

Sunday, July 30, 2023 | Everyday Disciple

Week 15 | Luke 8:4-21 | “Hearing & Listening”

Last week, we got a closer look at Jesus' entourage. And we learned that besides the twelve apostles, Jesus had many female disciples who served alongside the Son of God. And these ladies were instrumental in laying the groundwork for God's upside-down kingdom because they were among the first to use their time, talents, and treasures for Jesus. This taught us that **beneficiaries** of God's work become **benefactors** of God's work.

Today, we'll be talking about the proper way to *listen*. After all, hearing something doesn't always mean you're actually listening. As G.K. Chesterton put it, “There's a lot of difference between listening and hearing.” Kids are known for this. A child will hear something you say but won't always *listen* to what you've said. In other words, though they have no trouble understanding your words, they will often refuse to obey. All listening is hearing, but not all hearing is listening.

The same principle applies to our relationship with God.

Admittedly, there are parts of Scripture that are difficult to understand (i.e., Revelation), but there is much in God's Word that is easy enough to comprehend (cf. Prov. 3:5-6; Jn. 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9; etc.). Thus, the problem we have when it comes to growing in our faith isn't that the Bible is unknowable; we can all hear His Word clearly enough. Instead, like some strong-willed child, our problem is that we often fail to listen—i.e., obey—to what we already know the Bible has told us to do. First and foremost, the disciple isn't simply a “hearer” of God's word; the follower of Jesus is also a listener, an obey-er, and a “doer” (cf. Jam. 1:22-25).

In fact, our faithful narrator, Luke, devotes the following three passages to explaining how important it is to hear God's voice and listen to his Word.

Luke teaches us three things about listening:

- i. How you “hear” God determines your **fruitfulness** (vs. 4-15).

READ: Luke 8:4-15 (ESV)

⁴ And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, ⁵ “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶ And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷

And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. ⁸ And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

⁹ And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, ¹⁰ he said, “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.’

¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God. ¹² The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the Word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the Word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. ¹⁴ And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵ As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the Word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

Traditionally, this passage has been called ‘The Parable of the Sower.’ And while there is a “sower,” the emphasis is more on the four kinds of dirt than the farmer. As such, I think a better name would be ‘The Parable of the Soils.’ Jesus wants us to focus more on how the Word of God is received than presented. After all, the Scriptures are given to everyone, but not everyone becomes a believer. Why is that?

Jesus explains there are ***four*** different types of listeners:

1. Those who hear but are prevented from believing because of the devil. Like some birds eating the seed on the path, Satan works against God and steals away His Word from the hearts of would-be believers. This does not mean people are helpless. As we'll soon see, the devil could only take away God's Word because the person was too hard and stubborn. Had that listener heard the Word and received it, like the good soil, Satan himself would not be able to take God's Word away from one so quick to believe. Nevertheless, we should all be aware that the Devil is present in church as God. And he is working from the time church starts to its end.
2. Those who hear believe for a time but do not fully internalize their faith. Like some seed that sprouts but withers away due to a lack of depth, these would-be Christians have a casual faith. It is enough that they will identify themselves as a believer so long as

things are good. But the moment things get tough, they shed their Christian identity to blend in with the crowd. They like the idea of Christ but not the idea that they would have to suffer like Christ.

3. Those who hear but are prevented from believing because their lives are already too full. Like some seed that falls among the weeds, these people would've become believers if not for how cramped their lives were already. But what exactly was taking up all the nutrients? Jesus lists three things: "cares" (which is to say worries), "riches," and "pleasure." So, God's Word would've taken root in someone's life, but they were too afraid to allow the Scriptures some room. God's Word would've taken root in someone's life, but their heart was set on their bank account. And God's Word would've taken root in someone's life, but they dead-set on living the "good life."
4. Those who hear and take hold of it so that not even the Devil can snatch it out of their hands are those who believe. And they bear fruit with patience, the evidence of a changed life. They withstand trials and temptations, allowing the roots of God's Word to penetrate even deeper into their life. And they uproot those things (i.e., cares, riches, and pleasures) which might prevent God's Word from encompassing the entire field. Good soil is the person who not only allows God into their life, but they are also the one who allows God to take complete control of their life. They know that to follow Jesus means enduring tribulation, and they are ready. And they resist the devil whenever he rears his ugly face.

Jesus began this parable by exhorting the crowds, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." He then explains 3 ways his audience shouldn't hear and one in which they should. And for those who hear, listen, and take hold of God's Word, Jesus promises that fruit will spring up. Though this won't be instantaneous. It will take, as the Lord says, "patience." But, eventually, those who hear God's Word and walk God's way will live a fruitful life.

ii. How you "hear" God determines your **trustworthiness** (vs. 16-18).

READ: Luke 8:16-18 (ESV)

¹⁶ "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.

¹⁸ **Take care then how you hear**, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

In an age where lamps were fire hazards, putting one under a bed would not only be pointless as the light would be diminished, but it would also be stupid as the fire would catch the bed on fire. Lamps are meant to be seen. Likewise, so is God's Word. It is not meant to be hidden. It is intended to be used and displayed for all to see. And indeed, many Christians today proudly bask in the light of the Bible. And to them, God promises to illuminate their lives even more. What little Bible they know, use, and obey will multiply. Prov. 9:9 says, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning." Your trustworthiness increases. You become more dependable, so God entrusts you with greater knowledge, insight, and understanding. He invests more in you the more He sees you taking care of those things He's already given you.

But what does God do to those individuals who do not respect his Word? He takes it back. Whatever good they've gleaned from Scripture will be taken away if they don't continue on that path. And this isn't like you become rusty as if you once knew how to play an instrument and need a refresher. No. Jesus says that even what people "think" they have will be taken away. In other words, you had best take care of how you "hear" because, if not, God's Word might not be there when you need it most.

iii. How you "hear" God determines your **genuineness** (vs. 19-21).

READ: Luke 8:19-21 (ESV)

¹⁹ Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." ²¹ But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who **hear** the word of God and do it."

Are you genuinely a part of the family of God? If so, Jesus says that the key characteristic distinguishing genuine followers of God is not some familial bond or some family trait but obedience to God's Word. God does not want scribes; he wants servants.

So, what's the takeaway?

Hearing God's Word is pointless if we're not also **listening** to God's Word.

Hearing God's Word is not a passive exercise but an active listening to God's will.

Video Description

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: