

# Jesus and His Word (Part 2)

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[ 0 : 00 ] The Bible reading can be found on page 1036 in the Church Bibles, and we're reading Luke chapter 8, verses 1 to 21.

After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases.

Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had come out. Joanna, the wife of Chusa, the manager of Herod's household. Susanna, and many others.

These women were helping to support them out of their own means. While a large crowd was gathering, and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable.

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 ate it up.

[ 1 : 12 ] Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered, because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it, and choked the plants.

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, whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.

His disciples asked him what this parable meant. 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 is the meaning of the parable. The seed is the word of God. 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.

Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe it for a while, but in the time of testing, they fall away.

[ 2 : 36 ] 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.

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.

No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar, or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light.

For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Therefore, consider carefully how you listen.

Whoever has will be given more. Whoever does not have, even what they think they have, will be taken from them. Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near because of the crowd.

[ 3 : 45 ] Someone told him, Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you. He replied, My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.

This is the word of the Lord. Alright, good morning. Lovely to see you all this morning.

If you're new to St. Silas, let me give you a big welcome. You're in the right place to hear God's word this morning with his people. Thank you to Martin and for the band, John and his team for leading, and Ruth reading.

Let me pray for us before we start and look at this passage. Father, we acknowledge when we try and look at your word without you explaining it to us, Father.

It is like an earthworm trying to do press-ups. Please speak to us now, Father. Please explain your word to us now. May that which is helpful be remembered and that which is unhelpful be forgotten.

[ 4 : 48 ] In Jesus' name, Amen. Great. Well, we've been going through a little series in Luke's Gospel, chapters 7 and 8, entitled Jesus and His Salvation.

And that is not, we're not talking about the saving of Jesus, but the salvation that Jesus alone offers. And this week, we're considering the topic, Jesus and His Word, looking at this much-beloved parable, the parable of the sower that we've just read.

So time and again, in these chapters in Luke's Gospel, we hear the question being asked, who is Jesus? And Luke answers this question by saying that Jesus is the one who alone has the power to save the lost.

And the lost here are those who need saving, those who have been alienated from God, who are marginalized, who have been expelled from God's presence, who are hopeless and helpless and in need of rescue.

And so we've seen this time and again in these chapters of 7 and 8. We remember how the centurion's servant, the centurion was a Gentile and his servant was about to die, needed to be saved. And we considered the widow, how she was on the edges of society and how her son got raised to life.

[ 6 : 12 ] And then we considered, or we will consider, the demon-possessed man, the Gentile, and how he'll be delivered in coming weeks. And then we consider the sinful woman last week who needed forgiveness from her sins, who needed to be saved.

And what we notice is that Jesus saves these people through faith by the power of his word. So in these events, so what we find in these events is that Jesus' word is God's means of saving the lost.

And so as we begin our reading today, it's no surprise that what we find Jesus doing is proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God, of proclaiming his word.

And so if we are to be saved, we must pay attention to Jesus' words and persevere in paying attention to them.

And, well, that's really the point of the sermon this morning and the point of this much-beloved parable that we're going to look at, that if we are to be saved, we should come to Jesus, hear his word, and put it into practice, that we should believe it and persevere in doing these, that we might produce a crop.

[ 7 : 41 ] So firstly, our first point there is that we should come to Jesus. And that we should come to Jesus is seen by the context of this parable of the good sower.

So I wonder if you'll join me and look down and look at verse 4 there, and we read, While a large crowd was gathering, the people were coming to Jesus from town after town, and he told them this parable.

So if we are to be saved, we have to come to Jesus. You see, at the heart of the Christian gospel is not a set of ideas or propositions, but a person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So if we come to church today, if we're sitting here in church today, and we're more interested in the ideas of the Christian faith rather than Jesus, then we have not understood the gospel.

And if we are sitting here and we're more interested in the liturgy and the robes and the traditions, as helpful as they are, but we neglect Jesus, then we have not understood the gospel.

[ 8 : 48 ] If we want Jesus to do stuff for us, to give us things, to give us gifts, but we don't want Jesus, then we have not understood the gospel.

If we're tempted to move on from Jesus in any shape or form, if we disregard what he says and downplay his teachings, then we are in a spiritually dangerous place to be.

So here's a question for you. You'll remember that story in Matthew's gospel, how Jesus says, whoever wants to enter the kingdom of God must be like a little child.

Well, if you have children, I'm sure you'll know this, that for the most part, they disregard you. They ignore you. So you say, Timmy, come here, and they just carry on doing what they want. But as soon as they stub their toe or something, they make a beeline for their mom and dad, don't they?

They say, whatever's in the way gets knocked out the way straight to them. They go. They come to their parents without worrying, without distraction. And what does mom and dad do?

[ 9 : 56 ] They pick them up and comfort them. And what is the great promise that the Christian scriptures make? That Jesus says, come to me and I will give you rest.

But it's not simply enough that we come to Jesus. We need to hear his word. We need to listen to the Lord.

We need to listen to Jesus. So here is where. That's our second point. So when the people came to Jesus, we read, he told them this parable. It seems what happens in the parable, a sower goes out in the field and he throws some seeds on the ground.

I don't know if you sowed before or farmed before. And some seed falls along the path. And what happens? The bird picks it up and the seed doesn't sprout. And then some seed falls in a dry patch and that sprouts up, but it's got no root.

It falls away. And then some seed starts off great, but the worries of life, the thorns and the briars and the thistles, crowds it up.

[ 11 : 01 ] But some of the seed lands in good soil and sprouts and grows. Well, coming to St. Silas, one of the things that I found out quite surprisingly was that both Martin and myself have green thumbs, green fingers.

So at college, I had a little allotment. And let me tell you something. Gardening is hard work. Growing vegetables is hard work. Do you know that you have to start in January, in the middle of winter, you have to take this tiny little seed that looks small and insignificant, plant it in the pot, keep it nice and warm, nurture it up.

And then it's not enough. You can't, when they start sprouting, you can't just take them out and plant them. You need to harden them up. You need to take them out in the morning and then bring them in the evening. Take them out in the morning, bring them in the evening.

And then once you've planted them, you put them in the garden and the sun comes up, but also at the same time, the weeds come up and the bugs and the aphids and it starts eating them. It's hard work. So every morning you have to go out and water them and pick off all the aphids.

It's hard work to keep it growing. So here's a photo. That's me watering the plants there. And what do you know, I had a scare slug in there. I called him Mr. Pothead.

[ 12 : 15 ] It's a slightly naughty name. And then we had some vegetables. We grew some vegetables, lovely radishes and raspberries and tomatoes.

Lovely to eat. Delicious to eat. But then Jesus goes on to, once he told them this parable, he says, he commands them, whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.

In verse 8. Now, this might seem like a really silly thing for Jesus to say. You might say, well, what's he on about, Jesus? I've got ears.

I can hear. Of course I can hear. I've heard you. You've said it. Haven't you? But as every teacher or parent knows, the greatest distance in the world is from your ears to your heart.

But to apply and learn from what you've heard. So Jesus says, make sure you hear me.

[ 13 : 21 ] And friends, this is a very real temptation, isn't it, for us? We can come to church. We can say the right things. We can open our Bibles. Keep them open on the page now. We can read them. But we can actually not hear what Jesus is saying to us.

And there's any number of reasons for this. We might say to ourselves, well, I've heard this before. I've moved on from this. This is baby stuff. I want to move on in the gospel.

Go on to something more advanced. So I remember going for my driving test. I'd done my drivers in South Africa. Came over to the UK. Did the drivers over here. And my teacher said to me, you're unteachable because you think you know it all already.

It was very, very humbling. Mirror, mirror, I still don't have it. And then you might say, well, some of the things that Jesus teaches us, well, they're just not really relevant today.

They're just not. We've moved on from this. Some of them are a bit antiquated and unfashionable. These days are different. Or you might be sitting here today and simply say, well, I hear this.

[ 14 : 27 ] But it's simply just not true. Who can believe this if you're reasonable and rational? But Jesus instructs us, whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.

And here's the thing about reading our Bibles and listening to and hearing Jesus' words. I think Martin, when he preached on a similar passage to this, used the analogy that it's a lot like hitting an oak tree with the palms of your hands.

One of my lecturers said, listening to the Bible or learning language is a lot like painting a water color in the rain. It looks insignificant and pointless and futile when you're doing it.

And it's a lot like gardening, isn't it? So you take this tiny little seed, sprouting green broccoli, smallest seed in the world, baby marrow seed, courgette seed, absolutely minuscule.

You put it in the ground and it grows massively and huge. It looks insignificant, unimpressive. The results are slow to come.

[ 15 : 32 ] At first, nothing happens. You water the seed, nothing happens. You have to go out and do all the hard work. Nothing happens. But as you go, very slowly, nurturing it, surely by surely, the sun comes up, the sun goes down, and the plant grows bigger and bigger and bigger.

But then Jesus goes on to say something very disconcerting in verses 9 and 10. So he says, his disciples asked him what this parable meant.

And 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.

What's he saying there? What's Jesus saying there? Well, he's not saying that the secrets of the kingdom of God or the good news of the gospel is hidden from some.

He's not saying that as if he's saying, ha ha, I preach in parables so they don't understand and they won't be saved. He's not saying that. No. Jesus preaches the good news of the kingdom of God as clearly as he can, so that if there is any way whatsoever someone might listen and hear it and be saved, then they will be saved.

[ 17 : 11 ] But rather he's saying the good news of the kingdom of God is like a secret that's been hidden in plain sight. It's like diamonds strewn on the street or gold lying on the streets on Gibson Road.

If only someone would stop to pick it up. But people, because they're hard-hearted, they reject this teaching on the kingdom.

You see, for some, they'll come to Jesus, they'll hear the parable, and they'll rejoice in the good news of salvation. But others will come to Jesus, they'll hear the parable, and they'll reject his words, his teaching, as well as repugnant, as immoral, unfashionable.

And they look forward to judgment and not salvation. But in both instances, we recognize that God is glorified. But notice that Jesus, in his mercy and generosity, instructs us, he tells us the meaning of the parable and the parable, that we may be saved.

So if we are to be saved, we must come to him and hear his word. Well, it's not enough that we hear his words. We need to act on them.

[ 18 : 35 ] We need to put them into practice. And that's our third point there. And to see this, we're really going to be looking at the interpretation of the parable that Jesus gives in verse 11 and 15.

And the first thing that we notice is that the seed is the word of God in verse 11. And that it is to be believed.

So verse 11 and 12 we read, This is the meaning of the parable. The seed is the word of God. 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.

So firstly, to put the word into practice is simply to believe the good news of the kingdom of God. We need to believe the word in order to be saved.

The word is God's means of salvation for us. There is no other way to be saved than to trust what Jesus has said to us and in his death.

[ 19 : 50 ] Now, as a church, there are many temptations for us. We might be tempted to push for a church that's perhaps slightly slicker. Maybe the slideshows are slightly better.

Maybe the photos are slightly better on my gardening. Maybe the sound effects are slightly better. Maybe the lights are better. Or maybe we might be tempted to go for a church that's more, well, just more cuddly, more therapeutic, addresses our felt needs.

But if we are going to be saved and see others saved, then we are going to have to be a word-centered church.

I wonder if you noticed what the devil's chief means of attack is on us that will rob us of our joy and salvation. So take a look down at the second half of verse 12 there.

So that the devil comes, and what does he do? He takes away the word from their hearts so that they may not believe and be saved.

[ 21 : 01 ] He takes away the word from their hearts. What a chilling verse that is. So friends, the most dangerous thing that we'll do this week is sitting in church.

So even as we sit here listening to God's word, listening to the readings, we are tempted to either harden our hearts or to soften our hearts to God's worth.

Either we are believing the devil's lies or we are following and listening to Lord Jesus. So the devil has many schemes.

He might tell us that the word is simply not true, that it's a fairy tale, that it's something not to be believed. Or he might make it slow for us to apply the word to our hearts.

We might say, well, that was interesting. I'll think about it later. Think we are above it. Or the devil may make us cynical to the word, treating it suspiciously.

[ 22 : 07 ] We might change the Bible to say something that's more fashionable, echoing what the world says around us. And notice also that this might not happen all at once.

This might take years and years and years of slowly hardening our hearts to God's word, rejecting the word, saying no to the word, saying no to the word, saying no to the word.

Now the second thing that we notice is that to put the word into practice is to persevere in order to produce a crop.

So we need to persevere because there are many trials and tests that make us want to give up in believing the word.

And many do give up in believing in the word. So join me in reading verse 13 and 14. I'll just read it for us there. Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it.

[ 23 : 11 ] But in the time of testing, they fall away. The seed that fell among the thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on, they are choked by life's worries, aches, pleasures, and they do not mature.

And I think you and I both know folk who have come to the word and who have been fallen away through tests and trials and temptations. So John, Diane, Dave, Tom, Gordon, they have abandoned and rejected listening to the word, listening to Jesus.

But friends, here's the thing. Many start the race with great joy. They believe the word. They trust in the Lord. They trust in Jesus. But it is only those who persevere to the end who are saved.

Doggedly, determinedly, who carry on despite trials and temptations to win the prize. So I wonder if you remember the 2016 Olympics and Mo Farah.

If you follow sports, you might know the race that I'm referring to. What was Mo's greatest race? Well, it's got to be the 10,000 meters in that race, his third gold medal.

[ 24 : 40 ] But what made it so special? Well, in the heat of the race, Mo fell down. He thought his race was over.

But he stood up and carried on, doggedly and determinedly, and went on to win the race and win the prize. And if you're slightly older, you might remember slightly further back, you might remember Derek Redmond, if you remember the name, give me a nod there.

Remember Derek Redmond, semifinals, 400 meters, Great Britain runner, Barcelona Olympics, sprinting away, pulls his hammy, hamstring, the first 200 meters. And what happens is this big kerfuffle on the side of the track.

His dad comes running through. Derek keeps on hobbling the race. His dad helps him across the line. Doggedly, determinedly, persevering.

So, what are some things that we can do to help ourselves hear the word and put it into practice? Well, we can be reading our Bibles regularly and praying to God for insight.

[ 25 : 53 ] I know that many of us are very busy. Our lives are busy. We've got young families. We've got busy jobs. And this can be a struggle. But I also recognize that many of us make our lives more busy than they need to be.

And that crowds out our reading of the word. So, let me ask you, if you're a parent here or maybe thinking about parents, what's the greatest legacy that you can give your children?

Well, it's a love for the Lord Jesus. And we remember John Patton, the Glaswegian missionary to the New Hebrides, speaking on the legacy that his father left him as he went to the New Hebrides.

So, he says, how much my father's prayers at this time impressed me, I can never explain nor could any stranger understand when on his knees with all of us kneeling around him in family worship, he poured out his whole soul with tears for the conversion of the heathen world to the service of Jesus.

And for every personal and domestic need, we all felt in the presence of the living Savior and learned to know and love him as our divine friend.

[ 27 : 14 ] And then when Patton leaves his home, he goes on to say, what motivated him to do all those great things to Jesus? Well, this is father's legacy. So he writes, and then hastening on my way, I vowed deeply and oft by the help of God to live and act so never as to grieve or dishonor such a father and mother as he had given me.

Well, the next way that we can help ourselves is be committed to coming to church, to coming to our local church and hearing the Bible regularly preached.

Well, I am not, I'm not innocent, I'm not naive. I know churches can be awkward places, can't they? As we say an odd word there, that goes awry, we imagine a slight grudge there or something.

Can I challenge you simply to forget all the distractions, all the things that might turn you away from going to church, but simply come to church to pick one thing from your Bible reading that you've heard and think on that during the week and grow in that.

That will encourage you, that will warm your heart, that will challenge you to grow in the week. Maybe something from verse 15 in our reading this morning. So I'll read that for us.

[ 28 : 41 ] 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.

So how else can we help ourselves? Well, we can be praying over what we're reading in the Bible. We can pray to God for insight. Or, we can tell our friends friends about Jesus.

You see, evangelism is not because Jesus needs us to tell people, but because it is good for us. As we speak to our friends, as we tell our friends about Jesus, we get convicted of where we haven't lived the life that we've been proclaiming.

We need to open our Bibles to be able to explain and answer the questions that they're saying. We need to be praying for our friends. Evangelism is for us.

It's not for Jesus. The Lord can bring the whole world to him if he wants. Evangelism is for our benefit that we might grow in knowledge and love of our Lord.

[ 29 : 51 ] Well, in conclusion, so it's been a long passage and I have not quite managed to get through all of it. But what's the great thing about having an allotment?

Well, it's the harvest time, isn't it? We saw all those berries there. You get to invite all your friends over. So I had a great feast with my friends, had them all over, made a lovely yummy meal.

I made some raspberry ice cream, which was great, it was brilliant, it was very pink, but great. And what's it going to look like when Jesus, to come to Jesus, to hear his word and put it into practice?

Well, it's going to be becoming part of Jesus' new family. And families are places of feasting, aren't they? So look down and read verse 19 and 21.

Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near to him because of the crowd. Someone told him, your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to see you.

[ 30 : 56 ] Jesus replied, my mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice. And this will be a family filled with the most unlikely of candidates.

And we saw that from the start of our reading, don't we? So in that family we found Mary Magdalene who was possessed by demons. Well, that would have been awkward. or we find Joanna, the wife of Shusa, Herod, who murdered John the Baptist.

She would have had to have some questions to answer in the family. And Susanna and many others. These are outsiders that were brought into the family through the word.

And what do they do? Having come to Jesus, having heard his word, they put it into practice by helping and supporting as best as they could through their own means.

Well, this weekend I went to a wedding and weddings are great feasts, aren't they? They're great family occasions. And the Bible speaks of that final day when we'll be in heaven and there'll be a great banquet filled with the slightly awkward family who've been brought in through God's word.

[ 32 : 19 ] A wedding filled with good wine and yummy things to eat. And what is one of the great readings of the Bible that we often hear at weddings? I wonder if you remember.

Maybe it was read at your wedding. And this was the verse that was read at this wedding that I went to yesterday. And it made me think on this passage that we're hearing of today. I'll just read it for you.

It's from Ephesians 5, verse 25 and 26, which goes, Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

You see, Christ died for us to make us clean and to take away our sins. and that sin is symbolically washed away and removed through the waters of baptism, through that symbolic judgment and salvation that we go through.

But consider and look what the means of this salvation is that comes to us, that we might be invited to dine with Jesus in that great heavenly banquet, at that great marriage supper that we're looking forward to in heaven.

[ 33 : 42 ] Well, it's through the word. If we are to be saved, we must be people of the word. Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for this beloved parable of the sower. Please help us to be good soil, to hear your word and respond to it accordingly.

In Jesus' name, Amen.