

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 3rd March 2024 10 am

Consider carefully what you hear – God is speaking!

Welcome to all

Opening Scripture.....

Hymn MP 631 Tell out my Soul

Scripture Psalm 72 (page 585)

Prayer

Children's talk Aaron

Chorus MP 825 Faithful One

Notices Fellowship lunch,

Prayer and Lord's prayer

Readings John 15:1-8 (page 1083)

Mark 4:1-20 (page 1005)

Hymn MP 529 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness

Sermon Consider carefully what you hear – God is speaking!

Hymn MP 857 I the Lord of sea and sky

Closing Prayer

[Sermon Index Database](#)

349 It Passeth knowledge that dear love of thine

486 Now thank we all our God

Currently we are preaching through Paul's letter to the church at Corinth. We are also picking up key events in Genesis and the OT. We finished out look at Bible NT characters and are now today starting a series on the parables of Jesus. This will be roughly a three way rotation with other topics like Easter.

Prayer and Exordium

■ Do you remember the last chilling scene in the epic film Titanic? The ship has sunk, and they are all scattered in the water. The distant voice rings out: "Is there anyone alive out there, can anyone hear me?" There's silence, many people can be seen bobbing up and down in the water, but no response, all quiet - for all are dead.

So too God's word comes to His world, a dead and deaf world. "Is there anyone alive out there, can anyone hear me?" Who will hear, who can hear? Or as Jesus tells us, or commands us: "**He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**" Jesus warning us at the end "**Consider carefully what you hear**"

⇒ We should – for God is speaking! May you - and I - listen carefully.

Parables

We come to look at the parable of the sower, the first parable. Matthew records Jesus describing it as the parable of the sower (Matt 13:18) Yes it is but what will the sower find when he goes out with his seed? It is also very much the parable of the soil, and of the heart. It is about how different people respond to the word of God. The category you are in here determines how you will hear any parable, or any word, or any phrase from God. It indicates your attitude to God's word as it is revealed throughout the Bible.

⇒ That is why the parable of the sower is Jesus' most important parable.

In a sense parables are like jokes. They are designed to catch people off guard and to elicit an immediate response. Parables "capture the listener and make him a participant, causing him to question his most basic values".

"If a parable has to be explained, it loses much of its force, just as a joke does when someone doesn't get it and needs an explanation".

The original hearers understood the context and points of reference, we often miss the point. Because Jesus doesn't want us to miss the importance here, he gives the explanation. So as the parable is followed by Christ's own interpretation we are on sure ground, an excellent place to begin.

A parable is an extended metaphor or illustration turned into a tale. Unlike allegories, parables usually have one central point. Jesus the supremely gifted teacher speaking to a crowd with a wide range of understandings and attitudes based each parable on the common, everyday events that made up 1st century life—lost money, sheep and shepherds, cruel creditors, etc.

Both Christ's teachings and his parables are like windows throwing light and brightly illuminating important truths about Christ's kingdom.

⇒ These are propositional truths, that is they demand a response.

The question is what will you do with God's word as it comes to you this morning, or any morning, or anytime it is opened and read?

The sad fact is that our rebellious and sin heart close the mind and hinder our response. The more brilliance, the more many people will persist more deeply in error. In this first parable we will get a chance to see this.

That is why Jesus says they may **see but not see, hear but not understand**.

Matthew ch.13 is a chapter of parables. They are arranged to denote how we enter the kingdom of God, or who enters, how the Kingdom of God grows, how valuable it is, and lastly what happens at the end as fish are caught, collected in baskets and then separated into two piles, some to be kept and some to be discarded.

Your place in this parable at the beginning will determine what will happen to you at the end. Yes you are in here, it's an inclusive parable, each of you, and me, here in this room this morning is in this parable. nobody's left out! Jesus gives four responses: Ask yourself, which one best describes me? x2

Listen

Jesus starts with v3 **Listen!** x2 it's emphatic, it's a command. Jesus wants those who read this to take note. Let us all listen.

The seed

A farmer went out to sow his seed. And what is that seed? 14 **The farmer sows the word.** Matthew says the **seed is the word of God.** That's clear, the seed stands for God's Word. Nothing starts, nothing grows without the seed. Here is that seed. Hold up the Bible, what you are hearing this morning.

The Bible is not a novel, something to enjoy at a distance. It is here that God speaks, it's relevant to you. It is to elicit a response from you. Here are commands to be obeyed, wisdom to act on, promises to believe, invitations to respond to, principles to apply, a God to trust. a person to meet, a doorway to heaven. It's purpose is to change you. Has it? does it?, will you let it? Will you enter in?

1

4 **As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.** And what is the path? It represents a type of person.

2a

15 **Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.**

Paths are earth trodden down until it is hard. Drop something on it and it bounces off, it does not penetrate. This person will allow nothing of God in. They will spend oodles of time on other things, - but nothing from God may enter. Speak about food, holiday, deals at the shops, pets and you have their attention, speak about the God who made them and owns them - and glazed eyes immediately appear.

Why is our hearing selective? Why so inconsistent?

Let's start at the beginning. God speaks, the first thing he did in creating this world is speak. The world, all of creation responded and were made, Adam and Eve responded. There was perfect, blissful communion.

Then Satan, the devil entered the garden, his prime desire is to hinder the word of God, hinder communication, cut the line, confuse, sow doubt.

■ **Satan is like an old hearing aid where you just hear background buzzing and can't make out the words, like it's a foreign language.**

How does Satan find it so easy today? We are all now born with a heart hostile to the things God. It doesn't want to listen. Here in this category is a person who has suppressed the evidence of creation, suppressed their conscience. They have repeatedly suppressed God's gracious advances to them. It has left them hard. The seed, the Word sits on the surface – but not for long for the birds are onto it. It's snatched away almost before it's landed. Satan finds it easy with this person for they do not wish to take it in. The Word of God will be allowed no access, it will effect no change.

■ **You can close your eyes so as not to see – but you can also close your ears so as not to hear.**

That's how I used to be, this book used to be a closed book. For years it meant nothing to me, it did nothing in me nor did it change me.

■ **The Bible speaks about the 'washing of the word' – it should clean me, like putting dirty clothes in the washing machine, only to leave them in a sealed bag, the detergents cannot access to effect a change, this man or woman leaves as dirty as you came in.**

2

5 **Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.** A shallow pocket of earth, water collects and quickly sprouts but when the heat comes it is gone.

2b

■ I remember on holiday one morning seeing in the garden an array of flowers across the grass. 'I don't remember those yesterday' I thought. No they weren't there, and they were soon gone, I was amazed at the speed of it.

6 **But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.** Who is this?

16 **Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy.**

Many have come in through these doors and show immediate enthusiasm, I can think of several as I speak, but they are only here for a short time. Where are they now? Where is their faith now? Then you hear it no longer fits with the work pattern, a child came, or the family expects them on Sunday. Those offers of help with this or that are quickly abandoned.

17 **But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.**

This type of person is a shallow person. People who never see things through, a person who makes speedy decisions - that end just as speedily! We live in an age that breeds fickleness, it promotes shallowness.

- "I've become a Christian" someone says, this parable says wait and see.
- or "will you baptize my children". I have had two requests in the last month for me to baptize children. This parable says wait and see.

I will not encourage it. The best way to see the genuineness of someone's faith is to try to put them off! If it is a genuine work of grace they will not budge!

- Pat someone on the back and exclaim 'wonderful' is like putting on the Nitrates / strong fertilisers, you get an immediate result but as any farmer know it is short lived, doesn't last.

They believe for a while but in the time of testing they quickly fall away.

- The Romans could always see in the arena who the genuine believers were.

Trials, big or small will come, James says: **Blessed is the man who has persevered under trial, when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised those who love him.**

3

7 **Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain.** Who is this?

18 **Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.** This person is a distracted person.

There's too much going on. God's word has no chance, it is in constant competition. This lady's heart is torn, she professes faith in the Lord but her mind and heart are filled with her own problems, family problems, money problems, work problems. Work is right, family is right, earning a living is right but did you notice what Jesus said? **the worries of this life, the worries not the problem, the worries x2.**

⇒ **What gives way? it's the Lord's word, the Lord's way, the Lord's work**

In C.S.Lewis' Screwtape letters where we have the devil trying to attack a Christian the senior demon says to the junior demon "when you see him reading the Bible and praying remind him that it is - lunchtime".

As I speak is your mind on lunch? Or has it gone back again to that problem? Or that thing you are looking forward to. Or tomorrow's plan?...

the deceitfulness or trickery of wealth – the desires the longings for other things come in and choke [use imagery] the word, making it unfruitful.

The seed the word of God has been sown in the heart, it has taken root, but it is fighting for life, **like the jungle it is fighting for light.** Lot had God's word but his heart was caught up with his desire for the things of the world.

Good listening is like tuning in to a radio station. For good results, you can listen to only one station at a time. Trying to listen to my wife while looking at the phone is like trying to receive two radio stations at the same time. I end up with distortion and frustration. Listening requires a choice of where I place my attention. To tune into my wife, I must first choose to put away all that will divide my attention, put down the phone, put down the book, or whatever else. R.W. Herron, *Homemade*, June, 1987.

What is it that's stopping the word be fruitful in your life? Is it busyness, is it a child? A pet, the home? Is your mind and heart so filled with this and that there's no time with the Lord, no meditating on his word. No exercising of the faith in love and good works.

This person doesn't mature. They know the word of God says do not worry, but they worry. They know the Lord said not to be engrossed in the things of this world but they fill their mind. They know the Lord has said give yourself fully to the Lord's work but it is all they can do to come for an hour on Sunday, there's minimal service or no avenue of service. A week goes by and nothing is done for the Lord within the life of the church. Gifts lie

dormant. They know they should give time to pray but for all the good intentions it doesn't happen. That daily Bible reading slips to a couple of times a week. The result is no growth, and the Lord is dishonoured. The result is a life of peaceless disobedience.

Where is that person's faith? The truth is that for some, for this person their Christian faith is a sort of add on. Something stuck on the side of my life. x2

Those who follow Jesus, those who are to one day be where Jesus now is, are those who **deny self**, that is all those desires, worries, (the same thing), that worldly way, they **take up their cross daily** that is live out the Lord's will, - which includes trouble, - **and follow Jesus**, His way, His life, His priorities, His fervour, His resolve, His obedience to the words of the father.

If that is not you the put aside those other cares, turn from these distractions which are in effect idols and come to Christ on the cross. This requires repentance. Jesus said you and I are to repent. A Christian walking with the Lord will love to hear those words for that is a life of constant repentance.

If that word bothers you, - it is because you haven't, and up to now won't. My friend the stakes are high, you are gambling with your life. Repent and turn to Christ, the Son of God before it is too late, have him as your Saviour, obey His words, humble yourself now - before you meet him as your judge.

In Luke 16 the rich man who dies and ends up in hell says "send someone to warn my family to save them from coming to this place of torment" The reply, they have to word of God, let them listen. The word of God is His means by which he saves people from hell - and brings them to heaven.

⇒ **Salvation comes through hearing. The message, - is the means!**

4

This fourth category is made up of those who have done that 8 **Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.**" That is a high multiplication. Farmers would be pleased with that.

Who is this? 20 **Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.**"

Do you pray for revival? Well, it starts with you. When the Lord brought revival in Britain from the Reformation, the great Awakening, the 19th Century revival, the Welsh revival, the Hebridian revival and many other local ones such as in Cornwall in the 1970's they all saw the word of God effecting great change within the human heart.

4a

On Thursday we saw how the people wept when they heard Ezra read God's word. They understood - and they wept. It affected them, it brought a change in them.

When Whitfield preached outside the collieries at Bristol there were white streaks on the faces of the miners as the tears came on those faces blacked with coal dust. They were hearing the word of God, the good seed, and it produced a powerful effect in their heart. It came with power by the Spirit, and by that same Spirit brought deep conviction within the hearer.

How we need that washing of the word, a powerful Jet wash. When the word comes it does a breaking down work, and it does a remaking work.

This person is now sensitive to the Lord and to others, This person is alert to the Lord's voice, it produces a dedication, a sanctification, The exercise of the word in the mind and heart produces a crop of righteousness.

Christians are to be **filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.** Php 1:11

Let him hear

Jesus ends the parable with these words 9 **"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."** That is the point, that those who hear will hear... is that you?

Jesus ends with speaking about a lamp, saying **Consider carefully what you hear (or listen Luke)**. Not to listen is to leave you in darkness, we remain darkness for no light can penetrate, hearing the word of God brings light!

Jesus says prior to this parable that it is those who do act on what they hear that are in his family. In other words, if you want any partnership, fellowship, benefit from Jesus it is those who allow Him and His word to do it's His work within you.

Let's say to the Lord, like Samuel, I have heard your call, like Peter, Like Andrew, I have heard you speak, I will leave all and follow you.

Then you will be one who builds your life well. The wise man or woman, builds well by hearing the word by acting on it Matt 7

⇒ **How is it with you? have you worked out which of the four is you?**

May you be a good builder. Building not with **hay or straw** which is burned up but with **costly stones** that shine and last forever. 1 Cor 3:10-15

Do that and you will be safe, do that and you will be strong, do that and you will honour the Lord who bought you. **The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence for ever.** Isa

32:17

END

4b