

Sermon Outline

WHY DO GOOD NEWS BECOME BAD? (LUKE 8:1-18)

Sermon idea: *Because hearing of God's word is an issue of spiritual life and death, we must consider very carefully how we are listening to the word of God.*

I Introduction

II Because hearing of God's word is an issue of spiritual life and death, we must hear the Word with thankfulness. (v 1-10)

A. Context

1. Jesus and his disciples are beside the Sea of Galilee. (Mat 13:1, Mar 4:1)
2. A huge crowd followed and came to Him.

B. Jesus told a parable

1. What is a parable.
 - Stott: Earthly story with a spiritual meaning.
 - It is the comparison of two subjects, putting them in parallel for the purpose of understanding.
2. This parable was straightforward and not a particularly intriguing parable
 - About a farmer with a bag of seed under his arm scattering seed on his plot of land where there were attendant dangers of both poor soil and pests.
3. Jesus cited 4 places the seed fell— compacted pathway, rocky outcrops with surface layer of mould, thorny ground and finally good arable soil.
 - Same seed, same sower but 4 different results depending on where the seed landed.

C. Jesus highlighted that all hear that gospel but not all are saved.

1. Before ending the parable, Jesus raised his voice and called out - "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."
 - We can hear but are not listening.

- Difference between mere hearing and listening. Listening leads to learning.
2. But the implication is this : all might hear the good news but not all are saved. Why?
 - To have ears to hear is to persevere to know more in our listening even if we make a little sense in the first instance of what we hear. Matt 13:9,43; Mark 4:23, Luk 14:35

D. Jesus explained why he told a parable (v 10) to those who asked

1. The reason is given in v 10 – *To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.*”
2. In v 10 , there are 2 distinct groups of hearers – disciples (you) and others
 - Parables are for “others” so that they cannot see or understand.
 - But to his disciples they are given to understand the message.
3. The parable was acting as a filter – sieving out the hearers. Instead of making it easier to understand he is making it more difficult.
4. Doesn't Jesus know anything about evangelism? Doesn't he know we are to make it easy for hearers, lure them and not drive them away. Why?
5. The reason is found first in Isa 6:9 :God spoke to them in a form they couldn't understand. The message will be concealed from them. Rom 1:28
6. The other reason is circumstantial: to sieve out the present crowd who came to Him for a variety of reasons. All but perhaps for the right reason of entering into the kingdom:
7. Jesus could do anything with the crowd to sway them to his side. But instead he merely told them a simple parable.
8. Jesus made sure those who came to Him were those who seek to enter the kingdom of God that they might be saved from their sin and unrighteousness.

E. Jesus explained the parable to his disciples

1. Against this backdrop, those that stayed would be like those disciples who get to know the meaning of the parable.

2. The secrets of the kingdom of God are the glorious gospel truths concerning Jesus Christ and the establishment of His kingdom in the hearts of all who repent and confess Him.

3. Hence we should be thankful when we see and able to understand the gospel truths. Because not all who are evangelized are saved.

III Because hearing of God's word is an issue of spiritual life and death, we must hear the Word with much care. (v 11-15)

A. Let us drill down and learn from Jesus more about this parable

B. Jesus proclaims the seed is the word of God.

1. Whether the seed will grow to have heads of grain in the end depends on the condition of the soil. That is the main point of the parable. That's the reason what this often called the parable of the soils rather than the Sower.

2. The seed is the word of God that establishes the kingdom of God in the hearts of man.

3. But today, we have literally turned the Parable of soils to a parable of the sowers. Why ?

4. But beloved, the seed is the word of God. Not methods, gimmicks, drama, music, magic and showmanship. The seed must be the main tool, preachers are to use to proclaim the good news of the kingdom.

5. Hence how we listen and received the word is crucial. It is a matter of life and death with regard to entry into the kingdom of God.

C. Mark highlights (Mk 4:13) that this is the most fundamental of all parables.

1. "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"

D. Jesus graphically points out how the word has no lasting effect in the lives of hearers from the parable. Jesus warns us that evil influences and worldly hindrances can make the word ineffective in our lives:

1. vv12 warns that no matter how good the preaching might be, the Devil can snatch it away before it even takes root.

2. vv13 are those who are the superficial ones or fair weather Christians. Joyful on hearing the word but with trials coming into their life , they drop out.

3. vv14 are those with those with divided hearts. One foot in the kingdom of God and the other the world.

4. Beloved when we hear with hearts that are impervious, shallow and choked, the word becomes ineffective in our lives. Hence we must listen to the word with great care. With what heart condition we hear the word determines the outcome of the word in our lives.

IV Because hearing of God's word is an issue of spiritual life and death, we must hear the Word with obedience. (v 18-21)

A. What about the encouraging condition of the honest and good heart

B. The honest and good heart is likened to the good soil. It holds fast or keeps and retains the Word it received.

1. To keep the Word is to obey the Word and do what it instructs. It is not cerebral.

2. Hence it bears fruit and that with much endurance. Those who speak of the Christian life that is without trials is unbiblical. On a wrong track altogether.

3. Matthew and Mark describes yield of varying amounts – 30,60,100 fold. Bottomline is they bear fruit. There is change and transformation in their lives.

4. Ephesians 2:10 says, believers are created in Christ unto good works. And every branch that abides in Christ, John 15 :2, brings forth fruit.

5. Then v 21 family members of Christ are those who hear the word and do them.

C. At what stage of hearing is the parable describing the heart condition of hearers

1. Is it at first contact with the Word? Or is it after repeated hearing?

2. Lenski is most helpful. He said what the parable is describing is the final fate of the Word in the hearts of men. Word of caution and reflection on improving our listening while we can.

V Tying the loose ends

A. The hearing dilemma

1. Church is a dangerous place. In certain sense, it is better we did not hear.
2. Vv 18 clarifies that. *As much as those who listen fruitfully, more will be given, those who hear fruitlessly even what he thinks he has, will be taken away from him.*
3. When we persist in fruitless hearing, our hearts will be hardened. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing (Heb 3:7)
4. On the other hand, when we hear fruitfully, more and more blessings will be given. *“The gifts we have will either be continued to us, or taken from us, according as we do, or do not, make use of them for the glory of God and the edification of our brethren.”* (M Henry)

B. Heart of right hearing

1. True, clear and sound preaching cannot be overrated in church. But it can only be effective if there is right hearing
2. Right hearing as Ryle emphasized is about faith, reverence and prayer.
3. Hence v 28 of our text exhorts us to take care how you hear the word of God. Not that you hear but how you hear.
4. When you are unmoved and untouched by the word of God preached, the first thing you need to do is to check the condition of your heart. Beware of being content with a faith which does not bear fruit in our lives
5. Are you hearing with hardened heart of indifference, criticism, and defiance? Don't be too quick to find the fault of your not hearing in others.
6. God loves to see his children listen to him attentively, expectantly, lovingly like our lives depend on it? God grant you grace to listen carefully when His word is broadcasted. Ask that your hearts be ploughed by the Holy Spirit to rid the stones, weeds and break the hardness of our hearts.