

March 19th, 2023 – (full sermon notes)

"A Changed Heart Produces Fruit"

Luke 8:1-15

Read **Luke 8:1...** Not long after the dinner at the Pharisee's house, where the woman had wiped Jesus' feet with her tears mixed with perfume, Jesus began to travel from one city and village to another, in the region of Galilee, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God.

Although Luke doesn't record a specific area for this phase of Jesus' ministry, the parallel narratives (**Matthew 13:1-3; Mark 4:1-3**) tell us, Jesus was teaching by the sea [of Galilee] and such a large crowd had gathered that He got into a boat; the crowd was on the shore, and He said to them, 'Behold, the sower went out to sow'... and then He proceeded to tell them the parable of the Sower.

Jesus used every opportunity [sea shores, hillsides, public squares, highways and byways, synagogues, and individual homes] to share the good news, God forgives all the sins of those who repent and believe in Him.

Notice again, Jesus was "proclaiming [*kerusso = to publicly announce a legal and binding message that was to be heard and responded to*] and preaching [*evangelizo = to announce the good news of the gospel*] the kingdom of God."

The terms kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven are interchangeable; although kingdom of heaven is only used by Matthew (31 times), because he was writing to the Jews and they believed it was sacrilegious to use the name of God, so instead they used the place where God exists to refer to Him [in heaven].

Jesus used the terms synonymously to refer to the kingdom or sphere of those who are saved (**Matthew 19:23-26**), "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, 'Then who can be saved?' And looking at them Jesus said to them, 'With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"

In **Mark 1:15**, Jesus came saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." But what is the Gospel?

In **John 3:16** Jesus proclaims, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life," (**John 3:36**) "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides [*remains*] on him."

The awesome message of the gospel is repeated three times in God's Word (**Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13**), declaring that anyone, everyone, who repents of their sin and believes in God's Son for salvation will be saved from sin's condemnation by the sacrifice of God's Son, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (**John 1:29**), "who takes away the sin of the world!" So, salvation comes by believing in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and at the moment of genuine belief you

"A Changed Heart Produces Fruit"

Luke 8:1-15

are granted eternal life (**Romans 10:17**), "So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

1Corinthians 15:1-4, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

Back to **Luke 8:1...** Notice that while Jesus was proclaiming and preaching the gospel, "the Twelve were with Him." The men Jesus chose as disciples were ordinary men, most of them fishermen, who would become Apostles [except for Judas]. They would be sent out, after receiving the Holy Spirit (cf. **Acts 1:8**), as witnesses and heralds of the gospel, "in Jerusalem, and in all of Judea, and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

At this time in the narrative the Disciples are neither preaching, teaching, or healing, for they are in training, listening, observing, and learning what their mission will be, when they are sent out later in **chapter 9**.

Read **Luke 8:2-3...** There are others following along with Jesus and the Twelve, including some women who are named here: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. Mary was from Magdala, a town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. She was healed of seven demons, although we don't know when or where. Joanna was the wife of Chuza, a high ranking official who served as Herod Antipas's steward. Both Mary and Joanna were witnesses of Jesus' burial, resurrection, and most likely His crucifixion. We don't know anything about Susanna, as she appears nowhere else in the Scriptures.

There are other women followers of Jesus recorded in the Scriptures: Mary the mother of Jesus, and her sister, also Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (James and John), also Salome, Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptizer; Anna the prophetess at the Temple when Jesus was being dedicated to God, Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, and many unnamed women from both Galilee and Jerusalem (cf. **Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41; John 19:25**).

Jesus accepted all those who believed in Him, people from all levels of Jewish society. Luke says (cf. **Luke 8:3**), there were "many others contributing, out of their private resources, to support Jesus and the Disciples.

See **Luke 8:4-8...** A farmer sowed [broadcasted] seed that fell: **1)** along a path, birds ate it... **2)** on rocky places where it sprang up, but the sun caused the plants to wither and die... **3)** among thorns that grew up and choked the plants... **4)** on "good soil," producing a crop up to 100 times as much.

"A Changed Heart Produces Fruit"

Luke 8:1-15

Read **Luke 8:9-10...** The Disciples question the parable's meaning. Parables test the spiritual understanding of those who hear them, "He who has ears, let him hear." It is possible hear something, and not really know or understand what was said. If they would hear the spiritual message and understand their need for forgiveness, they would repent and be saved. Christ illustrates this truth by using an everyday life activity of Palestine - a farmer with a bag of seed over his shoulder walks in a cultivated field throwing handfuls of seed, until the field is covered.

Read **Luke 8:11-15...** Jesus explains the parable: the seed is the Word of God, the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ; the soil represents four different human heart response to God's Word.

Soil #1 - Luke 8:12... Walking paths (narrow roads) were created around the fields; this untilled and hard packed earth prevented seeds from taking root; this refers to those who hear the Word of God (the Seed) but they don't understand, their hardened heart cannot receive God's Word, His message of salvation, they remain in unbelief.

This type of hearer is indifferent, for there is no response to the Gospel, no sense of remorse, guilt, or need for the Savior, this is unbelief (cf. **Ephesians 1:13-14**) and therefore, without God's Spirit, remain unsaved, guilty of sin.

Soil #2 - Luke 8:13... The rocky places were underlying beds of solid rock [limestone] just below the depth of the plow blade, allowing newly germinated plants to spring up and appear healthy and hardy; but because of their shallow root system, they would quickly wither and die as the sun rose and heated the earth.

This type of hearer is superficial, at first appearing active in the church by attending prayer meetings, Bible studies, Sunday worship, etc.; but, because there has been no repentance, no regeneration of his spirit by God's Spirit, he is unable to resist the pressure of friends, family, etc., who may criticize him for his faith, so he quickly falls away, for he never really belonged to Christ (cf **1John 2:18-19**).

Soil #3 - Luke 8:14... Thorns infested much of the soil in Palestine, but weren't visible right after cultivation. However, as the grain began to grow, so did the thistle bearing weeds which would quickly displace the grain by taking away the moisture, nourishment, and sunlight, literally choking the grain to death!

This hearer is worldly, and although he is involved in some of the activities of the church, his real focus is in the world, not in Christ. Being overcome and choked by the worries of life, deceitfulness of wealth, and influence of pleasure, he is enslaved by the things that don't lead to godliness, rendering him incapable of producing fruit (cf. **1John 2:15-17**).

Soil #4 - Luke 8:15... This time the seed is sown on "good" soil. What makes this dirt "good" and the dirt in the other three examples "not good?" Remember, these soils represent different heart conditions and responses to the gospel.

"A Changed Heart Produces Fruit"

Luke 8:1-15

The "good dirt" represents the heart of a receptive and repentant hearer, one who hears and believes the message, acknowledging that he is a sinner, repenting of his sin, and trusting Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

This man not only hears, but also obeys God's Word, doing what it says, demonstrating that he has responded to the message of the gospel and is born again (cf. **James 1:22-25**).

In **John 3:3**, Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus went on to say (**John 3:6-8**), "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Romans 3:10, "There is no one righteous, not even one," 23 "for all have sinned."

Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 5:8, "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 8:1, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

How do you become "in" Christ Jesus?

Romans 10:10, "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

John 1:12-13, "Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

If God is your Father, you will desire to please Him (**Ephesians 5:1**), "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love." If you don't have a desire to please God, if you don't care about others, if you have no desire to share Christ with unbelievers, you are either totally disobedient and living in sin, or you don't belong to God and you are still bad dirt.

2Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"

Think about it, God formed Adam out of dirt, and breathed life into him. God created humans and said they were good; but that was before sin entered the world. Ever since the first children were born to Adam and Eve, we have all been born in sin, being born as bad dirt.

It is Jesus who turns bad dirt into good dirt (**Acts 4:12**), "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among

March 19th, 2023 – (full sermon notes)

"A Changed Heart Produces Fruit"

Luke 8:1-15

men by which we must be saved," (**Romans 10:13**), "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord [for the forgiveness of sin] will be saved."

God turns no one away! Hard hearts are softened and made receptive by the message of God's love made effectual through God's Son, to all who will repent of sin and believe in Jesus Christ, God's Son, Lord and Savior: crucified, resurrected, and coming again (cf. **2Corinthians 5:17-21**), "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Pastor Mike

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