

The Parables of the Sower and the Lamp

Luke 8:1-21

Luke 8:1-3: 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, 2 and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, 3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

Background Notes

The Lord and His disciples moved from one village to another throughout the countryside, and the Lord continued to teach and preach that the Kingdom of God was at hand. The first 3 verses of Luke 8 give some insight as to how the ministry of our Lord was financed, and this information appears only in the gospel of Luke. How was the ministry financed? After all, food and lodging requires money – as true then as it is today.

First of all, notice how the ministry was not financed. It was not supported by miracles, such as the Lord causing money to grow on trees. He could have done that, but He didn't. Second, it was not supported by fundraising. No pledges were requested, and no envelopes were passed out. The ministry was supported by voluntary and free will contributions - without any arm-twisting!

In verses 2 and 3, a number of women who supported the Lord's ministry are mentioned, including Mary Magdalene. The financial support of Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, was probably quite substantial. By the way, these women did not travel privately with the Lord and His disciples, which would have been considered scandalous. They were part of the large group of disciples that followed the Lord from village to village.

Doctrinal Points

1. The parable of the sower emphasizes receiving the Word.

Verses 4-18: And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: 5 "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. 6 Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. 8 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!" 9 Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?" 10 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.' **11** "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. **12** 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. **13** 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. **14** Now the ones that fell among 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. **15** 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. **16** "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. **17** For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. **18** 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." We don't have to wonder about the meaning of the parable of the sower because the Lord gave the meaning. Parables, remember, are verbal pictures. Just as artists have a main focus in their paintings, so the Lord had a main focus in His parables. The main focus in the parable of the sower is not salvation. It is how the human heart receives the Word of God. In Bible times, often the seed was sown first and then plowed into the ground. This explains why the sower in the parable sowed the seed on what turned out to be different types of ground. A couple of weeks ago I sowed some grass seed this way. I just threw the seed out on the bare spots and then raked it into the ground - and it grew!

The seed that fell on the **hard ground** was not received. In fact, the birds took it away. In the same way, Satan takes the Word of God from those who have a hard heart and are not open to the things of God.

The seed that fell on the **rocky ground** at first seemed to show signs of life, but the test of time proved in the parable that the Word was not received into the heart.

An illustration of rocky ground: When I worked with the Young Life high school ministry, I saw a number of teens "accept Young Life" into their hardened lives - but not the Lord and His Word. The true Word of God never got past their heads and into their hearts to change their lives. Praise the Lord, there were other teens whose lives were changed because they were good ground receivers of the Word.

The seed that fell among **thorns** was choked off by the thorns as soon as it began to grow. In the same way, the thorns of worries, money, and desire for success and the pleasures of this life keep the Word from being received by many human hearts. The Word is sown in churches on Sunday morning and may begin to germinate, but often by Tuesday it has been choked off by the cares of this world. How many of you can identify with that?

But when the seed falls on **good ground** that has been prepared by the Holy Spirit, only then is it received and only then does it grow and result in fruit. I trust you are a "good ground receiver" of the Word. Remember - the main point of this parable is not salvation or the possibility of losing salvation. This parable emphasizes **receiving the Word**.

2. The parable of the lamp emphasizes passing on the Word.

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. 17 For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. 18 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."

The small hand-held oil lamps of the 1st century were put on lamp stands in the homes so that maximum light could be obtained. In the same way, believers who have received the Word should let their spiritual light shine out to everyone. As the Lord said in Matthew 5:16, *"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven."*

It would have been foolish and unreasonable to place a 1st century oil lamp under a container or under a bed, and it's foolish and unreasonable for believers to hide the light that they have received from the Word. We should pass it on! In fact, verses 17-18 indicate that if we neglect to pass on the Word, we will lose out on our opportunity of being blessed. Our privilege and responsibility will be taken from us and given to others.

Again, the parable of the lamp has nothing to do with the possibility of losing salvation. Its focus is how we listen to the Word and pass it on, like a light shining in a dark room. Let's pass on the Word! The parable of the lamp emphasizes ***passing on the Word***.

Practical Application

1. Let's become members of the inner circle!

Verses 19-21: Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. 20 And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You." 21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

The brothers of Christ who are mentioned here are children who were born naturally to Mary and Joseph after the virgin birth of Christ. Two of them, James and Jude, wrote books in the New Testament. In these verses, the Lord wasn't disowning His natural family. His point was that when you are in God's spiritual family - when you have heard and obeyed His Word - then you are closer to the Lord than you would be even if you were related to Him by natural birth. Not only are we closer, but we are also given insight into the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. Verse 10, *"To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God."*

Are you a member of the inner circle? Not just a believer, but also a member of the inner circle? Do you listen to the Word of God? Do you hear and do the Word of God? Let's become members of the inner circle!

2. If you *will* not see, you *cannot* see.

Hopefully this practical application is not true of anyone listening to this Talk. Look again at what the Lord said in verse 10: *"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 word *mysteries* doesn't mean something weird or mysterious. Rather, it refers to a thing that was previously secret or hidden. Specifically, a *biblical mystery* is something that was hidden in the Old Testament, but is now revealed in the New Testament. There are a number of *mysteries* mentioned in the New Testament. There are mysteries (plural) about the Kingdom of God - truth about the Kingdom of God - that was not revealed in the Old Testament but is revealed in the New Testament. For example, the teaching that the earthly Kingdom of the Messiah would be postponed until His Second Coming, and in the meantime the Church, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, would be formed as the one Body of Christ - this is truth that was not revealed in the Old Testament.

These mysteries were now being revealed to the disciples, and they would continue to be revealed as the New Testament was written. But these truths were not being revealed to "the rest" (v10). Who were "the rest"? These people were the unbelievers in the crowd. The mysteries of the Kingdom of God were not being revealed to them. In fact, the Lord purposely gave parables to conceal specific truth from the unbelievers (v10).

Does that seem unfair to you? It may *seem* unfair, but it is not unfair from God's perspective. From God's perspective, ***if you will not see, you cannot see.*** This is a biblical principle. Truth is hidden from those whose hearts are closed to God - but it is revealed to those who are open to receiving and submitting to the Word of God. I trust that you are open to the Lord and His Word, because if you will not see, you cannot see.