

GROUNDED IN GOD'S WORD

Pastor Chris Brooks, Revive '21

TEXT: LUKE 8:4-15

If you are going to be a woman of substance, a woman who will impact the generations to come, you must be anchored in the Word of God.

One of the primary teaching tools of our Savior is telling stories called parables. Parables are indirect communication meant to take the hearer on a journey unwittingly into the front door of profound spiritual truth.

When studying God's Word, it's important to ask good questions such as *What is here? What do I see?* before asking, *What does this mean and how does it apply?* Before we get to what it means for the here and now, we need to ask ourselves what it meant to them then and there.

In Luke 8, four different types of soil are represented: 1) the well-trodden path which didn't take root, 2) the rocky soil which quickly withered away, 3) the thorny soil which choked out the seed, and 4) the good soil which produced a hundredfold (see Gen. 26:12).

The disciples were confused, so they asked Jesus what the parable it meant. He answered,

The secrets of the kingdom of God have been given for you to know, but to the rest it is in parables, so that 'Looking they may not see, and hearing they may not understand' (v. 10).

His response seemed contradictory to His character. Jesus isn't actively working to ensure that some people don't respond to His Word. It is a reference to Isaiah 6:9-10. Jesus is saying that "because your expectations are primary and preeminent in your heart, you will not see and you will not understand." The power of the parable is that it forces you to play by God's rules and not your own. Jesus and His Word aren't given in order to satisfy our desires, but rather it invites us to learn of *His* desires.

Let's not play Scriptural lotto by opening the Word of God and hoping it falls to a chapter or a verse that speaks a blessing.

Through faithful Scripture reading, God wants us to receive His imparted Word of truth so that we rightfully see Him as He presents Himself, see ourselves through His eyes, and see the rest of the world correctly.

The Word is like corrective lenses for people whose vision is obscured by sin. When these lenses are worn, we see clearly. C.S. Lewis said, "I believe in Jesus for the same reason I believe in the sun; not just because I can see it, but because of it, I can see everything else."

The parable is an invitation to those who sincerely desire to learn of Him, but it judges those who do not. Come to God's Word with a humble and teachable heart. Come ready to receive what He has for you. Don't impose upon God your own expectations.

When Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (v. 8), He is not talking about just listening. He means having a heart ready to respond in obedience. **You will know that you are grounded in the Word when you are doing the work of God.**

Notice Jesus doesn't describe the sower. The sower is not pertinent to the story. We become wrapped up in the identity, popularity, and fame of sowers. Never allow yourself to be more enamored with the sower than the seed of God's Word. The seed is what changes us. God can use any sower and any person.

The purpose of the story is very clear. It is to confront the reader with one question: What type of soil is your heart?

- A **hard heart** is bitter, hurt, and so wounded that it can't receive the hope and the truth of Jesus Christ. If the Word doesn't penetrate, the devil is working to prevent you from receiving the only thing that can heal you.
- The **shallow heart** receives the Word of God quickly, but then it withers as soon as persecution comes. While living in this world, we will still know brokenness and pain. The difference is that when our faith and trust is in Christ, He is with us through it all. He is Emmanuel, God with us.
- A **divided heart** allows the cares of this world to creep in. The cares of life are not bad, but if they take preeminence over the seed and its work in your life, it will choke out God's Word.
- We know that we have a **good heart** when we receive the Word of God then do the work of God.

It's important in reading parables to locate yourself in the story. The story is not given to affirm us; it is given to affirm God. You are probably reading the story correctly when you identify with the bad characters, look at yourself, and say, "Lord, I'm desperately in need of a Savior."

We're tempted to say, "I'm the good soil." Romans 3:10 states, "There are none that are righteous, no not one." The problem of the parable is that Jesus is demanding I have a good heart but I can't on my own. He wants us to be at a place of desperation that recognizes that, unless we get a heart transplant, we will never be grounded in the Word.

Jesus went to the cross to pay your sin debt so that you might have a new heart. Your old heart was buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him on resurrection morning with a heart transplant—good soil to receive the good Word of God, so that we might bear good fruit.

Search your heart. Is it:

- A **divided heart** with many directions, loves, and pursuits, but you want God to be your primary love and primary pursuit?
- A **rocky heart** that is hurt, bitter, downtrodden, or compacted from people who have walked over it?
- A **shallow heart** in an Instagram world, where nothing seems to be real and everything seems surface deep.

Pray like David in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." To be women of God grounded in His Word, accept the invitation to receive a new heart from the Master.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Share a favorite biography or biographical movie. What was most captivating to you about the story?

What are deceptions that can cause women to mistakenly believe they are grounded in the Word when in reality they are not? From your perspective, why is being grounded so vital today?

Consider the four soils. Describe what a life might look like for each of them: hard, shallow, divided, or good heart.

Pastor Brooks said, “Because your expectations are primary and preeminent in your heart, you will not see and you will not understand.” Discuss right and wrong ways to approach and receive God’s Word.

Pastor Brooks shared Andrew’s story of becoming a missionary to Afghanistan. Describe a specific time when hearing the Word of God compelled you to do the work of God. Is there anything He is asking of you right now?

Understanding parables includes finding yourself in the story. Which of the four soils represents your heart today?

Pray together as a group for clean hearts (Psalm 51:10) in order to receive the good seed of His Word that produces fruit for His glory.

