not going to be effective. Birds of the air swooping down onto that pathway and ingesting that seed, eating it and ingesting it.

No seed that falls along any of those pathways is going to bear any fruit, just counted by the sower by the farmer as a net loss. It's a calculated loss when sowing seed, but it's relatively small, acceptable. They move on. They don't even think about it. That's the sidewalk seed.

Look at the second seed verse 6, "the shallow seed." "Some fell on the rock. As it grew up, it withered away because it had no moisture." Now no farmer, sure no farmer in here, is going to allow rocks to remain in his field. He's done the hard work of plowing and he's turned up the soil exposed all the loose rocks and he's gotten rid of the rocks. He doesn't send, the farmer doesn't send the sower out to sow unless he's prepared that soil and pulled out all the rocks to do otherwise is to waste

resources by casting seed into a rock infested soil, that's not going to be productive.

So this section here is not talking about a bunch of rocks in the soil. What Jesus is referring to is a reality of farming in Palestine, which is, there is underneath the soil hidden from your eyes and deep enough to be missed by the plow a limestone rock bed beneath the surface. It's hidden and undiscovered. The plow isn't deep enough to get down there, and the presence of that rock bed, which is a foot or two beneath the surface, isn't going to be deep enough to sustain any productive crops.

What's going to happen is the seeds going to fall into that soil, it's going to germinate like the seed does. It's going to start growing developing roots that try to shoot down deep to make sure that there's moisture feeding the, the plant. But because the roots can't grow deep enough, all the energy that's within the seed to go down into and develop a strong, healthy root system, since it hits that rock bed, it cannot grow further, and so all that energy goes upward. So those crops breakthrough the surface rather quickly. Too quickly, in fact,

for the observant and the experienced farmer. When he sees that he sees signs of problems, when there's an over zealousness on the part of the crop to break through the surface and start to flower.

He knows something is wrong. He can reveal something wrong deep within the surface because in a short while, as the sun passes over those shallow rooted plants, the sun's heat is going to cook the plants. Without a sufficient root system unable to grow beyond that rock, rock layer, unable to reach deep enough to into the earth to find that life-giving water, that fledgling plant is going to wither and die almost as soon as it springs up. That's the shallow seed.

Look at the next verse, verse 7, we got the sidewalk seed, the shallow seed, now here in verse 7 is the suffocated seed. "Some fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it." Now again. Just like the previous two unproductive soils, no farmer is going to intentionally sow precious seed into soil that he has not weeded. He's not going to put it intentionally into weed infested soil. That just happens.



Certainly there's no intention to sow into a visible bed of weeds, but the good seed can sometimes fall into soil that's already been, unbeknownst to the sower, infested with weed seed.

When that happens, there's a stifling, choking, and suffocating effect. In a sin-cursed world, thorns, weeds, every kind of noxious plant grows remarkably well. I was over at Daniel Conroy's house the other day, admiring all the good work he's done in his backyard. He's got a pavers out there. Nice fire pit, picnic benches, lights up. It's really a really neat environment over there. I looked over at the planters. He's got some planters in his backyard. And his vegetable garden seemed to be thriving with luscious vibrant healthy plant life.

And I asked him, Hey, what have you planted in your garden? He said, Oh, that's just weeds." I said, Well, they appear to be doing quite well. Very, very healthy weed garden. You know how much effort he put into that weed garden? Zero. None. Doesn't take any work at all to grow weeds. They thrive in a sin-cursed earth. Isn't it frustrating? I heard, it really is. How politely said.

In contrast to everything useful to us, the weeds are robust and aggressive. Weeds intrude upon whatever it is you want to grow, and they take over the space. They devour the soil's nutrients. They drink up the moisture in the soil, and when they grow up next to your crops, the weeds always outpace your other crops, faster, higher. They steal all the sunlight from the grains and the vegetables that you hope to grow.

The weeds kill the good plants by choking them out, by suffocating them. Weeds starve the good plants of food. They dehydrate them of water. Weeds rob them of the energy from the sunlight. It's a slow death for those beautiful little plants we're trying to plant. But eventually the weeds choke out the life of the plants that sprout from the good seed. It's death by suffocation. This is plant murder.

So we've seen the sidewalk seed along the path, the shallow seeds sown on top of the bedrock, we've seen the suffocated seeds sown among the thorns. Let's look at the healthy super productive seed. Super productive, verse 8, sown in good soil,

"Some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundred fold."

The good soil, it's not hard like the first. It's not shallow like the second. It's not unclean like the third. The good seed is cast into good soil, and the rich nutrient filled earth of a freshly plowed field.

The soil is soft, able to receive the seed. It's deep, it's capable of developing a deep root system that shoots roots down to life-giving water. And it's pure soil, free from the seeds of weeds, free from the influence of noxious life-stealing murderous weeds. And in Jesus parable, that's the kind of soil that yields, what we see here is incredible growth. It turns out an extraordinary profit. In fact, this hundred fold profit is totally unrealistic. This is such a staggering return on investment that we should see a hundred fold yield here as nothing short of supernatural. And that's exactly what Jesus intends for us to surmise. Good seed in good soil with supernatural growth from God.

Now, that's all that most of Jesus' audience could hear and understand. That's it. That's what they heard with their

physical ears. Something familiar that's what they understood their natural mind, nothing more. And that is why Jesus cried out there at the end of verse 8, "He who has ears to hear." It says in verse 8 that as he said these things, that is very likely he said, "He who has ears to hear" before, during, and after telling the parable. He said that a lot. He called out loudly, it says here, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

In fact, it's the imperfect tense he was calling out loudly and repeatedly, over and over. Jesus knew they all had eyes to see something spectacular here, which is what drew them to him in the first place. No surprise there. He knew they all had ears to hear something familiar. In fact, that was a problem, that's all they had ears for. All this was so familiar to them that many of them in the crowd thought, Yeah, we got it. Nothing special here. He's an interesting storyteller, but that's it. They're spiritually dull, they're insensitive, they simply don't stop and bother to ask any deeper questions because they don't sense anything deeper. They think, I've got it.



Let's take a look at some of the clues that Jesus dropped into the parable for his audience that they should have seen something deeper. Here are some of the reasons that you can write down: one, two, three, four, and five. Some of the reasons that the audience that day would have been able, by listening, and should have been able to recognize that Jesus is teaching some deeper truth in this familiar observation and parable. Just a few observations here.

First of all, they should have known to look for a deeper meaning. Why? Because Jesus is the one speaking. It's not for nothing that this massive throng of people is standing at the water's edge looking out to a guy talking to them from a boat. It's not for nothing that they've traveled and left all their towns and cities and villages to gather here. If he talks, they should listen.

He's got this huge crowd in front of him. He's got a great opportunity to teach. He's taken the posture of a teacher or rabbi seated in the boat. Listen, no matter what comes out of his mouth, they ought to have taken the posture of humble

listening, attentive listening for eternally vital truth because it's Jesus who's speaking. Some of you've got red letters in your Bible, right? Look if Jesus is saying it even the translators in the producers or publishers your Bible understand, let's put those letters in red. They're important.

Just to clarify though, whether it's red letters or black letters, if they're found in your Bibles, they are all important, okay? All the letters, and the words, and the phrases, the sentences in the paragraphs, all the history, and the prophecy in the poetry, all the propositions, and the arguments, and the didactive reasoning, the stories, the encouragements, all the warnings, if they're in your Bibles, they are important. Don't be like this crowd, lazy listeners, casual readers. You approach your Bibles, God's words, with expectation, with humility and teachability. You approach, ready to listen, and to learn, and to work, and to study, and to repent, and to obey. God is the one speaking, so whatever he has breathed out of his mouth is important. It is all important. It is significant.

Second reason the crowd should have been looking for a deeper meaning is because, number two, his story was about something that's so utterly common. I mean just the fact that it's utterly common should tell them, wait a minute, that seemed too easy. He has this huge crowd, he's drawing everyone's attention to what is a very common occurrence in their land. Normal mundane agricultural reality of a sower going out into a field to sow seed. In fact, it's so normal, so mundane, that many would probably wonder why Jesus paid it any mind, and that should have been a clue right there.

First of all. Just looking around at a sower in a, in a, in a field, nothing really important about that in the crowd's mind. Because you don't ever, have no farmer send skilled workers out to sow the field, it doesn't take a lot of skill. Usually, it was slaves sowing the fields. Usually it was servants or, or poor and peasant farmers who were renting the land and they go out to sow the fields. In fact, for some in the crowd that day, they'd probably left behind servants back at home in their own fields so that they can come and see Jesus while those guys are out sowing the seeds while they're traveling to see Jesus.

It's not only a mundane task, but it's mundane people Jesus is drawing my attention to. Why do I care about a sower? I notice even deeper than that, Jesus has not called attention just to the task of sowing. He's not called attention to the sower. He's called their attention to the seed. He's observing what's even less significant than the task itself and the servant sowing the field. He's talking about tiny little seeds. His story is not about the sower. It's not about his background, his family, his skill, his technique, what he's planting. There's no human interest in this story at all. He's getting everyone in the crowd that day to think about what happens to an individual seed.

So the fact Jesus is speaking, the fact that when he speaks, he's talking about something that doesn't seem to merit our attention at all, that should have signaled to the crowd that he's got a deeper meaning in mind. It ought to have provoked their curiosity, but there's a third reason. They should have looked for a deeper meaning. He talks about where the seed falls in totally disproportionate terms. For any sower, where is the majority of that seed coming from his bag through

his hand, where is the majority of the seed going to fall? Not on the path, not in the thorns, right? He's going to so the seed in what he believes to be the prepared soil.

So Jesus is here taking all those different four soils or four outcomes. He's put them all on the same level. He's giving them all equal consideration. Sower does not go out to sow equal amounts of seed in all those areas. Oh, here's a quarter of the seed for the hard baked pathway, the sidewalk. Need to put some there for the birds and people to stamp on. Need to put some, oh, that's the rock bed soil. Let's put a quarter of the seed there. Oh, there's a bunch of thorns. Let's see how that seed does. He throws quarter over there and then puts a quarter in the good soil. That is not what he does.

Any sower who sowed the seed like that is going to be summarily fired by the farmer for wastefulness, right? Total wastefulness of the farmers resources. So by giving the fate of the seed falling in all these different areas of field equal attention, the pathway, the rocky soil, thorny soil, good soil,

the disproportionate way Jesus speaks is signaling, they should look for something deeper.

Fourth reason to look for a deeper meaning has to do with the incredible, totally unrealistic yield of the, of the seed that fell into the good soil. On the best year a farmer does not get a hundred fold return on the investment out of his crop. If that were the case, everyone would be farming, right? My dad is a financial guru. And he grew up farming. And you know what he said? Let's see, I've done the math. I'm going to go into finance, not into farming. Many farmers I talked to, they, they, they work all their lives because they love farming but they just want to get out of the red and into the black. They get into the black and it's like time to retire. It's a lifelong effort.

A hundredfold yield? It's unrealistic. Luke has only mentioned the hundredfold yield, both Matthew and Mark mentioned the thirtyfold and the sixtyfold yield. Luke just abbreviates it here brings it to the, the hundredfold. It's a common characteristic in Luke's Gospel writing. But still, whether it's

a hundredfold or sixtyfold or even thirtyfold, it's a remarkable return. It's so remarkable is to be self-evidently ridiculous on a literal level. Which again signals the need to consider that Jesus is talking about something of spiritual significance here.

Finally, as if to remove all doubt, as we read in the last part of verse 8, as Jesus said these things he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." It's the verb *phoneo*, which portrays Jesus shouting out loudly. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." As we said, he did that repeatedly. Everyone has ears. They're all hearing him. They're all listening to his tale about the sower and the fate of all these little tiny seeds. So ears to hear what? Something deeper, something of spiritual significance in this familiar tale.

So based on who's speaking here, based on the subject of this parable and the fate of seeds, based on the disproportionate terms he uses on the on the different kinds of soil based on this supernatural return on the investment, and finally because he simply shouts out loud, leaving no doubt there's something deeper here. "He has ears to hear it, let him

hear it." All those factors signal a deeper meaning, a spiritual meaning, something a great spiritual importance. People should insist about getting to the bottom of this short little parable, right?

For every true pastor, for every true goodhearted Christian teacher, at any level, any, any Christian teaching other people, this reality is one of the hardest to bear, even though we understand it. We preach sermons, we teach truth, we evangelize, we disciple, we counsel people, we teach publicly, privately, we teach in larger gatherings, we teach from house to house, we teach individually, and can be so sad to see people look you in the eye and tell you, Yeah, I got it. And they walk away completely, not getting it. You want to just reach into their chest and just turn on the switch, that their eyes would be opened.

Some people are hardened by blinding pride. Some people are dulled by shallow sinful desires. Some people are choked and distracted by other worries, and cares, and pleasures. When we see this out there, we see it in here. We see this happening in



the world. We see it happening at work, in the home, even within the walls of the church. People that only hear what's on the surface and they walk away, indifferent, or critical, or complaining, but eventually rejecting.

That was the majority reaction to Jesus' teaching on this occasion. No spiritually oriented, spiritually sensitive questions are forthcoming. They've missed all the clues. Why? Because, third and final point for today, they lack the heart to understand something deeper. They lacked the heart to understand something deeper. Jesus had called out, "He who," hasn't ears, "has ears to hear, let him here." And then look at verses 9 and 10. Not everyone in that attendance that day, thankfully, not everyone lacked the ears to hear, the heart to understand something deeper, most did. But the disciples had ears to hear, and this is such an encouragement to us disciples.

Look at verse 9, "When his disciple asked him what this parable meant," and by the way, they some time had passed between his telling of the Parable of the Sower, and when they asked, they may have asked right then, but the, the time didn't,

the opportunity didn't allow itself, present itself for them to actually get private with Jesus and hear the full explanation. So some time has passed Lucas condensed the tale here.

But “when his disciples asked him what this parable meant” and, and oh, and one more thing. “When his disciples asked him” imperfect tense again, which means they were continually asking him. They were bugging him to find out, Hey what is, what? That parable thing about the sower? What's the deal there? What's the seeds? The different soil? What's going on? They're asking him over and over. Jesus is like, Hey, just not, not yet, not yet. Let me let me get this real quick. He comes, teaches more, they're like, Hey yeah, now by the way, tell, you know pulling on his robe and stuff; What's, what's the deal with that? So over and over there asking him what this parable meant.

Verse 10 he said, “To you, to you,” emphasis in the text. “To you, it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others, they're in parables so that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand.” That cry, he cried at the end of the parable, “He who has ears to hear, let him

hear," that sentence draws a line across humanity that separates those with spiritual sensitivity and those without it. Jesus acknowledges, and recognizes, and reveals that spiritually speaking, there are two kinds of people in this world and only two. The spiritual haves and the spiritual have-nots.

Let me give you just a few little sub-points to jot down in your notes as we cover these two extremely vital verses of explanation. Two verses answering the question we asked back at the very beginning. Why did Jesus speak in parables? For what purpose did he speak in parables? Several answers sub-point A. Let's not do use numbers this time. Let's use letters. Sub-point A: To distinguish the regenerate. To distinguish the regenerative. Or if you like, to distinguish the believers. To call out the believers. How did this happen? By this.

The disciples aren't satisfied with a superficial understanding. They are not satisfied; they want to go deeper. They didn't rest until they found the answer. His disciples asked him what the parable meant again. As I said, he, they not

only asked him, they kept on asking him, bugging him. They kept after it until he explained the meaning of the parable to them.

According to Mark's account, the answer didn't come right away. Mark 4:10 tells us, "When he was alone, those around him with the Twelve asked him about the parable." So it's the Twelve, but it's also probably those women we met in Luke 8:2-3, along with other unnamed male, female disciples. They're all asking him. They want to know they're asking him over and over. And as I said, it's not the Jesus is reluctant to explain the parables to them, they're just times when Jesus withholds an answer momentarily in order to draw something out that he wants to draw out.

In this case, it's the fact that they had ears to hear. They had a heart for truth. They're not content to know what Jesus just said in the parable. They want to know what Jesus meant in the parable. So they keep on asking. Sometimes, true believers find themselves in weak churches, even sub-Christian forms of evangelical Christianity. I've even met a dear couple in our, Melinda and I, in our past, that came to Christ while

they were attending a Catholic Church, and it was actually a like a Bible study attached to the Catholic Church that was all about charismatic, mystical experiences. Completely in darkness, and they came to Christ. And they just woke up and they start asking questions.

Sometimes, true Christians find themselves awakened in that context. Maybe the context into which they were saved, maybe they visited there with a friend or family member. Maybe that's the only church in town. A true believer, though, will become discontent with weak teaching. Impatient with poor teaching, especially intolerant of wrong teaching and absolutely angry at error. A true believer is going to become upset and uncomfortable and start asking questions. You know what that is? That is the, the presence of the spirit of God above inside of them, causing them discomfort, irritation, making them discontent and sending them out of that context to find good teaching and a true church.

The rest of the people who sit in that church satisfied with weak, erroneous teaching, why are they content eating

garbage? Why are they subsisting on a diet of junk food? Swallowing sweet tasting trivialities week after week, why? Because they don't have ears to hear the truth. It all sounds pretty much spiritual to them. They don't notice the difference. In fact, they're often repelled by the truth and just can't stomach it. So Jesus use parables, tucking the truth just beneath the surface to provoke the true believer, to gently nudge him to work to find the answer.

Parables hide the truth enough so the lazy listener is not going to work to uncover its meaning, but true believers, those who are truly regenerate, they work to find the answers. They're not pew-sitters; they're Bible students. The heart of the regenerate is a heart that's willing to work to understand, work to gain wisdom.

In fact, I'd like you to turn back just very quickly back to Proverbs 2, Proverbs 2:1-5. Solomon is teaching his son and he's encouraging his son not just to gain wisdom, but to work hard to gain wisdom. That's how all of us should be encouraging those who are younger than us in the faith. Whether younger in

years or younger in knowledge and understanding, we should all be encouraging those younger in these, this same way, Proverbs 2:1 says, "My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments within you."

Notice that's a heart inclination to treasure good words. "If you make your ear attentive to wisdom and incline your heart to understanding, yes, if you call out for insight, raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." You see all the hard working verbs in that text. "Make your ear attentive" and "incline your heart," "call out." "Raise your voice," "seek for it like silver." "Search for it as for hidden treasures."

The last two there, those are mining metaphors. If you're familiar at all with Colorado history, you know, you know something about the miners who search for gold and silver in the Rockies. Mining in the 1800s was incredibly hard and often deadly work. If you mind for truth and wisdom with the same effort that those guys mined for gold and silver with the same

abandon, with the same disregard for health and safety, with the same time commitment and energy commitment. You know what that means, probably means you're regenerate. Blessed are you. Unregenerate people are lazy. And that's so sad because they miss out big time.

Sub-point B for your notes, why Jesus spoke parables. Jesus spoke in parables, sub-point B, to bless the regenerate. You could turn back to Luke 8:10. Jesus spoke in, bar, parables, not only to expose the regenerate, but to bless them to give them more truth. Solomon said those who work hard to discover the truth and understand it when they do that, God will reward them with the fear of the Lord. They'll find the knowledge of God. It's exactly what Luke says in Luke 8:10 or Jesus says in Luke 8:10 to his disciples, who come asking. He says, "To you, it has been given to know the secrets of God."

"The secrets of the kingdom to you," at the front of the sentence. It gives it special emphasis. He's saying, Jesus is saying, The fact that you're here, the fact that you're repeatedly looking for answers, pressing me for understanding,



that reveals your blessed by God." "And to you it's been given," perfect passive, perfect tense indicating something that's happened in the past. God gave it in the past with results continuing into the present. Passive voice indicates that they are not the ones who went and got it. They are recipients of the action of the verb. God has chosen to give to them. They've become recipients of his gracious gift.

For the regenerate, for the believing, this means they have become recipients of divine grace, divine favor. God has granted them to know the secrets of the kingdom of God that begins with salvation, right? The fear of the Lord grants wisdom from God, which starts with the Gospel of God. The Gospel is the very pinnacle of divine wisdom resulting in reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. It's how God justifies the ungodly. Gospel teaches sinners to fear God, to fear his judgment about their sins. The Gospel teaches sinners to repent of their sins, to embrace Jesus Christ in faith since he died for their sins on the cross and he lives to give them new life. The Gospel teaches sinners to deny themselves to take up the cross, to follow Jesus Christ in lifelong obedience.

And that, beloved, opens up a treasure trove that Jesus here calls the secrets of the kingdom of God. The word secrets, I think, is a not a great translation. The word is *mysterion*, from which we get the word mystery. The word was common among the mystery re, religions and the 2nd century gnostic cults. To refer to knowledge that's mysterious or mystical or esoteric. It's open only to special initiates, through secret rituals and, and religious rights.

When the Bible uses the word *mysterion*, it's, it's used only in connection with this parable in the Gospels, by the way, Matthew 13:11, Mark 4:11, Luke 8:10. Paul, though, uses the word *mysterion* 21 times in his epistles. He was thrilled to be numbered among those to whom it had been given the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Mystery here, it's just talking about New Testament truth. Just talking about truth that God kept hidden in ages past but revealed in the coming of Christ. That's what's been hidden but has now been made known to his elect.

It's the subject of Paul's ministry, to make known to the church as the mysteries of God. That's what he told the

Corinthians as he told him about the privilege of being Christians. First Corinthians 2:7, "We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory." What wisdom is that? "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, nor has entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him." Those things God revealed to us through the spirit.

Those are truths that are the privilege of every true believer and, beloved, that is the blessing and the privilege of Jesus' parables for us, the regenerate. That's a privilege for us as true believers. The truths of the parables, they don't just fall open before us like, they're like sweet fruit that's hidden beneath the surface of an outer skin. We know what's there and we need to work a little bit just to, just to penetrate, peel it back and reveal the treasure that lies beneath the surface.

We are more than rewarded for our efforts because discovering the life giving fruit of the truths of God's kingdom means life, and glory, and peace. Sin is gone. Judgment is over.



And nothing but life eternal. Beloved, there's more to say. But I'm going to punt it to next week. I just wanna say this and ask folks, what about you? Are you the sincere seeker or are you the casual listener? Do you come, because you're compelled to come, because you must know you must understand, you must find trustworthy answers, God's answers to the questions that perplex your heart?

For those of you with ears to hear, I'd like to invite you back next week to hear the meaning of the parable. For those of you who don't know whether or not you have ears to hear, but what Jesus is saying and doing here has provoked your interest, I'd like to invite you to come back next week to hear the meaning of the parable too. And for all of us, let's close in a word of prayer.

Our Father, our God, we thank you that you have re, been the revealer of mysteries to us that you have favored us, your people, your elect, with ears to hear, and eyes to see, a heart that understands. We're so grateful to you for the truths in this text that encouraged us, that sober us, that give us great



cause for gratitude knowing that we are numbered among the favored by you. We pray, Father, that you would save and sanctify many more besides that you use our witness. Help us to understand the profound seriousness of the things we're dealing with. Help us to lean in, to work hard, and discover the truth that you have for us. In Jesus name, amen.