

Luke 8:1-21

Verses 1-3:

--Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

--(1) Christ continues His ministry in synagogues, homes, boats, or fields. All the time preaching ***the glad tidings of the kingdom of God***. In the next few chapters, Luke traces the ministry of Christ (8:1), the apostles (9:1), and the wider group of disciples (10:1).

--(2) Luke also introduces a group of women who are now followers of Christ, some of whom had histories full of darkness or disease until they met Jesus.

--***Mary Magdalene*** is mentioned numerous times (Mt. 27:55-56, 61; 28:1; Mk. 15:40, 47; 16:1, 9; Lk. 24:10; Jn. 19:25; 20:1, 18). We are told that she had been delivered from ***seven demons***, which are the same as the ***evil spirits*** mentioned earlier. Scriptures call demons ***evil spirits*** to emphasize the wickedness of their twisted nature.

--***Joanna*** is mentioned one other time (Lk. 24:10). She was of a noble societal rank as the wife of Herod's ***steward***. A steward was either the head of Herod's household or his personal treasurer.

--***Susanna*** we know nothing more about than what is mentioned here.

--(3) We are told these women, among others, supported Jesus and His disciples monetarily.

What an investment!

--We don't know a lot about how Jesus was supported in His three years of public ministry, but this passage gives us a little detail. We do know that the disciples lived out of a common purse (Jn. 12:6; 13:29), held by Judas, out of which they also gave to the poor.

*Morgan (The Gospel According to Luke, pg. 106): *"It seems to me as though that little group of women will always have an honored place in the Glory Land, because they took care of the Lord of glory during those years of earthly ministry. Christ has first ministered to them, and then they ministered to Him; and let me say very reverently, but with profound conviction, He would not have accepted their material aid unless they had yielded allegiance to His message and to God."**

--That the Lord Jesus Christ was willing to live on the generosity of His followers is a beautiful picture. It is an eternal wonder that He allows us to contribute anything at all to His person or mission—let alone encourages it.

*Godet (Gospel of Luke, pg. 363): *“What a Messiah for the eye of flesh, this being living on the charity of men! But what a Messiah for the spiritual eye, this Son of God living on the love of those to whom His own love is giving life! What an interchange of good offices between heaven and earth goes on around His person!”**

Verses 4-8:

--And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, he spoke a parable: “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.” When He had said these things He cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

--(4) A large crowd came to Jesus from every city and village. As He speaks this parable to them, they can see the land He is describing, and very likely even see a sower sowing.

--The word **parable** means *to place side by side*. It is an illustrative story placed alongside the truth.

--The emphasis here is what Jesus says in **8: He who has ears to hear, let him hear!** This is one of Jesus’ most repeated cries (**Mt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk. 4:9, 23; 7:16; Lk. 14:35; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17; 3:6, 13, 22**).

--Hearing is the wider emphasis of the section: **8:8, 10, 18, 21**. How many hear the Word of God without hearing?!

Verses 9-10:

--Then His disciples asked Him, saying, “What does this parable mean?” And He said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that ‘Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’”

--The disciples seem unprepared for Jesus’ new mode of teaching. When they are alone (**Mk. 4:10**), the disciples come and ask what the parable meant.

--Jesus’ response is surprising. He says they were given to know the **mysteries of the kingdom of God**. Meaning the truths they couldn’t have known without God’s revelation.

--Then Jesus quotes from **Isa. 6:10** and says that parables work to fulfill the prophetic rejection of truth from God’s people. Israel’s rejection of God’s truth is mentioned numerous times in the NT (**Mt. 13:13-15; Mk. 4:12; Jn. 12:40; Acts 28:26; Rom. 11:8**).

--The parable of the sower was easy to understand in earthly terms, but not in spiritual terms. Parables veiled truth from the indifferent, sifting the sincere from the spectators. This parable, first and foremost, drew the disciples closer but repelled the crowds.

Verses 11-15:

--Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among the thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

--(11) God's Word has its own life like that of a seed.

--The parable becomes an illustration of the Word of God and its effect in human hearts. It is a parable about a perfect seed—God's Word, and imperfect soil—human hearts.

--Is this parable referring to saved or unsaved people? Salvation or discipleship? If it is about the work of God's Word in a human heart, then the answer is clearly both!

--Salvation.

1 Peter 1:23: *having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,*

--Sanctification.

2 Corinthians 9:10: *Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,*

--The four soils are representative of the dominant soils of our hearts. Each type of heart is in the sanctuary today.

--The four soils can also be found in our hearts at the same time in relation to different "sections" of our heart-fields. Have you never been soft to the word in some places but hard, shallow, or choked in others?

--The four soils will also correspond to different seasons of life if we are not careful. The heart-fields which were once fruitful may quickly turn to overgrown wilderness!

--How we receive God's Word is extremely important! Our first concern should always be to gauge whether a speaker is truly "sowing the good seed of God's Word". Is he a worthy sower? But the next question is just as important. What soil does the seed find? Are we worthy listeners?!

--(12) Hard hearts (Devil). The wayside was tamped down by the traffic of the day. The seed could not penetrate. Jesus is explaining, not excusing. Hard hearts cooperate with Satan.

--Satan's black wings cover the seed, and he rips it away before life can emerge. Satan will do all he can to keep you from the Word of God.

--(13) Shallow hearts (Flesh). The idea here is of a very thin layer of soil with stone beneath. The seed begins to grow, but then dies because its roots are shallow.

--This is sentimental devotion to God. The word is received with joy, but then some form of testing, tribulation, or persecution comes. How many are happy with the Word of God until it costs something like followers, friends, family, a music career, an unsaved girlfriend/boyfriend, a relationship with their homosexual child, or even their life? *Think of John the Baptist with Herod. He was not a shallow hearer of the word!*

--(14) Crowded hearts (World). Here, the soil has too many things growing. Fruit grows, but nothing mature ever grows. The fruit always remains limited and unripe.

--Our hearts are limited. We can only give ourselves to so much. How many are choked by ***cares, riches, pleasures?*** *Is this not America's soil?!*

*Piper (A Hunger for God, pg. 18): "The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the X-rated video, but the prime-time dribble of triviality we drink in every night. For all the ill that Satan can do, when God describes what keeps us from the banquet table of his love, it is a piece of land, a yoke of oxen, and a wife (Luke 14:18-20). The greatest adversary of love to God is not his enemies but his gifts. And the most deadly appetites are not for the poison of evil, but for the simple pleasures of earth. For when these replace an appetite for God himself, the idolatry is scarcely recognizable, and almost incurable.

"Jesus said some people hear the word of God, and a desire for God is awakened in their hearts. But then, "as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and *pleasures of life*" (Luke 8:14). In another place he said, "*The desires for other things* enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful" (Mark 4:19), "*The pleasures of life*" and "*The desires for other things*"—these are not evil in themselves. These are not vices. These are the gifts of God. They are your basic meat and potatoes and coffee and gardening and reading and decorating and traveling and investing and TV-watching and Internet-surfing and shopping and exercising and collecting and talking. And all of them can become deadly substitutes for God."*

--You wouldn't imagine the rich young ruler would turn his back on Jesus and walk away sad. You wouldn't imagine Demas would leave Paul's side to love the present world. You wouldn't imagine Ananias and Saphira would overcome literal physical persecution only to fall to riches and reputation! You wouldn't imagine how much good fruit is choked out by the ***cares, riches, and pleasures of life.***

--How easily our hearts can become crowded! Only one thing is truly needful.

--(15) Soft Hearts. Good soil is possible. *We should never be satisfied without godly fruit!*

Colossians 1:5-6: *Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf,*

--It is not hard for God to make fruit grow. Hear God's word and then patiently keep it. Keep sowing. Keep watering. And God will bring the increase.

Galatians 6:9: *And do not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

--Are we losing heart in sowing? Are we losing heart in doing good? Don't lose heart! The season for sowing is now, but the season of reaping is coming!

Verses 16-18:

--***"No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."***

--These parables are related. The emphasis of this parable *is not* that we need to shine like lights in the world. Again, it is a parable about how we hear the word of God. Jesus makes that clear when He says, ***Therefore take heed how you hear.***

--**(16)** The two main types of lamps used in the day were a saucer filled with oil with a wick, or a pitcher-type of pot filled with oil that would be placed in a holder mounted on the wall. The lamp was meant to fill the room with light, not to be hidden.

--In this parable, God's truth is pictured as light. How do we respond to the illumination of God's Word? Do we try to cover it or escape it?

--**(17)** Jesus makes it clear that in the end, nothing will truly be hidden from the illumination of the truth. Hiding from the truth of God's Word now doesn't mean we are escaping anything.

Allow the light of God's word to shine on you now!

Ecclesiastes 12:14: *For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.*

--This is a repeated exhortation in Scripture: **Eccl. 11:9; Mt. 10:26; 16:27; Mk. 4:22; Lk. 12:2; Rom. 2:6, 16; 1 Cor. 4:5; Col. 3:23-25; etc.**

--**(18)** When we accept the light of God's Word and walk in it, we will have more. If we reject it, what we think we have will be taken from us. In practical terms, eleven of the disciples walked in greater and greater light. Judas rejected the light and eventually succumbed to darkness.

--Spiritual stasis regarding the truth of God is impossible. When God shines the light of truth in our lives, it is a very dangerous thing to hide from it or cover it!

1 John 1:7: But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

--Men love darkness because their deeds are dark. We are to be children of the light.

Verses 19-21:

--Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You."

But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

--Jesus seems to be teaching in a crowded house when His mother and His brothers come to get Him. Some imagine that Jesus' **brothers** were really Joseph's kids from a previous marriage, or sons of one of Mary's sisters, making them Jesus' cousins. But in this passage, with the terms *mother* and *brothers* connected with one another as they are, multiple times by Luke, the crowd, and Jesus, it is virtually impossible to make that case. Also, the context is of the immediate family.

--Why are they seeking to speak with Jesus? Mark infers this was something of an intervention.

But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind" (Mk. 3:21).

--Jesus was growing in popularity and hate. He was being slandered as crazy, unclean, working miracles by the power of Satan, a winebibber and friend of sinners, etc. He was also living homeless, poor, and working incessantly. I'm sure Mary's love was sincere (His brothers were probably just embarrassed), and she was concerned about her Son, but her actions were also sincerely misplaced. Again, she is learning the lesson that Jesus had to be about His Father's business.

--While He is still speaking (**Mt. 12:46**), the crowd relays that His family is outside and wants to speak with Him. What is Jesus' response? Combining the accounts from Matthew (**12:46-50**) and Mark (**3:31-35**), we get this picture:

--First, Jesus asks the one who told Him, **Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?**

--Second, Jesus **looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him.**

--Third, Jesus **stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."**

--This simple passage has numerous important lessons:

--1) Our connection to the will of God, as revealed in the Word of God, is more important than our connection to human family. Blood ties, at best, are the *lesser* picture of the eternal family of God purchased by Christ's blood. *How many Christians through history and today are closer to the family of God than unsaved/estranged blood family?*

--2) Jesus claims the disciples as His own. Imagine this moment for the disciples! They left all to follow Him, and their culture was rejecting them for it. How important was this for them? Our relationship with God is established by our response to the Word of God. *This passage also clearly teaches that we don't need to pray to Mary to find favor with Jesus! Mary was wrong.*

--3) How many of us, like Jesus, will have family members who do not understand the will of God for our lives? Most of us, at some point in life, will be forced to choose between what God thinks and what our family thinks. We need to continue to obey Him.

--4) How do we relate to family that doesn't like us, or doesn't understand us? Jesus shows us the way! By obeying the will and word of God! Certainly, this *does not* teach us that Jesus doesn't care about His earthly family. In fact, it is just the opposite. Jesus' actions here teach us that God's way of winning family-in-conflict is to walk in God's will and obey God's word.

--If *family* forces you to choose between them or God's Word, you choose obedience to your Heavenly Father. Jesus' way to win family is never to compromise or disobey.

Acts 1:14: *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

--What are we left with?

--*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

--*Therefore take heed how you hear.*

--*My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.*