

# Luke 8:1-21 // Let Them Hear

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Today's reading can be found on page 1036 of the Pew Bibles.! 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 among the path. It was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. 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.
- [ 1 : 4 9 ] 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.
- 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 for a while, 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 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.
- [ 3 : 0 3 ] Look, 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.
- Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd.
- Someone told him, your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to see you. And 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. Thanks be to God. St Silas, good morning, great to be with you. My name's Tim, I'm on staff here. It's a great privilege to be opening up God's word from Luke 8.
- [ 4 : 1 5 ] Let's pray as we come to this passage. Father, we thank you so much for your word. Thank you that you speak to us, that we don't need to guess who you are, because you've told us.

And you've told us what you've done. And we pray that this morning would not be wasted for any of us, as we come to hear your word.

And this invitation to hear your voice. And we pray that in Christ's name. Amen. An old football coach of mine used to love sharing his life philosophy with us when we were playing football.

Life, we were told, is as simple as look, decide, execute. Look, decide, execute. Whether you are applying for a job or you're driving a car, life boils down to look, decide, execute.

You evaluate the decisions around you. You make a decision as to what path you're going to take, what action you're going to make. And then you execute. You do it.

[ 5 : 23 ] Look, decide, execute. Any mistake that we made on the football field was because either we didn't look properly and evaluate what decisions there were for us to make with the ball when we had it.

Or we made a bad decision about what we should do with the ball. Or we didn't execute the skill properly. Look, decide, execute. I can still hear his words echoing firmly in my brain now.

I mean, there we were, sort of exhausted people who were losing badly in our game. And we were sitting in a philosophy lecture from our coach. It was odd. So, if I reflect on it.

It's not a bad philosophy to bring into Luke chapter 8 this morning. Because in our passage, we have an invitation to look at Jesus, to hear Jesus, make a decision about who he is, and then let the implications of that flow out in our life.

Look, decide, execute. If you're here today, supporting a baptism, or you're here today, and you're new to church, you're new to the things of God, or you've been here for a thousand times, there is an invitation for all of us to look at Jesus and to hear him rightly.

[ 6 : 48 ] Let's decide what impact he will have on our life. Let's start, and then execute. Three points for our time together. Hearing that hardens.

Hearing that produces. And hearing that bonds. Those headings are in the outline that you received on the service sheet and your way in. Let's start. Hearing that hardens. We're in Luke chapter 8.

Open up your Bibles if they are not open at the moment. And we're going to start right in the middle of our passage in verses 9 and 10. Right in the heart of it. It's in between the parable that Jesus tells and the explanation of the parable.

It's sandwiched between those things. Verse 9. Jesus' 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, disciples, but to others I speak in parables, so that, though seeing, they may not see.

Though hearing, they may not understand. Now, in case that isn't immediately clear, Jesus did just say what you thought he said.

[ 8 : 04 ] He tells parables to be deliberately cryptic. That's not what you expected, is it? I mean, come on, Jesus, parables are there to make complex things simple, aren't they?

Well, apparently not. Through Luke's Gospel, there's been an interesting relationship between Jesus and judgment. When he commenced his ministry in the synagogue, back in Luke chapter 4, he quotes from Isaiah 61 in the Old Testament.

And he deliberately leaves off the last line, or the next line, of the quote, which was that he was to bring the day of vengeance of our God. He decides not to quote that from Isaiah 61.

Then, when John the Baptist came, we saw this a couple of weeks ago, John the Baptist came and he comes and he says to Jesus, Are you the one that we are waiting for, or should we expect someone else?

And it is probably the case for John the Baptist that the reason why he's a bit unsure about this is because he was expecting there to be a little bit more judgment coming with God's Messiah. And Jesus again quotes the prophet Isaiah to John and he says, here are six things that you've seen in my life that are wrapped up with the Messiah.

[ 9 : 20 ] Now, blessed is anyone who does not fall away on account of me. I am the Messiah who was to come. Now, in Luke 8, Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah for a third time.

But this time, it's from right at the beginning of Isaiah's ministry. Isaiah chapter 6. And in Isaiah chapter 6, God is commissioning Isaiah, his prophet, to his ministry and it's a ministry of judgment.

A ministry where he will not be understood. He won't be agreed with. Back in Isaiah's day, Israel had wandered from God and been disobedient in so many ways that God was preparing Isaiah that they're not going to listen to you.

And in fact, the more you speak, the harder the hearts of Israel are going to be. It was a great frustration to Isaiah. And Jesus is saying that his ministry is going to be similar.

It is similar. Only a very few will listen to him and actually hear him. Only a very few will see his miracles and come to believe that he is the Son of God and orient their lives to follow him.

[ 10 : 43 ] As we track through Luke's Gospel, we see that some come to Jesus in faith, but many grow in their opposition to him. Some anoint him with oil and wash his feet.

Some plot how they can get rid of him. Some follow him wherever he goes. And some nail him on a cross. And sitting here in 2025, we're in the privileged position of seeing the inside word.

We're given the explanation that the disciples were given as to what is really going on in this parable. We know the end of the story. We know what happens next.

There's a warning for us. If we are content to hear Jesus, but we don't listen to understand him, then we are just like the crowds who milled around him in the first century.

To not hear is the first mistake that my coach told us that we could make on the football fields. If you don't even look at what is out there, you've got no chance of doing the right thing.

[ 12 : 02 ] And we would be fools to have made a decision about Jesus without having listened to understand who he is and what he came to do for us.

That is hearing that hardens. It's a warning that's right in the centre of our passage for today. The second point is hearing that produces, and we're going to go into the parable itself.

So just before that warning and just after that warning. And it's an explanation that we see about the parable of the four soils that Jesus tells. Now the point of this parable is that there's only one good soil.

I have heard, I've been in sort of debates before about, you know, is the third soil saved? It's just the wrong question. Jesus doesn't present it as something to aim for.

That's the thing that we need to hear today. His point is, the third soil, like the first and the second, is not a soil that's heard properly. But here's what happens with the seed in the four soils.

[ 13 : 05 ] There's the hard path. Well, for that one, the birds just pick it up. The devil takes away the seed. They don't believe they're not saved. They don't have ears to hear.

The rocky ground. These are the people who are in and out of Christianity. Right? It's Jesus this year. It's tarot cards next year. It's Buddhism the year after that.

They don't have ears to hear. Then there's the seed among thorns. They get choked. But the sun can't get in. The plant doesn't mature. They don't have ears to hear.

The good soil. The good soil is one that does have ears to hear Jesus and understand Him. It retains the Word.

And by persevering produces a crop in their life. A fruitful life in the Kingdom.

[ 14 : 05 ] But do you notice though that there's a missing row in the table that we've got on the screen? The missing row is important for us to notice.

Each of the soils that represent these people has a comment about their heart or a comment about their desires.

You see, the thing about the people that the soils represent is that they're not listening with their ears.

They're listening with their hearts. The heart is what needs to listen to Jesus. And if the heart of a person is hard to Jesus, like a path, well then the seed can't get in.

It just bounces off and the birds take it away. The rocky heart, that has some fleeting joy, but the rocks that are in the heart prevent it from taking root and it goes away too.

[ 15 : 11 ] The seed among thorns. Well, this is the most confronting to me as I read this.

As a family, we were in Germany over summer and we were staying in this beautiful area down in the south of Germany. Lovely sort of forested areas. And although it was quite hot when we were there in the middle of summer, when you're walking through this forested area, it was beautiful because there was just about no sunlight that came through.

Because in this forest, these huge tall trees had sort of grown up and then their foliage created like a canopy for the whole ecosystem. So other plants were sort of underneath, they were going to be struggling to grow because, you know, they would sort of pop up a little bit and they would be sort of twisted and contorted to different ways to try and catch a little bit of sunlight here, there or wherever it could.

So dense was the foliage of these trees. And Jesus says that the world we live in has trees like that which can form a canopy for our hearts.

And they produce an ecosystem where the things of God are always starved, never fully pursued.

[ 16 : 30 ] Whether by temperament you are prone to be an anxious type or a really driven type or potentially a bit lazy, there's a warning here for all of us.

Have a look at verse 14. It says, 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. Life's worries. What do you find yourself worrying about?

Housing, health, relationships. These things can form the canopy for our heart.

And God's Kingdom is underneath them straining for a little ray of sunlight. Getting choked. Riches. Riches. I remember a school friend of mine who said as a 19 year old in Bible study, I just want to earn enough so that money won't be a stress.

[ 17 : 49 ] As far as I know, he's not walking with Jesus at the moment. He's doing quite well professionally. But riches were the forest canopy for his heart. God's Kingdom was underneath straining for a little ray of sunlight.

But getting choked. Pleasures. Pleasures. If riches are the playground of the driven, pleasures are the playground of those who lack drive.

Or perhaps just are tired. Get distracted by cheap thrills. Anything that requires effort is too hard. The easy dopamine hit becomes the canopy for the heart.

And I've found that it's very, very possible for me to be someone who writes sermons, who pastors people, who's sort of doing Kingdom stuff.

And yet all the while have things of the world being the canopy of my heart. Soil health is not decided by a one-time decision back then when I decided to follow Jesus.

[ 19 : 02 ] You've got to keep weeding. And I find I need to keep praying that God would give me insight into my heart because the heart is a deceitful thing.

What we want to aim for is to be the good soil. Verse 15. It stands for those with a noble and good heart. It retains the Word.

But it's soft. And by attending to the Word, feeding it, allowing it to grow, persevering, there is a bountiful crop.

Thomas Cramer was one of the leading Christian thinkers in England 500 years ago. And his biographer, a guy called Ashley Nulls, summarized his teaching on how people work and live and make decisions like this.

What the heart loves, the will chooses and the mind justifies. You see, we imagine ourselves to be people who evaluate the alternatives with our mind.

[ 20 : 14 ] And then we make a decision with our will. And then we love that thing. But the truth is that we decide on things quite differently to that. Just reflect on how you make decisions.

Right? You desire to have the ice cream. And so you have the ice cream. Right? You decide upon it. And then you justify it. Well, I've had a big day today.

Or with positive things as well. Right? Your heart is concerned for your friend who's having a hard time. And so you decide to call them and check up on them and see how they're going.

And then it's justifiable that we didn't get around to cleaning the kitchen because you chose something that was better. But what the heart loves, the will chooses and the mind justifies.

And Jesus is showing great insight into us as people when he says that the decision we make about him will be determined by our heart and what our heart desires.

[ 21 : 19 ] We will only decide to follow Jesus if our heart has first heard him, is drawn to him, and begins to desire him more than it does the weeds of the world.

Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear. In verses 16 to 18 there's a similar image that reinforces the command to listen.

Think about it. Seed in soil goes from something that is hidden, that it's invisible, to something that is revealed. That's what the kingdom is like.

And similarly, Jesus says the kingdom is like, verse 16, a lamp that it's not hidden under a bowl but it's shared out with the world.

Verse 17, for there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. And Jesus is saying that the knowledge of the kingdom is going to be revealed more and more.

[ 22 : 22 ] And as Jesus goes on, as he goes closer to the cross and he rises again and his disciples carry this out, as Jesus, as the knowledge of him is only going to become more evidence.

Therefore, consider carefully how you listen now. Listen like good soil.

Listen like good soil. Now the thing about the four soils is that they do two things. They teach us about ourselves, and they teach us about the world.

They teach us about ourselves. You can't help but let them be a diagnostic tool for your heart. Which soil have I been? Which soil do I want to be?

But the four soils are also to prepare the disciples for mission. You see, in chapter 9, Jesus is going to send them out to proclaim the good news of the kingdom, just like he has been doing at the beginning of chapter 8.

[ 23 : 27 ] And he wants them to know that not everyone is going to receive their message with glee. Jesus is teaching about the world. Some will hear the word and be drawn close.

But some will hear the word and not gain any understanding. I think this is supposed to be an encouragement for us in our evangelism.

As you scatter seed, you are scattering something of enormous potential. That's what a seed is, isn't it?

The seed has the potential. It just depends on what soil it lands in. And you can't control the soil that the seed is going to land in. But don't let that stop you scattering.

Hear and produce a crop in your life and as the kingdom spreads into the lives of others.

[ 24 : 24 ] That's hearing that produces. And finally, for today, hearing that bonds.

When we listen to Jesus, we are welcomed into his family. We're bonded to him. And in the passage, there's this curious little bit at the end, in verses 19 to 21.

And Jesus is told that his mother and brothers are looking for him. And it almost sounds like he rebuffs them. But it's not a comment from Jesus to exclude.

It's actually a comment from Jesus to include. So, verse 20, someone told him, your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to see you. And Jesus replied, verse 21, my mother and brothers are those who hear God's words and put it into practice.

It's illustrated by the group at the beginning of the chapter in the first three verses. Who are travelling around with Jesus while he proclaims the good news of the kingdom of heaven.

[ 25 : 35 ] They are his true mother and brothers. Look at the end of verse 1. It says, the twelve were with him, as Jesus was going around preaching.

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. They were giving of themselves, experiencing personal cost, to support Jesus and the twelve's ministry.

It seems like they were gospel patrons of some sort. They were funding out of their own means. And they're an interesting mix.

We have Mary, who we know from the Gospels, is a former prostitute who Jesus has delivered from demons. Someone who would have been looked down upon in the first century context.

[ 26 : 46 ] We have Joanna, whose husband was Herod's right-hand man. In the first century context, someone who was looked up to. And then we have Susanna.

No story. Unremarkable. Just average. But the point is that this is not a usual band of friends.

They have been gathered together because they have bonded on to Jesus. They are those who, verse 21, hear God's word and put it into action.

They are good soil. What enabled their hearts to hear Jesus like good soil?

Surely that's the question we should be asking, isn't it? If, as we thought, we had this challenge to hear. The warning, right? Not everyone will hear Jesus accurately. In fact, many will hear and not understand.

