

**Home : Sermons : Mar 12, 2006****Authentic Hearing – Luke 8:1-21**

Introduction – These stories are all about hearing, and particularly on hearing the Word of God. Hearing is mentioned in v8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, and 21. It is also a passage on the various ways that God uses His Word. It is also a passage full of exhortation to us as to how we are to receive the Word. It is almost as if there should be a warning before every sermon or reading of the Word of God: “Handle with care – use of this product will have great effect, for good or ill.”

The Entourage (vv1-3) – Jesus had many disciples with Him, including many women. Let us be clear: Jesus had women disciples. This in itself would have been revolutionary in its day. Even today, as you consider the world’s religions, Christ’s gospel stands out in the dignity and honor shown to women. While women are forbidden from teaching in certain contexts (1 Tim 2) they are required to be learners, disciples, and teachers in other contexts (Titus 2). The pages of scripture do not teach egalitarianism, but neither do they teach a demeaning role for women. And so, men AND women need to take heed to hear the Word of God. Men AND women are called to be disciples of Jesus.

The Parable of the Soils (vv4-10) – After telling this parable, Jesus cries out, “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*” But the disciples need help in understanding this parable and Jesus takes the opportunity to teach about the nature of parables (v 10).

Mysteries – The gospel is not a club with secret handshakes. Nor is it a place where you arrive at some form of higher enlightenment. But the gospel does go out in such a way that some ears are opened and some are stopped (1 Cor 2:14). This is not frustrating the Lord’s work – it is the Lord’s work. Jesus proves this by quoting from Isaiah 6:9-10. The ministry of Isaiah was a type of the ministry of Jesus. Parables were given for two reasons. One reason was for God to make known the mysteries of the kingdom of God. The other reason for God was to darken some to the Good News so that they would not turn and have their sins forgiven. This is the wonderful truth of the absolute exhaustive sovereignty of God (Rom 9:19-24). As we read the full prophecy of Isaiah 6 we can see that this darkening was to go on until the land is destroyed and the remnant spared. Christ is bringing this judgment to bear upon Old Israel while establishing the New, worldwide, Israel.

Interpreting the Parable (vv11-15) – Jesus interprets the parable for them and us and teaches us about how to interpret parables.

Hard Hearts – There are those who hear the gospel, hear it well, hear it many times, but Satan snatches it out of their hearts lest they should believe and be saved.

Impatient, Shallow Hearts – Like a great tent revival meeting, some receive the Word and immediately spring up. They have great excitement and exuberance for a while, but not persevering faith – and temptation causes them to fall away. Trials cause them to be offended and they wither away.

Mixed Hearts – Other seed falls among those who are easily distracted. They receive the Word, but assorted lusts, over time, demand their attention as well. They come to worship and grow, but there is also a growing competition for their hearts – the cares, riches, and pleasures of this world. It often happens slowly and subtly, but over time, these weeds own the garden and choke the plant.

Good Hearts – Finally there are those who receive the Word and “*keep it*” (*hold fast*) and bear fruit. This one brings forth fruit, doing so with patient, sustaining endurance.

The Parable of the Lamp (vv16-18) – This parable is also about how one listens (v18). The Gospel is an illuminating light on a stand. The teaching of the kingdom of God is done openly for all to hear, it is not done in secret. But hearing this teaching brings us all into the light which exposes us. How we listen (or fail to listen) to the Word of the Lord cannot be hidden forever, for the nature of the Gospel is to reveal all things to the glory of God. There are things yet hidden (like the seed in the ground) but it will all come to light fully – and so there is another emphasis on patience here. But over time, fruit will reveal all. Whoever really has been given this gospel, to him even more shall be given; and to him who heard but didn’t really receive, even what appeared to be his will finally be taken away. “*Therefore, take heed how you hear*” Jesus says, emphasizing the free will and responsibility of man to choose to respond to the Word as well. Jesus is not contradicting Himself as He assumes both the doctrine of Man’s Responsibility and God’s Exhaustive Sovereignty.

The True Family of God (vv 19-21) – This short story emphasizes again the importance of authentic hearing. Far from demoting His own family, Jesus is really promoting all of those who hear and obey His Word. This means that this text cannot

be used to deny one's family obligations 'for the sake of the gospel.' That's not the point. The point is that those who "*hear the word of God and do it*" are those who are really just as much a part of the family of Jesus as were Mary and Jesus' brothers. Paul will tell Gentiles that they are the true sons of Abraham if they have the faith of Abraham. And that faith is a faith that hears, believes and then obeys.

There was a great multitude that had gathered to hear Jesus (v4) and that is the way it goes with the gospel, with evangelism, and with church-life. Many will claim they are followers of Jesus, claim that they have received His Word, and claim that they have had a born again, joy-filled experience. Hearing and experiences are not enough. True discipleship is evidenced by enduring fruit, by holding fast, and by obeying what God has given you to do. No one is born with good soil, with open ears, with a heart that responds rightly to God. But if you hear the Word and are convicted of your apathy toward God and the things of Jesus, cry out to Him for a new heart. Our Lord loves to make new hearts, and He loves to make hearts new. *Dave Hatcher- March 12, 2006*