

The Powerful Purpose of Parables, part 2

Luke 8:4-10

So we've seen the sidewalk seed along the path. The shallow seeds sown on top of the bedrock. We've seen the suffocated seeds sown among the thorns. Let's look at the healthy super productive seed. Super productive. Verse 8, sown in good soil, "Some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundred fold." The good soil, it's not hard like the first. It's not shallow like the second. It's not unclean like the third. The good seed is cast into good soil, and the rich nutrient filled earth of a freshly plowed field.

The soil is soft, able to receive the seed. It's deep, it's capable of developing a deep root system that shoots roots down to life-giving water. And it's pure soil free from the seeds of weeds, free from the influence of noxious life-stealing murderous weeds. And in Jesus parable, that's the kind of soil that yields, what we see here is incredible growth. It turns out an extraordinary profit. In fact, this hundred fold profit is

totally unrealistic. This is such a staggering return on investment that we should see a hundred fold yield here as nothing short of supernatural. And that's exactly what Jesus intends for us to surmise. Good seed in good soil with supernatural growth from God.

Now, that's all that most of Jesus' audience could hear and understand. That's it. That's what they heard with their physical ears. Something familiar that's what they understood their natural mind, nothing more. And that is why Jesus cried out there at the end of verse 8, "He who has ears to hear." It says in verse 8, that as he said these things, that is very likely he said, "He who has ears to hear" before, during and after telling the parable. He said that a lot; he called out loudly. It says here, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

In fact, it's the imperfect tense he was calling out loudly and repeatedly, over and over. Jesus knew they all had eyes to see something spectacular here, which is what drew them to him in the first place. No surprise there. He knew they all had ears to hear something familiar. In fact, that was the problem. That's all they had ears for. All this was so familiar to them

that many of them in the crowd thought, Yeah, we got it. Nothing special here. He's an interesting storyteller, but that's it. They're spiritually dull. They're insensitive. They simply don't stop and bother to ask any deeper questions, because they don't sense anything deeper. They think, I've got it.

They should have known to look for a deeper meaning. Why? Because Jesus is the one speaking. It's not for nothing that this massive throng of people is standing at the water's edge looking out to a guy talking to them from a boat. It's not for nothing that they've traveled and left all their towns and cities and villages to gather here. If he talks, they should listen.

As we read in the last part of verse eight, as Jesus said these things he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." It's the verb *phoneo*, which portrays Jesus shouting out loudly. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." As we said, he did that repeatedly. Everyone has ears. They're all hearing him. They're all listening to his tale about the sower and the fate of all these little tiny seeds. So ears to hear what? Something

deeper, something of spiritual significance in this familiar tale.

So based on who's speaking here, based on the subject of this parable and the fate of seeds, based on the disproportionate terms he uses on the on the different kinds of soil, based on this supernatural return on the investment, and finally because he simply shouts out loud, leaving no doubt there's something deeper here. He who has ears to hear it, let him hear it. All those factors signal a deeper meaning, a spiritual meaning, something of great spiritual importance. People should insist about getting to the bottom of this short little parable, right?

For every true pastor, for every true goodhearted Christian teacher, at any level any, any Christian teaching other people, this reality is one of the hardest to bear, even though we understand it. We preach sermons, we teach truth, we evangelize, we disciple, we counsel people, we teach publicly, privately, we teach in larger gatherings, we teach from house to house, we teach individually and can be so sad to see people look you in the eye and tell you, Yeah, I got it. And they walk away

completely not getting it. You want to just reach into their chest and just turn on the switch. That their eyes would be opened.

Some people are hardened by blinding pride. Some people are dulled by shallow sinful desires. Some people are choked and distracted by other worries and cares and pleasures. When we see this out there, we see it in here. We see this happening in the world. We see it happening at work in the home, even within the walls of the church. People that only hear what's on the surface and they walk away, indifferent or critical or complaining, but eventually rejecting.

That was the majority reaction to Jesus' teaching on this occasion. No spiritually oriented, spiritually sensitive questions are forthcoming. They've missed all the clues. Why? Because, third and final point for today, they lack the heart to understand something deeper. They lacked the heart to understand something deeper. Jesus had called out, "He who" hasn't ears, "has ears to hear, let him here." And then look at verses 9 and 10. Not everyone in that attendance that day, thankfully, not everyone lacked the ears to hear the heart to understand

something deeper, most did. But the disciples had ears to hear, and this is such an encouragement to us disciples.

Look at verse 9, "When his disciple asked him what this parable meant," and by the way, they some time had passed between his telling of the Parable of the Sower, and when they asked they may have asked right then, but the, the time didn't, the opportunity didn't allow itself present itself for them to actually get private with Jesus and hear the full explanation. So some time has passed Luke has condensed the tale here.

But "when his disciples asked him what this parable meant" and, and oh, and one more thing. "When his disciples asked him" imperfect tense again, which means they were continually asking him. They were bugging him to find out, Hey what is what? That parable thing about the sower? What's the deal there? What's the seeds? The different soil? What's going on? They're asking him over and over. Jesus is like, Hey, just not, not yet, not yet. Let me let me get this real quick. He comes teaches more they're like, Hey yeah. Now by the way, tell, you know pulling on his robe and stuff. What's, what's the deal with that sower? So over and over there asking him what this parable meant.

Verse 10 he said, To you. To you, emphasis in the text. "To you, it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others, they're in parables so that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand." That cry, he cried at the end of the parable, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," that sentence draws a line across humanity that separates those with spiritual sensitivity and those without it. Jesus acknowledges and recognizes and reveals that spiritually speaking, there are two kinds of people in this world and only two. The spiritual have and the spiritual have not.

Let me give you just a few little subpoints to jot down in your notes as we cover these two extremely vital verses of explanation. Two verses answering the question we asked back at the very beginning. Why did Jesus speak in parables? For what purpose did he speak in parables? Several answers subpoint A. Let's not do use numbers this time. Let's use letters. Subpoint A: To distinguish the regenerate. To distinguish the regenerative. Or if you like, to distinguish the believers. To call out the believers. How did this happen? By this.

The disciples aren't satisfied with a superficial understanding. They are not satisfied; they want to go deeper. They didn't rest until they found the answer. His disciples asked him what the parable man again. As I said, he, they not only asked him, they kept on asking him bugging him. They kept after it until he explained the meaning of the parable to them.

According to Mark's account, the answer didn't come right away. Mark 4:10 tells us, "When he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables." So it's the twelve, but it's also probably those women we met in Luke 8:2-3, along with other unnamed, male, female disciples. They're all asking him. They want to know. They're asking him over and over. And as I said, it's not that Jesus is reluctant to explain the parables to them, they're just times when Jesus withholds an answer momentarily in order to draw something out that he wants to draw out.

In this case, it's the fact that they had ears to hear. They had a heart for truth. They're not content to know what Jesus just said in the parable. They want to know what Jesus meant in the parable. So they keep on asking. Sometimes, true

believers find themselves in weak churches, even sub-Christian forms of evangelical Christianity. I've even met a dear couple in our, Melinda and I, in our past, that came to Christ while they were attending a Catholic Church, and it was actually a like a Bible study attached to the Catholic Church that was all about charismatic, mystical experiences. Completely in darkness, and they came to Christ. And they just woke up and they start asking questions.

Sometimes, true Christians find themselves awakened in that context. Maybe the context into which they were saved, maybe they visited there with a friend or family member. Maybe that's the only church in town. A true believer, though, will become discontent with weak teaching. Impatient with poor teaching, especially intolerant of wrong teaching and absolutely angry at error. A true believer is going to become upset and uncomfortable and start asking questions. You know what that is? That is the, the presence of the spirit of God above inside of them, causing them discomfort, irritation, making them discontent and sending them out of that context to find good teaching and a true church.

The rest of the people who sit in that church satisfied with weak, erroneous teaching, why are they content eating garbage? Why are they subsisting on a diet of junk food? Swallowing sweet tasting trivialities week after week, why? Because they don't have ears to hear the truth. It all sounds pretty much spiritual to them. They don't notice the difference. In fact, they're often repelled by the truth and just can't stomach it. So Jesus use parables, tucking the truth just beneath the surface to provoke the true believer, to gently nudge him to work to find the answer.

Parables hide the truth enough so the lazy listener is not going to work to uncover its meaning, but true believers, those who are truly regenerate, they work to find the answers. They're not pew-sitters; they're Bible students. The heart of the regenerate is a heart that's willing to work to understand, work to gain wisdom.

In fact, like you'd to turn, just very quickly, back to Proverbs 2, Proverbs 2:1-5. Solomon is teaching his son and he's encouraging his son not just to gain wisdom, but to work hard to gain wisdom. That's how all of us should be encouraging those

who are younger than us in the faith. Whether younger in years or younger in knowledge and understanding, we should all be encouraging those younger in these, this same way, Proverbs 2:1 says, "My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments within you."

Notice that's a heart inclination to treasure good words. If you make your ear attentive to wisdom and incline your heart to understanding, yes, if you call out for insight, raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. You see all the hard-working verbs in that text. Make your ear attentive and incline your heart, call out, raise your voice, seek for it like silver, search for it as for hidden treasures.

The last two there, those are mining metaphors. If you're familiar at all with Colorado history, you know, you know something about the miners who search for gold and silver in the Rockies. Mining in the 1800s was incredibly hard and often deadly work. If you mind for truth and wisdom with the same effort that those guys mined for gold and silver with the same

abandon, with the same disregard for health and safety, with the same time commitment and energy commitment. You know what that means? Probably means you're regenerate. Blessed are you. Unregenerate people are lazy. And that's so sad because they miss out big time.

Subpoint B for your notes, why Jesus spoke parables. Jesus spoke in parables, subpoint B: to bless the regenerate. You could turn back to Luke 8:10. Jesus spoke in parables, not only to expose the regenerate, but to bless them to give them more truth. Solomon said those who work hard to discover the truth and understand it when they do that, God will reward them with the fear of the Lord. They'll find the knowledge of God. It's exactly what Luke says in Luke 8:10 or Jesus says in Luke 8:10 to his disciples, who come asking. He says, "To you, it has been given to know the secrets of God."

"The secrets of the kingdom to you," at the front of the sentence. It gives it special emphasis. He's saying, Jesus is saying, The fact that you're here, the fact that you're repeatedly looking for answers, pressing me for understanding, that reveals your blessed by God and to you it's been given.

Perfect passive, perfect tense indicating something that's happened in the past. God gave it in the past with results continuing into the present. Passive voice indicates that they are not the ones who went and got it. They are recipients of the action of the verb. God has chosen to give to them. They've become recipients of his gracious gift.

For the regenerate, for the believing, this means they have become recipients of divine grace, divine favor. God has granted them to know the secrets of the kingdom of God that begins with salvation, right? The fear of the Lord grants wisdom from God, which starts with the Gospel of God. The Gospel is the very pinnacle of divine wisdom resulting in reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. It's how God justifies the ungodly. Gospel teaches sinners to fear God to fear his judgment about their sins. The Gospel teaches sinners to repent of their sins, to embrace Jesus Christ in faith since he died for their sins on the cross and he lives to give them new life. The Gospel teaches sinners to deny themselves to take up the cross to follow Jesus Christ in lifelong obedience.

And that, beloved, opens up a treasure trove that Jesus here calls the secrets of the kingdom of God. The word secrets, I think, is a not a great translation. The word is *mysterion*, from which we get the word mystery. The word was common among the mystery religions and the second century gnostic cults. To refer to knowledge that's mysterious or mystical or esoteric. It's open only to special initiates, through secret rituals and, and religious rights.

When the Bible uses the word *Mysterion*. It's, it's, used only in connection with this parable in the Gospels, by the way, Matthew 13:11, Mark 4:11, Luke 8:10. Paul, though, uses the word *mysterion* 21 times in his epistles. He was thrilled to be numbered among those to whom it had been given the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Mystery here, it's just talking about New Testament truth. Just talking about truth that God kept hidden in ages past but revealed in the coming of Christ. That's what's been hidden but has now been made known to his elect.

It's the subject of Paul's ministry, to make known to the churches, the mysteries of God. That's what he told the Corinthians as he told them about the privilege of being

Christians. 1 Corinthians 2:7, "We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory." What wisdom is that? "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, nor has entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him." Those things God revealed to us through the spirit.

Those are truths that are the privilege of every true believer and, beloved, that is the blessing and the privilege of Jesus' parables for us, the regenerate. That's a privilege for us as true believers. The truths of the parables, they don't just fall open before us like, they're like sweet fruit that's hidden beneath the surface of an outer skin. We know what's there and we need to work a little bit just to just to penetrate, peel it back, and reveal the treasure that lies beneath the surface.

We are more than rewarded for our efforts because discovering the life giving fruit of the truths of God's kingdom means life and glory and peace. Sin is gone. Judgment is over. And nothing but life eternal. I just wanna say this and ask folks, what about you? Are you the sincere seeker or are you the

casual listener? Do you come because you're compelled to come, because you must know, you must understand, you must find trustworthy answers, God's answers to the questions that perplex your heart?

For those of you with ears to hear, I'd like to invite you back to hear the meaning of the parable. For those of you who don't know whether or not you have ears to hear, but what Jesus is saying and doing here has provoked your interest, I'd like to invite you to come back to hear the meaning of the parable too. And for all of us, let's close in a word of prayer.

Our Father, our God, we thank you that you have been the revealer of mysteries to us that you have favored us, your people, your elect, with ears to hear and eyes to see a heart that understands. We're so grateful to you for the truths in this text that encourage us, that sober us, that give us great cause for gratitude knowing that we are numbered among the favored by you. We pray, father, that you would save and sanctify many more besides that you use our witness. Help us to understand the profound seriousness of the things we're dealing

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with. Help us to lean in to work hard and discover the truths
that you have for us. In Jesus' name, amen.