



Luke 8:1-21 – Five Accounts Concerning the Word of God

He [Jesus] said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’” -- Luke 8:10

Jesus continues His public ministry in Luke 8 by introducing parables in His teaching. **Read Luke 8:1-8.** First, Luke gives us insight into how Jesus and the twelve were able to subsist as they traveled to cities and villages throughout Galilee to spread the gospel of the kingdom—the ministry of the Word of God. To cover the most ground and spend the time teaching, they were not able to work a trade, so a group of women of means provided food for them. This was done out of gratefulness as they are described as having been delivered by Jesus from demonic bondage and/or illness. The most well-known of these is Mary Magdalene (or of Magdala, sometimes called Magadan), a town between Capernaum and Tiberias on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee. She had been severely afflicted by seven demons until meeting Christ. Also included were Joanna, whose husband managed King Herod’s household, and Susanna, of whom we only know her name. Mary and Joanna will figure into the resurrection account later in this gospel. It was most unusual for a rabbi to travel with women not in his family; do not miss that Jesus is elevating the cultural status of women.

Jesus knows that not all who hear His message will receive it, and as opposition grows from the Pharisees, scribes and other power-holding members of Jewish culture, He begins to teach the crowds using parables. So, starting in verse 5 we see the parable of the sower, a familiar lesson included in Matthew 13 and Mark 4, (who note this event happened near the sea). In all the accounts, the seed is spread but some falls on the path and is trampled and eaten by the birds, some falls on rocky soil but has no root and withers, and some is choked out by weeds or thorns. But the seed that fell into the good soil had a yield 100 times larger than the seed itself. Note Jesus does not explain the parable to the crowd, He just dismisses them with a cryptic, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” This is the first clue that not everyone is able to receive the gospel.

The disciples privately ask for explanation (**Read Luke 8:9-15**). In Matthew’s account the disciples even ask, why use parables? Jewish teachers commonly used parables as stories that reveal a moral truth by way of analogy. But the disciples seem vexed by the way Jesus switches from discourses to parable format. Looking at Matthew 13:11-17 (as a little longer exchange) shows there are secrets about the kingdom of God that Jesus is

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revealing but He does not want everyone to hear them! Does this surprise you? To understand, we need to know the context better.

Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 in His explanation in Matthew. In that account Isaiah, commissioned as a prophet to the Jewish people, learns that God would not let them hear his message. That must have been disheartening! The reason is Israel was largely unreceptive to God's word. Fast forward to Jesus' time and we see that He starts using parables when it becomes apparent the people are following Him for healing and miracles but not receiving His kingdom gospel news. In this way, as John MacArthur notes, he shields the unbelieving as an act of judgment and mercy. *Judgment* because it keeps them in the darkness they desire and *mercy* because exposure to more truth will only further condemn those who reject it. This is why the parable of the sower is the first parable given: it illustrates the spiritual warfare that is happening in the hearts of the people and displays there is not a universal response of acceptance to the gospel. The seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11) and is the focal point of the story; the soils are the different hearers of that word. Some hear but have no defenses and our enemy the devil steals it away; some receive it with joy but without a necessary depth of understanding—under pressure of testing they have no root and fall away; and some are too caught up in material pleasures of this life and never produce any fruit. But those who are good soil, receive the seed and learn to love it and patiently bear great fruitfulness.

Then Jesus elaborates further (**Read Luke 8:16-18**). His teaching is light that reveals truth and He desires for men to see it, but most will reject it and even hate the light (see John 3:19-21). Rejecting the light is the same as rejecting Christ, the Word of God (see John 1:1-5). The more you receive the Word of God, the more you grow. However, the less you are in the Word you will drift away. It is not a neutral situation; you are either thriving with the Spirit or you are atrophying. The lesson here is if you hear (or read) carefully, you will gain more. But if you are not careful, you will lose what you have. Run to the light and be hearers of God's word!

In our last section (**Read Luke 8:19-21**) we see that Mary, the mother of Jesus, comes with His half-brothers (children of Joseph and Mary, after His virgin birth by the Holy Spirit) to see Him. However, Jesus' response indicates His family is actually made up of obedient followers rather than His blood kin! This seems to conflict with the commandment to honor our parents, but the text never says He rejected or ignored His family here. Instead, we should read it as an elevation of His followers into His family, which we know happens in Christ's church body. We do know from John 7:5 that his brothers did not believe in him early in His ministry so we do not know their motive in trying see Him. Perhaps out of embarrassment they want to take Him home.

Matthew 19:29 also relates how following Christ may involve leaving behind family and home for a mission that results in eternal life. Our relationship with God must be our highest and most important relationship. And, again, the word of God is the focal point here. It is by the truths of that gospel message that we relate to Christ, not by any other way. Mary and his brothers had to learn that and be saved, too. And there is good scriptural support that they did believe the gospel, became regenerated, and obeyed Christ, thus entering into a new relationship themselves with the Almighty God (Acts 1:14).

Questions To Ponder Further: *What type of "soil" are you? How do you receive the word of God when it is given to you? What might you do to make yourself more ready to receive the "seed"? Have you seen where church relationships may be deeper than your kin?*

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