

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 2/21/93 PM
Luke 8:4-15 "How to Identify a Genuine Christian"

Children's Story: "The Parable of the Four Soils"

Intro: Lots of people call themselves a "Christian" these days.

Illust:

Q: How can you tell who is genuine? How can you identify a real Christian?
Jesus told a parable that addresses that very issue. In fact Jesus faced the very predicament we're describing. Turn to Luke 8.

8:1 "And it came to pass that He went throughout every city and village..."

Jesus' popularity was soaring. Curious crowds poured in to see and hear Him. He couldn't escape the multitudes. Wherever He went there were throngs of people longing to be with Him.

8:4 "And when many people were gathered together...He spoke a parable."

You need to realize that though scores of people were fascinated with Jesus, there was a mixed response to His ministry. Some people, like the religious leaders, hated Jesus. A small few, like the disciples, left all to follow Jesus. And still others, the majority in fact, were fascinated with Jesus and responded favorably to Him. But for the wrong reasons.

Q: Is it possible to come to Jesus for the wrong reason?

A: It sure is. Jesus told a parable to unveil the wrong responses to Him. And listen. Just as people responded wrongly to Jesus in His day, people still are responding in wrong ways to the message of Jesus today.

Illust:

Q: So what's the right way to respond to Jesus and to the Word?

Proposition: In the Parable of the Sower in Luke 8:4-15, Jesus identified 4 types of people who make 4 different responses to the gospel.

I. Jesus tells the Story (4-8).

II. Jesus tells the Significance of the Story (11-15).

- A. There are Hard-Hearted People (12) -- Fossilized People.
- B. There are Shallow-Hearted People (13) -- Fickle People.
- C. There are Half-Hearted People (14) -- Frivolous People.
- D. There are Good-Hearted People (15) -- Fruitful People.

I. Jesus tells the Story (4-8).

We commonly refer to this story as the Parable of the "Sower." But the story really is not so much about the Sower as the Soil. It's the parable of the Four Soils.

The problem in the story is not with the Sower. Nor with the Seed. The problem lies with the soil.

V 5 "A sower went out to sow"

Farmers in Jesus' day didn't use John Deere tractors. In this story, a common first century farmer used the primitive method of farming. He broadcasted his seed. He had a sack of seed over his shoulder, and he walked through the field. As he went he scattered the kernels of grain all over the ground.

Where did the seed land? In four places.

A. Some seed landed on the Hardened Pathway (5).

Can you picture the field. Around the field, and perhaps through the field were walking paths. People trodded on these paths. So did their wagons and animals.

What did the traffic do to the soil on the walking paths? It packed it down, and made it hard. So hard that what happened to the seed that fell there? It could not penetrate the soil, and thus could never germinate.

v 5 "it was trodden down, and the fowls devoured it"

B. Some seed landed on Rocky Soil (6).

V 6 "And some fell upon a rock..."

Some soil is rather deceptive. From the surface it looks OK. You see dirt. But what you don't see is that the topsoil is only an inch deep. That's enough room for a seed to germinate, but it's not enough room for the plant to establish its root system.

Soon the plants popped their heads out of the rocky ground.

Did they last? No. Why not? v 6 "it withered because it lacked moisture"

C. Some seed landed on Thorny Soil (7).

V 7 "And some fell among thorns..."

Illust: I planted a garden when I was in the 6th grade. I was all excited. I worked the soil. I marked out the rows. I dropped in the seed. That was in the Spring. Baseball was also in the Spring. So were a lot of other things I liked to do. Guess what happened to the garden after a couple of months? The weeds choked the life out of the plants.

Seed doesn't have a chance if you don't get rid of the weeds. The problem is not with the seed. The seed will germinate, take root, and even start to grow. But the weeds will actually choke the life out of the good plants.

D. Some seed landed on Good Soil (8).

V 8 "And other fell on good ground..."

Finally! There's no fruit from Hardened Soil, or Rocky Soil, or Thorny Soil. But some of the Sower's seed landed on Good Soil. And what was the result?

v 8 "sprang up and bore fruit an hundredfold"

An interesting story. But what's the point?

That's what Jesus' disciples wanted to know. V 9 "And his disciples asked Him, What might this parable be?"

II. Jesus tells the Significance of the Story (11-15).

Jesus was a Master Storyteller. One of His favorite teaching devices was the parable. A parable is a simple story that illustrates spiritual truth. Each parable has a focal point, a key lesson. Jesus tells us the point of this story.

The Seed = The Word of God (11)

The Sower = (although not mentioned) The Messenger proclaiming the Word

Q: What do the Soils represent?

A: Different responses to the Word. There are four types of soil which represent four types of Hearers representing four types of people.

Which of the four are you?

A. There are Hard-Hearted People (12) -- Fossilized People.

V 12 "Those by the wayside hear..."

Notice please that all four people in Jesus' story "hear" the Word (12, 13, 14, 15). They all hear the same words. They all hear the same message of Christ.

Q: What does the first hearer do?

Mt 13:19 "he understands it not"

Lk 8:12 "then comes the devil and takes away the word..."

Q: What's the first hearer's problem?

A: He's got a Hard-heart.

This is the person who hears the Word, but it makes no logical sense to him. Do you know anybody like that? Have you ever shared Christ with an intellectual skeptic? Eg--"Prove to me that the Bible is true, and I'll believe it."

The first person is the Hard-hearted person. His heart is fossilized.

Illust:

B. There are Shallow-Hearted People (13) -- Fickle People.

There are fossilized people. Then there are fickle people.

V 13 "They on the rock...hear...receive...have no root...fally away."

Some people are impulsive. You can talk them into anything.

Illust: Salesperson almost talked me into buying a camera over the phone

The world is full of Shallow-hearted people. They go to church, hear the Word of God, and are emotionally touched. They shed a few tears and quickly announce, "That's what I want. I want to follow Jesus."

You've seen them. They join the church the next week, sign up for a ministry the following, and are gung ho for Christ...for about a month, or maybe two. And then they're gone.

What's the problem? They're shallow-hearted. They have no root. They made an emotional decision, but never really understood what real repentance and belief in Christ involve.

Quote: Arthur Pink hit the nail on the head with this observation, "Sadly most modern evangelistic efforts appeal to produce this type of hearer. The bright singing, the sentimentality of the hymns, the preacher's appeal to the emotions, the demand of churches for quick results produce nothing but superficial returns! Sinners

are urged to make a prompt 'decision', then are assured that all is well with them. The poor soul leaves with a false joy."

Illust: Date trees in Israel, had no roots, fell over in the storm

Trials will strengthen a true believer, and draw him/her closer to Jesus Christ. But do you know what trials will do to a shallow-hearter hearer? Drive him away from the Lord.

Have you ever met someone who said, "Christians are hypocrites. I tried Christianity, but it didn't work."

Q: What's that person's problem? He's got a Shallow-heart.

Illust:

There are Hard-hearted and Shallow-hearted people. And...

C. There are Half-Hearted People (14) -- Frivolous People.

V 14 "And that which fell among thorns..."

The Half-hearted hearer is the most baffling to me. For this reason. Look at Mt 13:22 "...he becomes unfruitful."

Listen. Jesus says that some people hear His Word, and make a 'decision' to receive His Word. They may even shed tears at the altar in the front of a church. Quite possibly they even sign a card indicating they've prayed the sinner's prayer. No doubt they may go through a new members class and join a church.

Remember, Jesus said they "became unfruitful." What does that imply about the person? You could see fruit in his life. For awhile. He looked like a Christian. For awhile. On the outside.

Until what?

V 14 Until he was "choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life."

Q: What's the problem with hearer #3?

He's Half-hearted. He's a camilian kind of person. He's easily influenced by the world around him. He came to Jesus for the wrong reason. He never grasped the fact that becoming a Christian involves a radical reordering of your priorities. He was willing to accept Jesus Christ as Savior, but rejected Him as Lord.

But friends, is that possible? Becoming a Christian involves more than an intellectual or emotional 'decision'. It takes genuine repentance.

Quote: Spurgeon, The Soul Winner, "If the man does not live differently from what he did before, both at home and abroah, his repentance needs to be repented of, and his conversion is a fiction. Not only action and language, but spirit and temper must be changed... (MacArthur, "How to Meet...", 83)

Q: Was the Half-hearted person ever really saved? The Shallow-hearted?

Quote: Jonathan Edwards, "It follows that if there is no real and lasting change in people who think they are converted, their religion is worthless, whatever their experiences may be. Conversion is the turning of the whole man from sin to God... What, then, shall we make of a person who says he has experienced conversion, but whose religious emotions die away, leaving him much the same person as he was

before? He seems as selfish, worldly, foolish, perverse, and un-Christian as ever. This speaks against him louder than any religious experience can speak for him." (in MacArthur, 24)

Q: How can you identify a genuine Christian?

D. There are Good-Hearted People (15) -- Fruitful People.

V 15 "But that on the good ground..."

Q: What's the difference between the Hard-hearted, the Shallow-hearted, the Half-hearted, and the Good-hearted? All of them "hear" the Word. Three of the four "receive" the Word. But one thing is different.

Only the Good-hearted do what?

V 15b "bring forth fruit with patience"

What is fruit? Fruit is the visible evidence that the Word of God has taken root in a person's heart. Good-hearted people not only hear the Word. They hold fast to it. They keep it. They appropriate it. Through thick and thin. Throughout the rest of their lives.

Quote: Hymn "Trust and Obey"--"When we walk with the Lord...Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus..."

Fruit is the key. Lots of people hear the Word. You're hearing it right now. What kind of heart do you have? Do you have a Hard-heart? Maybe you have a Shallow-heart. Perhaps you're Half-hearted.

O friend, listen to Jesus words. Lots of people hear the Word. But only 1 out of 4 hearers in the story responded in the right way. Only one brought forth fruit. Only one persevered.

Challenge: V 18 "Take heed, therefore, how you hear."

Q: How can I be a Fruitful person?

There's only one way. You must trust and obey Jesus Christ. No strings attached. Are you doing that in your life? Are you willing to trust and obey?

Illust: Matt Miller will be baptized in a few moments. Why? Because a couple of months ago, he admitted the fact that he was a sinner, and that only Christ could free him from his sins. He repented of his sins, and placed the confidence of his life in Jesus Christ. Tonight, he's taking the next step of obedience. Baptism.

Q: What about you? Are you right with Christ?

Some here need to trust Him for salvation. Others need to obey His command and be baptized.

Baptism: Matt Miller