

## 1. The Kingdom of God Comes Through Hearing

- a. 'how shall they believe if they have not heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?' - Rom 10:14
- b. "He who has ears, let him hear"
  - i. This "hearing" is the hearing of the heart, i.e. faith/trust that the word of God is true and capable of building life upon
  - ii. Stop and consider the oddity of this: the key to salvation, the key to knowing the kingdom of God, the power to produce the fruit of God is found in *listening*.
    1. We usually are looking for something to do, to perform, to attain, to grab, maybe even to recite ourselves so that we are the ones proclaiming
    2. We get power in earthly kingdoms by talking rather than listening
      - a. In fact, the most powerful people in our society are horrible listeners, because if they do more listening than talking they will get pushed around and overwhelmed by worse listeners than them
    3. But the Kingdom of God is known by listening, and the power to produce the fruit of God comes by hearing, by taking in, by understanding
      - a. Not by speaking, by taking over, or by proving
- c. The content is the Word of God, which is expounded as the "secrets of the kingdom of God"
  - i. The kingdom of God is revealed through the proclamation of God's Word (announcement of good news of Jesus Christ's kingship and all that the kingdom of God means) and is received through the hearing of that Word with perseverant faith
    1. The kingdom of God moves forward by the hearing of God's truth, His proclamation of His greatness: the greatness of His holiness, justice, righteousness, truth, mercy, grace, compassion, and power summed up in the person of Jesus Christ
    2. Every other kingdom moves forward by coercion, but God's kingdom moves forward by the proclamation of God's Word and those who have ears to hear will enter and be productive in it
      - a. Even democracy is coercion – the minority must submit to the ruler whom the majority elect
      - b. The Word of God is like a seed, not a boulder – it comes in quietly, organically, gradually, gently, but productively into life-giving transformation of the land (from dirt field to crop, forest, orchard)
      - c. This is what John the Baptist didn't get, yet. He assumed that the kingdom of God would come by coercion as well.
  - ii. The Word of God reveals the kingdom of God, which is the all-encompassing power of God to restore and heal every alienation of creation: forgiveness of sins (reconciliation with God), love of one another (reconciliation with each other), adoption as sons (reconciliation with ourselves), and the freedom of creation from futility (reconciliation with creation).
- d. This "hearing" of God's Word is what transforms the hearer
  - i. Do you come to hear the Word of the Lord to have your own heart transformed? To produce fruit of good works consistent with his word as a seed produces fruit consistent with itself?
  - ii. Or, do you expect the kingdom of God to make your circumstances better? Coerce those around you to be morally upright? Treat you well? Respect you?
    1. This type of thinking places the kingdom of God within the definitive walls of the kingdoms of the earth, but Christ's kingdom is not like that
  - iii. His kingdom comes in quietly, small, "insignificant", but it is powerful to transform and bring life
    1. Like a mustard seed that becomes a tree, or a pebble that grows into a mountain and fills the whole earth
    2. This sounds crazy to the world! Think about it:  
The gospel is that the King of the Universe came down and triumphed by dying, by giving up his rights, by laying his power down. Then, he was raised

from the dead, ascended into heaven, and gave His Spirit so that He comes into the life of his followers so that they can do the same: die to themselves, lay down their lives, carry their crosses, and lose all things to gain him. His followers know that the way down is the way up, the cross precedes the crown, to become rich in his kingdom is to give everything away, to really have power is to humbly serve, to really grow and be transformed like Jesus is to go through much suffering, pain, and trial to learn dependence.

3. That doesn't sound like a kingdom that we see anywhere, does it? But that's the power to change the world according to Jesus.
4. The kingdom of God comes by hearing a truth, trusting in a promise, and like a seed it comes in seeming to make no cataclysmic difference, but grows into the glory and beauty of an entire field of life
  - a. Dynamite cannot transform a field like a seed
  - b. Kingdoms of the earth happen through force, but the kingdom of God transforms hearts to loving obedience rather than force
  - c. This is why hearing and understanding and taking the seed all the way in is so important
    - i. Jesus isn't about coercing slaves, but about transforming hearts to loving and trusting obedience to the Word of God
    - ii. Slaves don't understand!

## 2. Hearing is About Belief That Produces Fruit

- a. There are two primary kinds of hearing here: hearing with the physical ears and hearing in the "heart" that results in belief and salvation (v12)
- b. The Word of God is always the same, it is the response of the hearers (the condition of the soil) that is differentiated in this parable
  - i. Thus, this is not a parable about the throwing of the seed, but rather the receiving of the seed, of the response of the hearer
    1. 'he who has ears, let him hear'
  - ii. ears of the heart, respond with faith
    1. believe the word of God given by the Son and place your dependence upon it, build your foundation upon it, order your life around it
- c. The parables are also God's way of judging the hardness of unbelieving hearts by keeping them from the plain truth
  - i. "Seeing" "knowing" and "hearing"
    1. 'seeing' they may not 'see'
    2. 'hearing' they may not 'understand'
- d. They are also the way that God gifts His Word to his believing children
  - i. 'it has been given to you to know'
    1. it is a gift of God to his disciples
  - ii. Thus, while it is imperative to hear rightly, we must also humbly recognize that our hearing is not of our own doing, but of God's sheer grace
    1. Eph 2:5-8
    2. Col 2:13
    3. John 3:1-21
    4. Phil 1:6; 2:13
- e. It also means that when we preach the gospel and do not see the fruit of faith, it does not mean that God's Word failed, but rather that hardening may have been its purpose.

## 3. Four Types of Hearing – How is Yours?

- a. First, it is clear that there are many, many people who think that they are in the kingdom of God who are not
  - i. This is a hard truth, but it must be spoken, and Jesus is warning us to hear rightly, not to be like any of the first three soils, but to be of the fourth soil

1. In earthly kingdoms it is clear if you are in or out (passports, citizenship papers, legal proof)
2. In Christ's kingdom, the proofs are much more subtle, much quieter, much easier to miss
3. So, he is warning people to be hearers who really hear
- ii. Jesus often asks "have you really heard me?"
  1. Luke 9:57ff - "I will follow you wherever you go!"
  2. Typical leaders would love to hear this, but Jesus questions it and then mentions the cost involved
  3. "I have no place to rest my head. Let the dead bury their own dead. Nobody who follows me looks back to say goodbye to his family"
  4. He is essentially asking, "Are you really hearing what it will cost to follow me, or are you wanting me to serve your purposes?"
- b. Each of the first three soils is a warning of how not to "hear" the Word of God
  - i. Packed-Hard Heart: hear with ears, but never gets to the heart (v12) because the enemy snatches it away as it sits on hardened soil
    1. Luke uses the preposition "near" - indicating the word never even penetrated the heart all
      - a. hard hearts don't take in the word, thus the devil (slanderer) takes it away
      - b. This is intellectual "hearing" only, coming into contact often with the word, reading the Bible, reading Christian books, going to lectures, etc.
      - c. Yet, it never penetrates the heart and thus it is only theoretical, philosophical, a search for truth but not a submission to the personal power of the truth
    2. There is judgment here, accompanied by the Lord's word about the use of parables as having a hardening effect
      - a. Hardened hearts may experience the present judgment of God *through the preaching of the Word*
      - b. God's Word may find its purpose in revealing a hardened heart and in the Lord's judgment against the hardened heart by removing the Word, hardening the heart more, rendering the heart "deaf" and "blind" and "ignorant" of God's truth
      - c. This is a hard word.
    3. Don't hear with a hardened heart, packed down with self-righteousness and unbelief by which the Word of God is not even received
      - a. Are there moments when the Word of life ignited your soul to joy because you believed it?
      - b. Has there ever been a time when the presence of Christ revealed things about yourself that you've never seen? That you're "waking up" from a sleep and light has dawned upon you and truth suddenly was about you?
      - c. Are there times when you know, really know, that you NEED this word and that you NEED Christ Jesus and that you heart leaps for joy because he is near?
  - ii. Shallow Heart: hear with ears, receive the Word for its joy, but it doesn't go deep and trials (joy-sucks) lead them to fall away
    1. Luke uses the preposition "upon" - indicating a shallow penetration that is never fully immersed in the heart
    2. This is an emotional reception of God's Word, but when the emotions run dry the person gives up
      - a. They receive it gladly (with joy) - who get very excited about Christ, it is not just theoretical or philosophical for them
    3. This is scary, because these people are likened to those who can't take the heat
      - a. These are people who say they love Christ, but when the heat of suffering and trials come in, losing important things, they turn their back on God
      - b. "What use is Jesus if he takes these things away?"

- i. This shows that their emotional experience was completely self-centered
      - ii. They were using God to get something else, i.e. comfort, joy, good feelings
      - iii. They were joyfully receptive of Christ's blessings, but not of Christ Himself
      - iv. They want a Blessor, not a Savior; a Sugar-Daddy, not a King, Relief from stress, but not salvation
    - c. The things that they really worshipped were the things that the sun's heat took away- the things they lost were what they really "heard"
      - i. They think that their real problem is that they're a sufferer in need of a solution
      - ii. But, our real problem is that we're sinners in need of a Savior
      - iii. They had a personal experience with Christ but it did not lead them to repentance
  - 4. The root problem (get it?!) is that these people receive the word with joy but they were never convicted of sin and thus weren't looking for an utter and complete Savior, but rather a solution to their suffering and a blessing to meet their felt needs. Don't listen like this.
- iii. Divided Heart: hear with ears, but life is choked by competing desires of the heart, trusting not in God's Word but rather in the promises given by riches and the pleasures (desire word) of life
  - 1. Luke uses the preposition, "in the midst" - indicating the seed was never full received as the good seed, but it fell with competing values that eventually choked out the Word
  - 2. This is really scary!
    - a. It is pretty easy to write off the first two soils as not really citizens of the kingdom, not really Christians
    - b. But, my heart is sometimes divided!
  - 3. The 2<sup>nd</sup> group, the shallow soil, were obviously controlled by what they lost, they worshipped those things only and they "fell away"
    - a. This soil is rooted, it is committed to Christ, but it shares control with the "riches" and "pleasures of this life"
    - b. Thus, Christ is worshipped AND these other things are worshipped
    - c. There's a division and thus their life is choked and they don't see the kingdom of God reality in their lives
      - i. There is no fruit, no healing, no life, no transforming power of God
      - ii. Thus, they don't know if they're alive or dead, saved or lost, always anxious and always in doubt, living in fear
      - iii. Just like in the parable, you can't tell until the harvest whether there is life or not
      - iv. The result of these competing desires is fruitlessness, immaturity, a similarity to life but not true life
  - 4. Some of you may be here today, fully committed to Christ and have seen that you're a sinner in need of a Savior and yet, you haven't been able to really grasp the message of the gospel so thoroughly as to see that the only way you will ever holy and happy is to give him complete and utter lordship of every area
    - a. Some of you are committed to Christ, yet using your sexuality in a way that you know is wrong
      - i. Why are you so unhappy? Why is it the joy of the Lord is missing and you are filled with anxiety?
      - ii. You're being squeezed, trapped, choked by a divided heart!
    - b. Unlike the first two soils, who gave up and pursued the world in ignorant bliss, you know too much, Christ is in you, and you are the only soil that is miserable.

- i. Loving Christ and loving the world leads to a terrible war in your soul and amongst your relationships
      - ii. James calls it making yourself an enemy of God, and that's not comfortable and you know it!
        - 1. You are a child of God siding with the enemy and it creates havoc in your heart and in your relationships
        - 2. You don't see yourself growing or anyone's life being changed through you, but rather there is a growing chokedness, a growing squeezing, a greater and greater overwhelming feeling of doom
    - c. **Psalm 86:11** Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. (Psa 86:11 ESV)
    - d. **Psalm 119:73** Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments. (Psa 119:73 ESV)
  - 5. Don't listen with a divided heart! Endeavor to submit all to God, to trust in His promises and to pursue Him as the only one worthy of your adoration and the only who can secure the hopes of your failing heart!
- c. Softened Heart: "good soil" - hearing the word, hold it fast genuinely (honest) and in goodness, bears fruit in perseverance
  - i. Luke uses the preposition, "into", indicating the Word is fully penetrating the heart, absorbed and received all the way down so as to produce fruit
  - ii. Jesus emphasizes "perseverance" and "holding fast", showing us that true faith and the heart that hears the Word of God rightly is the heart that perseveres to believe all that God has said and builds one's life upon it
    - 1. Here there is joy and gladness, fruit and transforming power!

#### 4. What Shall We Do?

- a. See the Gardener!
  - i. If you've got rocks in your soil or there are thorns in your life, recognize that the soil's job is not to de-rock itself or de-thorn itself, that's the Sower's job!
  - ii. Who is the Sower? The Son of Man!
  - iii. You receive the Word!
    - 1. Ask the Gardener to remove the rocks and the thorns and weeds
    - 2. Trust Him to remove what needs to be removed, and you hear the Word and receive it!
    - 3. "I will hear you and I will listen to You, but I need You to pull out these things in my heart that are obstructions to me!"
      - a. How do you think He will answer?
      - b. "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened down and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you from my yoke is easy and my burden is light"
      - c. "I will put my Spirit within you to cause you to walk in my statutes, and I will place you in my land so that you will know that I am the LORD"
      - d. "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"
- b. Hear the gospel sing to your heart!
  - i. He took your thorns upon his brow and was buried beneath your rock.
  - ii. He became that sin within your heart and was made wretched that you and I might become the righteousness of God
  - iii. See His great love for you! He does not stand and give up on this soil, He is casting His divine Word upon you that you might live, taking upon himself your iniquities and your weaknesses and your depravities!
  - iv. The Gardener came not merely to proclaim, but to rescue. And the kingdom of God comes by hearing
  - v. How shall you hear the Word of the Lord?
- c. "Where else shall we go, for you have the words of life" (John 6)