

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 11: Parables and the Calming of the Storm -- Luke 8:1-25

A farmer walks across his field with a bag of seed slung over his shoulder, and with each step he flings a handful out across the ground. Some of it lands on the hard footpath, where it lies exposed until the birds carry it off. Some falls on a thin layer of dirt over rock, where it springs up fast and dies just as fast under the scorching sun. Some lands among thorns that crowd it out before it can ever bear a head of grain. And some lands on good ground, where it sinks down, takes root, and produces a harvest beyond anything the farmer threw out. Jesus tells this simple story to a great crowd, and then He says something that should make every one of us lean in: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (v. 8). The same word is being scattered. The difference is the soil.

Luke gathers several scenes in this passage, and they are bound together by a single thread. Jesus is moving through the towns and villages proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God (v. 1), and a question hangs over every encounter: what will people do with the word He brings? Some women who had been healed and set free now travel with Him and provide for the work out of their own means (vv. 2-3). A crowd presses in to hear the parable of the soils. Then Jesus speaks of a lamp that is not meant to be hidden, and He says plainly, "Take care then how you hear" (v. 18). Hearing is not a passive thing in this chapter. How we hear, and what we do with what we hear, turns out to be the most important question of our lives.

Then the scene shifts to a boat on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus, exhausted, falls asleep on a cushion, and a storm sweeps down on the lake so violently that seasoned fishermen are certain they are about to drown. They wake Him in a panic, and He stands up, rebukes the wind and the raging waves, and the sea goes flat and still. Into that sudden silence He asks, "Where is your faith?" (v. 25). The men who had just been terrified are now afraid in a deeper way, and they ask one another a question that echoes through the rest of the Gospel: "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?" (v. 25). It is the question the whole book is driving us toward.

Read these verses slowly, because they will not leave you where they found you. The parable of the soils asks what kind of ground your heart has become, and whether the word that took root there is still growing or has been quietly choked out by the cares and pleasures of life. The lamp and the warning to take care how you hear press you to do something with what you know. And the storm on the lake confronts you with the staggering identity of the One in the boat. The same Jesus who commands the wind is asking you, today, where your faith is.

Group Discussion: Jesus told the parable of the sower to a great crowd, and then explained that "the seed is the word of God" falling on four different kinds of soil (v. 11). Before we dig into the details, talk together as a group about what it has looked like in your own experience to see the

same gospel produce wildly different results in different people. Why do you think the word takes deep root in one heart and seems to bounce right off another? What does this parable suggest the difference really is?

Personal Reflection: Jesus warns that some who hear the word receive it with joy but have no root, and that others let the word be choked out by “the cares and riches and pleasures of life” (vv. 13–14). Take an honest look at the soil of your own heart this week. Is the word still sinking deeper and bearing fruit in you, or have the worries, comforts, and busyness of your life slowly begun to crowd it out? What is one specific thorn you need to ask God to help you pull up?

Read Luke 8:1–25

Study Questions

1. As Jesus traveled “proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God” (v. 1), certain women whom He had healed followed Him and “provided for them out of their means” (vv. 2–3). What does this opening tell us about the kingdom Jesus was establishing and about who has a place in His work, and how does it correct any idea that following Jesus is reserved for a privileged few?
2. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna gave of their own resources to support the work of Jesus and His disciples (vv. 2–3), responding gratefully to what He had done for them. When you consider what Jesus has done in your own life, where do you sense Him inviting you to give of your time, money, or energy to His work, and what tends to hold you back?
3. When His disciples asked what the parable of the sower meant, Jesus said, “The seed is the word of God” (v. 11), and then explained that the word falls on four kinds of hearts. What does it teach us about the power and the nature of God’s word that the same seed is scattered on every soil, and that the harvest depends on the condition of the ground rather than on a different message?
4. Jesus describes the seed on the rock as those who “receive the word with joy” but have “no root,” who “believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away” (v. 13). Where in your own walk have you noticed an emotional, surface response to God’s word that did not put down deep roots, and what would it look like for the word to take root more deeply in you this week?
5. Jesus says that the seed among thorns represents those who hear, “but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature” (v. 14). What does this teach about the real dangers that threaten a believer’s fruitfulness, and why are comfort and prosperity often more spiritually dangerous than open hostility?
6. After telling the parable, Jesus warns, “Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away” (v. 18). How carefully do you actually listen when God’s word is taught, and what is one habit you could change so that you hear in order to obey rather than merely to be informed?

7. Jesus says no one lights a lamp and hides it, “for nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest” (vv. 16–17). Why does Jesus connect the public, visible nature of the kingdom with this warning that everything hidden will be brought to light, and what does this teach about the kind of life God intends His word to produce in those who truly receive it?
8. When His mother and brothers could not reach Him through the crowd, Jesus said, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it” (v. 21). What does it stir in you to know that closeness to Jesus is defined not by family ties, religious background, or good intentions, but by hearing and doing His word, and where is the gap in your own life between hearing and doing right now?
9. In the boat, Jesus rebuked the wind and the raging waves so that “they ceased, and there was a calm” (v. 24), and the disciples asked in awe, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?” (v. 25). Taking the whole passage together, what does the parable of the soils teach us about whether a person who once believed can truly fall away, and how does this guard us against the false comfort that says a believer is eternally secure no matter how he lives? Tie this to Jesus’ question, “Where is your faith?” (v. 25), and to who this commanding Lord must be.
10. Look back across the whole passage, from the scattered seed to the stilled storm. Jesus has shown you the soil of your own heart, called you to hear and do His word, and revealed Himself as the Lord whom wind and water obey. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from Luke 8:1–25 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Hebrews 3:12–14, the warning not to let an unbelieving heart fall away from the living God but to hold our confidence firm to the end; James 1:22–25, the call to be doers of the word and not hearers only; Hebrews 6:4–8, the sobering picture of ground that drinks the rain yet bears thorns; Psalm 107:23–32, the Lord who stills the storm and hushes the waves of the sea; Colossians 1:13, the deliverance into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son in whom we have redemption.