

He Who Has Ears to Hear...

Lesson 7

Read Luke 8:4-15

Romans 10:17 says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” In this lesson we examine the ways different people respond to the gospel message and will challenge you to do some self-examination.

I. General observations about this parable

- A. This parable is explained. Verses 4-8 contain the parable, and verses 9-15 contain the explanation.
- B. This is, in many respects, the most fundamental of all the parables.
 1. In Mark’s parallel account, Jesus says, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all parables?” (Mk. 4:13)
 2. Part of the reason for its foundational importance is that it deals with hearing the Word and the ways that people respond to all the parables (and, indeed, all of God’s Word).
 3. Jesus explains that not all will come to know the “mysteries of the kingdom” – only those to whom it has been granted.
 4. The Bible has an amazing ability to yield its meaning to those who are hungry for it and to hide its meaning from those who are not. Parables especially are designed to *reveal* and *conceal* at the same time.
- C. The parable uses a farming analogy to analyze the harvest-bearing potential of God’s truth.
 1. The seed (= the Word) is constant (v. 11). The variable is the soil type.
 2. There are 4 soils depicted:
 - a. The wayside (“those beside the road”) = the hard heart
 - b. Rocky ground = the shallow heart
 - c. Thorny ground = the divided heart
 - d. The good ground = the good heart (responsive and fruit-bearing)
 3. Notice that each of the successive soil types represents an advance over the previous one.
 - a. I.e., the rocky ground represents those who hear the Word and receive it with joy. People who are like wayside soil don’t even give the Word a chance to germinate.
 - b. The thorny ground heart produces a plant that lasts for the long haul, unlike the rocky ground, which produces a temporary sprout.
 - c. The good ground is productive of a desirable harvest, unlike the thorns.
 4. People are not predisposed by force to fall under one of the four categories against their will.
 - a. It is entirely possible that a person whose heart is hardened against the truth at one point in life will yield later on, after his heart is softened.
 - b. In fact, one purpose of this parable is to challenge us to be like the good ground.
 - c. Notice that Jesus, as He said these things, would call out, “He who has ears

to hear, let him hear” (v. 8). He evidently repeated this saying to emphasize the point!

II. The challenge to you

- A. The *wayside* (vv. 5, 12) – why don’t some people give the Word a chance?
 - 1. Prejudice
 - 2. Preconceived notions
 - 3. Blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4)
 - 4. Can that happen to you?
- B. The *rocky soil* (vv. 6, 13) – why don’t some people stay with it?
 - 1. They lack depth of commitment
 - 2. They haven’t counted the cost
 - 3. They allow temptation to pull them away
 - 4. They fall away
- C. The *thorny soil* (vv. 7, 14) – why don’t some people become productive?
 - 1. They are choked with worries
 - 2. They are choked with money
 - 3. They are choked by pleasure
 - 4. What are some of the ways this happens today?
- D. The *good ground* (vv. 8, 15) – why aren’t all people like this?
 - 1. They really listen to the Word
 - 2. They have a good and honest heart
 - 3. They have staying power
 - 4. They bear fruit, no matter what

Final question: which of these soil types represents *you* right now?