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## The Heart Luke 8:4-15

***<sup>4</sup>While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: <sup>5</sup>“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. <sup>6</sup>Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.” When he said this, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”***

So He's not talking about the physical ear here. That's my problem...huh?

- Anthony's Wedding (Hearing the truth)

***<sup>9</sup>His disciples asked him what this parable meant. <sup>10</sup>He said, “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.’***

This can be kind of confusing because at first glance it can seem as if for some...Jesus has intent to cloak the meaning of scripture. This is simply not the case!

In Matthew's description found in chapter 13:13 Jesus said he spoke in parables because people could not see or understand. So Matthew's emphasis helps us see that parables were used by Jesus to help people understand the word of God. Then Matthew quotes Jesus...quoting Isaiah 6:9-10 where it says: ***You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.***

Verse 15:

***For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes***

Here is what I want to establish. The focus here is all about the condition of the heart of those who hear the word of God. What is the seed? Luke 8:11 tells us the **seed is the word of God**. Who is the sower or farmer? A preacher, teacher and in this case...Jesus Himself – proclaiming the word of God. The emphasis here is not on the seed (Word of God) or the farmer/sower (the deliverer of God's word). The emphasis of this parable focused on? The hearer of the word.

God is a God of both mercy and justice. God is a god of gentleness and firmness. And when the word of God is proclaimed...when Scripture is taught for some it will have a softening effect while on others it will have a hardening effect. God's word is a double edged sword

This parable speaks of four kinds of ground which seed can fall on. Three of these soil conditions end up with basically no kingdom value whatsoever. The seed is what? Word of God. What is the emphasis of this story? The condition of the hearers heart.

➤ A little Nervous

It's easier to talk w/you about a group of people who heard me give a 'Wedding Message' last week and their struggle with the truth. It's much harder to stand with you, my family, and deliver truth knowing that each of the soil conditions are represented...not out there...but here. So my encouragement to you this morning is...don't shoot the messenger. Rather, allow God's Spirit to penetrate whatever condition your heart is in.

Some of you have the first soil condition.

## **Hard Heart**

Verse 12:

***12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.***

The common field in Palestine was long and narrow with paths running along the fields. Those paths could get rock hard and when good seed fell on them birds could easily come and feast.

Some of you here this morning have hard hearts. You hear the truth of the gospel and your heart says..."whatever, not for me." For some you have hurts that have turned into bitterness. Bitterness is like that well used path. It just gets so hard that there's no chance of any seed getting in. And in bitterness your heart is completely unmoved by the word of God.

Ephesians 4:31 says:

***Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.***

Was that a suggestion? No...it was a command.

Let's keep going here. It doesn't get any easier. Some of you have hard hearts. Some of you have had:

### **Hard Times**

Verse 13:

***<sup>13</sup>Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.***

This is not referring to seed landing on literal rocks sticking up out of the fields. Its rocks under a thin skin of soil like a shelf of limestone just beneath the surface. This soil produced plants that would start out vibrant but when the heat of summer set in...the growing plant would wither and die.

Some of you have been through a time of testing. And what's hard is that you've loved God. You've had experiences with him that were real. You have tasted it. You can point back and articulate that God was real for you.

But then the heat of life rose on you. We don't have time to talk about trials. Why they come, whether or not God sent them... The only way to survive storms is to have roots that go deep. Deep roots equal life. God allows trials. This is not a trial free gospel we see preached by Jesus.

But some of you have been withered by those trials and your walk with God has all but dried up. Since that trial you have not grown in your love and worship of Jesus...and yet you come.

For some here hard times have withered your life with Jesus. You're not green anymore, you're brittle. The word of God is not water for your soul...it's about something else.

When the heart dies and becomes lifeless...either you fall out of church, or worse yet...you stay in church and replace life with legalism. A lifeless heart is at risk of being replaced with duty and that becomes fertile ground for tradition and religion...judgment & pride.

Some of you hear the word week in and week out. And rather than being moved by it...you just hear it. Maybe even agree with it. But it doesn't move you. The legalist says; "I wish so and so were here to hear this." Right? Always for someone else...not me – I've got my system. And the tragedy is you've lost relationship.

There's one more hard one...And it's probably the most difficult of all three. You may have flown under the radar up till now. Maybe you haven't had a Hard Heart...Maybe you've made it through Hard Times.

Verse 14:

***14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.***

This is a heart that receives the seed...the word of God...and there is a deep desire to walk it out in obedience and maybe you even begin to step in the direction of that next level of growth with Jesus only to be overcome by life's:

### **Hard Obstacles**

What are the obstacles? Worries...Riches...Pleasures (How many have these)? The farmer puts the seeds in what looks like good soil only to discover later that the seeds of weeds and other fibrous roots of wild grasses had been left in the soil too. And as that plant begins to grow it is eventually choked out by these other invaders or obstacles.

At first we don't really want it but we get to the point where we see deeper relationship with Jesus as some enemy of our joy. As if our king couldn't supply us with riches and contentment.

Paul told the Philippians (3:8): ***I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.***

Think about some of the things we trade intimacy with Jesus for. Addictions: Alcohol, drugs, pornography. That's a horrible trade. Wealth, relational partners who don't follow Christ. We simply discard obedience to the word and do it our way because obstacles we've allowed into our fields begin to take over and Christ is choked out. You bear no fruit in your life and your growth in Christ is stunted.

1 John 2:16

***...Everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.***

Why would we trade imperishable for perishable? The bible pleads with us...Jesus died in order that we would choose a different route. Verse 15:

***<sup>15</sup>But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.***

This heart hears the word of God and rather than justify it, compartmentalize it or rationalize it you receive it. You receive the fullness of its:

### **Hard Truth**

You allow the word to cut you and in response you say, "That's me...I'm sinning in that area of my life and I need to turn it over to God. You repent and make the necessary adjustments to come into alignment with Jesus. We stop trying to make the gospel fit our lives and we give in...and we allow our lives to be conformed to the image of Christ.

But for this to happen the word has to hit an honest heart. That will hear it for what it is and retain it...own it...be shaped by it and go on and produce a crop for the kingdom.

Oh how we struggle with delayed obedience. We feel the tingle of the Spirit in us calling us to deeper things. And somehow we find our hearts getting hard. Or we hit hard times...hard obstacles. And months or even years later we find that we haven't grown much...struggling with the same old issues. We realize we've become stiff, judgmental and religious.

And God is saying that's not where I want you...I have so much more for you. There is greater relationship available for you: Wife, kids, Jesus. There is greater joy and purpose. And we sense that down deep in places we struggle to talk about and if we're not careful we end up putting off responding to it.

I believe the offer of the Spirit this morning is to shake that off. To bury it in Jesus name. To change the condition of our hearts so that the Word of God can change us in order that we can produce for the kingdom.

- The world is dying
- Shelton is dying

Pray