

Kingdom Secrets

Select Parables in Luke

MPS: We aim to stir the hearts of LifePoint Church by the plan and simple, profound and eternal, revealed truths of God's Kingdom set forth for deeper faith in Jesus to walk in greater obedience.

Seed-ready soil

Luke 8:4-15

MPS: God's Word gives abundant life to those who want it; who hear it, hold to it and humbly trusts in Him.

OBJ: Every person can discern how ready they are to receive God's Word by four soils.

God's Word gives abundant life to those who want it; who hear it, hold to it and humbly trusts in Him.

READ Luke 8:4-8

⁴And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, ⁵"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. ⁸And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus teaches by telling a parable, a story with a point taught for a specific purpose that reveals God's greater plan for life. This parable focuses on a seed that falls on four different kind of soils. Only one soil holds any lasting impact from the seed. But the yield it produces from the seed is unbelievable, a hundredfold. Jesus concludes by exhorting people, any who has ears, to hear. [Jesus says that how we listen to His words is important.](#)

TRANS But first, allow me to pause and make an introduction.

I begin a new Summer series today titled "Kingdom Secrets". "Kingdom Secrets" is a study of select parables in the gospel of Luke that seek to help and encourage LifePoint Church in two principles ways. First, we aim to set forth the plain and simple, profound and eternal, revealed truths of God's Kingdom. Second, we aim to stir the hearts of people to faith in Jesus for salvation, and to build and strengthen them in their personal relationship by walking in the power of Holy Spirit.

TRANS Let me begin by addressing a few **key terms** for this series.

First, when we speak of "**Kingdom**" we identify how God works and what life is like under Jesus' Lordship. [Learning to live in God's Kingdom now is a foretaste of eternity in Heaven with Jesus.](#)

Second, **parables** are a method of teaching that Jesus mastered while He was on earth. They present a unique and creative strategy for teaching eternal truths through stories that relate to real life. Leon Morris instructs, "'Secrets' are truths which we could never discover for ourselves, but which God has revealed. Parables both reveal and conceal truth: they reveal it to the genuine seeker who will take the trouble to dig beneath the surface and discover the meaning, but they conceal it from him who is content simply to listen to the story."¹ [Parables provide the opportunity to preach the profound, eternal truths of God's Word through the gospel of Jesus Christ, to stir the hearts of people to faith for salvation and to build and strengthen them in their personal relationship with Jesus.](#)

¹ Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 171.

Parables re-orient our understanding of God, self, our worldview and understanding of all things that exist. When we live in these kingdom secrets so that they come alive in us, we access an unlimited love for our lives and all those around us. Understanding kingdom secrets is not simply about making our life better or bigger, but making Jesus' name and His glory bigger in us and in this world. [Kingdom Secrets unleash a Christian to live for God's glory in this life and make an eternal impact in the lives of all others.](#)

Kingdom Secrets aims to challenge you to consider your whole life and the whole world in light of God's eternal wisdom as taught through these parables. [Kingdom Secrets series aims to stir the hearts of LifePoint Church by the plan and simple, profound and eternal, revealed truths of God's Kingdom set forth for deeper faith in Jesus to walk in greater obedience.](#)

TRANS His disciples immediately ask Him about the meaning of the parable. Jesus' response provides insight as to why some understand, and others do not. Today we want to consider who it is that can understand Jesus' words, and those who will not. Let's go back to the parable and receive what Jesus teaches about how we receive His Word.

READ Luke 8:9-10

⁹And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, ¹⁰he 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.'

Once Jesus explains why he teaches in parables, He then explains the parable for the disciples to understand. He says, Luke 8:10, that the disciples are given the true understanding because the secrets of the kingdom have been revealed to them, but to others it had not. Using Isaiah 6, Jesus points out that it was the Jews that wouldn't understand Him. Kingdom secrets aren't revealed to those of a special group, but those whom God chose to reveal them. [God's plan for His kingdom to spread is to plant the seed of His Word in the hearts of those who want it.](#)

Jesus clearly teaches God's truth through parables. However, due to the hardness of peoples' hearts, people don't understand what He is teaching. R. Kent Hughes explains it this way.

"Then Jesus called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (v. 8). Jesus was the Word incarnate, God's ultimate communication. His every fiber longed for his hearers to comprehend his spoken words that day.

But sadly, not everyone had ears to hear. Some understood, but many were perplexed. Even some of Jesus' followers were in the dark. Verse 9 tells us that they began asking him about the parable, and Jesus responded with one of his famous "hard sayings": "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' " (v. 10)."²

Q? Why do people not hear? What prevents you from hearing?

The posture of a person's heart determines whether they are ready to hear God's message. The biggest reason people get nothing from God's Word is because they don't want it. We don't want what God has for us. We want what we want from it, how we want it. We want it to say what we want to hear, and not have to hear what it actually says. This is often not a malicious or purposeful rejection. Rather, as the parable illustrates, it is a by-product of the kind of lives we live that just don't take time to honor God's Word as what it is, the living Word of God. We don't believe it can do what God says it can do. Or, we don't live with any sense of expectancy or trust that God actually works through it. [And when we fail to hear God's Word with expectancy our hearts are not ready to receive what God's Word says.](#)

² R. Kent Hughes, [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 286.

Jesus knew it was especially important for people to understand how a real disciple listened to the Word of God, probably because he saw so many that were unaffected by it when they hear it. So, he explains the parable to identify how we should be ready to hear God's Word.

This passage is important because Jesus shows what it means to receive his Word (8.8, 15), the responsibility that every person has in hearing God's Word (8.8), the fallacy of false followers who are not truly saved (8.11-14), and the dangers that Christ-followers must be aware of that battle against the Gospel in life. (8.11-14)

God's Word gives abundant life to those who want it; who hear it, hold to it and humbly trusts in Him.

Ask yourself this today. **What kind of hearer of God's Word am I? Do I listen like I want it?**

"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" **Luke 11:28**

READ Luke 8:11-15

¹¹Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. ¹⁴And as for what fell among the thorns, they are 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. ¹⁵As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

TRANS Jesus identifies four kinds of soils that represents the way we listen to God's Word.

Four kinds of heart soil

The first kind of heart is hard soil.

"those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved."

Hard soil is the person who hears, but because of hardness it does not reach the heart. The longer one lives without the soil of the heart being broken up and softened, the harder it becomes.

ILLUS Hardening the floors of huts in Nicaragua

It is interesting how water is the best agent to loosen the soil. But if it is not utilized, it will harden the soil. When God's Word is heard, it penetrates life. But if it is left, without life being considered in light of the word's presence, it dries to harden life more. The more God's Word runs over without life being considered, the harder the heart becomes. The harder the heart, the greater the toil to break up its fallow ground. **There is no neutral response to God's Word. When heard, you are either humbled to receive it or hardened toward God from it.**

Satan works to deter the Word of God from impacting people's lives. (1 Pet 5.8) We should be careful not to make too little of his work. We should be careful not to make too much of his power. He works to distract so when the Word of God washes over our ears we miss it by busyness, distraction and many other deterrents. The two hardest soils that resist the seed most are those that are cold and frozen, and those that are dry and hard. The person whose heart is hard soil is not a true Christ-follower. **The soil of the heart must be prepared to receive the seed so it can take root to grow.**

The second kind of heart is shallow soil.

"those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away."

Shallow soil has nowhere for roots to grow and take hold, or feed from. This person shows an initial reaction, but no lasting change.

ILLUS This is the **Church Junkie**. They often get really excited about church, about worship, about the activity of what revolves around Christianity. There's a whole lot of "whoopy" from them when they get high, but there is no "do" that follows when the rush wears off. Too much Christianity today is comprised of nothing more than moving people from one high to the next. **Church Junkies love the thrill and rush of it all, but when the thrill is gone they never walk in obedience to Jesus.**

Jesus teaches that the result of 'falling away' shows the reality of the initial reception. These people get caught up in emotional experiences, traditional practices or false hopes. Once the initial thrill subsides they feel dissatisfied, betrayed or frustrated. Many get mad at the church because "their problems didn't go away". They get mad at others because "they were not satisfied with the way people treated them or got offended." They get mad at God because "He didn't do what they wanted or at the Bible because it was too hard to make any lasting change. **Shallow soil always blames others, the church or God for problems or challenges, to avoid the convicting work of the light of God's truth.**

Shallow soil only searches for the next fix to get by, instead of bothering with deepening the soil of life for the gospel of Jesus to take deeper root for eternal impact. The person whose heart is shallow soil is not a true Christ-follower.

The third kind of heart is thorny soil.

"they are 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."

Thorny soil does not give the seed priority. 'Thorny soil' receives the "seed", just as it receives everything else. But the seed remains unknown because of the prominence of everything else. The seed is not prioritized, and therefore holds no significance. The seed may begin to grow but you won't let go of or say not to other things, so there is no room for growth. The heart and life are occupied by other things.

The "other things" that occupy the heart and life choke the seed. Thorny soil is filled with life's worries, riches and pleasures, and consumed by its busyness so maturity never happens. Thorns and weeds don't just appear overnight, they begin small and one thinks, "I can fix this", "I can control/manage this", "they don't look so bad." And then overnight they are out of control. Thorny soil buries the seed of God's Word under everything else so it cannot sprout in any area of life.

Thorny soil lacks any de-weeding filter. In the thorny heart there is an overall lack of Godly wisdom and discernment, no real shift of life's affection and adoration to Christ, and a lack of self-control and guardedness to flee youthful lusts, rid self of sinfulness or competing idols. Most of all this soil is not willing to be de-weeded. The thorny soil is so close to true Christianity, and yet knows nothing of its real goodness and glory. **When we love God's Word the same way we love everything else, we prevent His power from working in our life by giving less priority to that which is more glorious.**

The fourth kind of heart is good soil.

"they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience."

It may seem a bit strange for some to think of the heart as soil, but things grow in the heart: love, compassion, mercy, hate, bitterness, anger, jealousy, etc. **What's growing in your dirt?**

Good soil takes much hard work. The heart of good soil "hears" God's Word in a way that demonstrates its readiness and receptiveness. Acts 13:48 shows a right response to the Gospel when it says, "*when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the Word of the Lord.*"(Acts 13:48). Every time you hear God's Word, you must recalibrate all that is in your heart to honor the Word above all. **The heart of good soil "hears" God's Word by rightly honoring it, positioning it within to receive God's work.**

The heart of good soil “holds...fast” to God’s Word. Once the Word is rightly honored and placed with life to work, it saturates every area of life. The Word informs to lead us forth, shining light on sin for an honest look at our words, attitudes and actions. Then, it shines forth righteousness in relationship to our sin to lead us in God’s good work. [The heart of good soil holds fast to the Word by faith as it purges sin and root the righteousness of God’s truth thoroughly within us.](#)

Finally, the heart of good soil “bear(s) fruit with patience” in obedience to God’s Word. Faith perseveres to hold God’s Word until its roots take hold in us to grow and bear fruit. [The strength of our perseverance is sustained by God’s promise that He always perfectly completes what He starts.](#) (Phil 1:6)

[God’s Word gives abundant life to those who want it; who hear it, hold to it and humbly trusts in Him.](#)

CLOSE

Every person must consider their own life and ask, “Which soil am I?”

Only one soil represents a person who knows God in a saving relationship, the good soil. My intention is not to pressure a person into a decision, but to clearly define the Bible’s teaching regarding the person who truly lives in a personal relationship with Jesus.

Do not measure your life solely on one day’s receptiveness, but over a comprehensive view of your life. It is dangerous to completely measure your spiritual life in one small moment of time. However, no one moment should be excused from your spiritual evaluation. “Which soil am I?” can most accurately be answered by “[what’s growing in your life?](#)” [When we hear God’s Word but have no outward change resulting from inward growth is to ‘have an ear, but not hear.’](#)

WHAT IF one of the other soils seems to describe my heart more today?

There is work to be done, friend. No one must settle. All must listen in such a way that we “want” to hear; “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*”

Where is the Word of God speaking to you today? Let it soften your heart to God’s transforming truth by responding to it with faith. [What is going on within you and how you allow things around you to influence and affect you will ultimately determine how you receive and become transformed by God’s Word given to you.](#)

[IF you WANT to hear from God today, listen like you “want” it. Hear His word with faith in your heart. Take hold of the Word. Respond in humble confession, repentance and trust to obey as Jesus leads by Holy Spirit.](#)