

Luke 8:4-15

“Hold Fast to the Word”

November 10, 2024

1. Intro

- a. The idea that Jesus was a great teacher is an idea that is widely held throughout the world today
 - i. There are many non-Christians all over the globe who would willingly affirm that Jesus, although he might have been a misguided religious fanatic, still had some good things to say about morality and kindness and just being a decent human being
 1. Mahatma Gandhi was a huge fan of the Sermon on the Mount
 - a. He didn't care at all for the Old Testament of the Bible
 - i. He cared even less for the writings of the Apostle Paul
 - b. But, regarding the Sermon on the Mount, when Gandhi read it for the first time, he said that “It delighted him beyond measure... and gave me comfort and boundless joy.”
 2. Elon Musk, the billionaire businessman who has brought us companies like SpaceX and Tesla, and now even owns the social platform formerly known as Twitter, had this to say just a couple of weeks ago...
 - a. That he now believes in “the teachings of Christ,” including the principles of “love thy neighbor,” and “turn the other cheek”
 - i. Which he says are both very important when it comes to learning how to forgive others
 1. Note that Musk didn't say that he believes in Christ as the Son of God
 - a. He simply says that he has come to believe in “the teachings” of Christ
 3. A couple of years ago during the Super Bowl, a commercial from the organization “He Gets Us” generated a LOT of talk inside and outside the Christian community, as it brought Jesus to a public platform that was certainly not expecting it
 - a. This ad, and the ads that followed it in the months since then, have been applauded by many for getting the name of Jesus out to the masses in creative and challenging ways
 - i. The problem though, similar to the situation with Elon Musk and Mahatma Gandhi, is that NONE of these ads point to Jesus as the Son of God
 1. None of these ads speak to our sinful nature and our desperate need for a Savior
 2. None of them speak of repentance from sin, or surrender to the Kingdom
 - ii. Ultimately, in the end, this entire campaign, which various Christians and churches have invested BILLIONS of dollars into, really only serves to repackage the message that...
 1. One, Jesus was a great moral teacher
 2. And two, if we would all just follow his example, the world would be a much nicer place to live in
 4. Friends, Jesus was indeed a great teacher
 - a. In fact, being the Son of God incarnate, the Word made flesh, an EQUAL member of the Triune God of all creation...

- ii. "Anyone know what kind of sower was this, who so carelessly let his seeds fall on the path, or onto rocky soil, or into a bunch of thorns?"
- iii. "And what kind of seed was this anyways, that when it fell into good soil it yielded a hundredfold crop?"
 - 1. "Does ANYONE know what he just said?"
 - a. "I thought this guy was supposed to be some great teacher... but I don't have a clue what we just heard"

- 3. If you read these verses by themselves, understanding that Jesus ended his teachings for this great crowd at verse 8, with zero explanation whatsoever
 - a. We have to ask the question... "WHY?"
 - i. Left by themselves, these five verses are an AWFUL example of good teaching
 - 1. It's a completely vague and random illustration
 - 2. We get no explanation of the meaning
 - 3. The only application we have is make sure you throw your seeds on good soil, which any good resident of the Middle East in those days would have already been FULLY aware of
 - b. So WHY would Jesus teach them in such an unhelpful way?
 - i. Well, he tells us exactly why in verses 9 and 10...

3. Luke 8:9-10

- a. *⁹And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, ¹⁰he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'*
 - i. TO YOU it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God
 - 1. Not to the Pharisees and the religious leaders in Judea
 - 2. Not to the wise philosophers and statesmen in Rome
 - 3. Not even to the great crowds that have come to hear me speak
 - ii. But only TO YOU, my disciples, will the knowledge of my Father's kingdom be given
 - 1. Only TO YOU, my disciples, will it be given to see all that the Father wants you to see
 - 2. Only TO YOU, my disciples, will it be given to UNDERSTAND all that the Father is doing
 - iii. This is a STUNNING statement that flies in the face of the belief that Jesus is a great teacher for all the world to learn from and for all to follow his example
 - 1. Jesus came as THE greatest teacher of all past, present, and future
 - a. But he came as a great teacher with ONE singular agenda...
 - i. To call all of God's lost sheep home
 - 2. In John 10:2-5, Jesus says,
 - a. *²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.*
 - i. God, the great Gatekeeper, has opened the door to the sheepfold
 - ii. Christ, the Shepherd of God's sheep stands at the door and calls out for all to hear
 - iii. And those who belong to God will know his voice, and they will follow after him

1. TO YOU, my disciples, it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God!
3. Think about Luke 10:21-22, after the 72 return from healing the sick and casting out demons and proclaiming the Kingdom of God,
 - a. They return to Jesus full of joy to tell him all that happened
 - b. And Luke tells us in verse 21...
 - i. *²¹In that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²²All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."*
 1. TO YOU, my disciples, it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God!
4. Or think about Matthew 16, verses 13-20
 - a. When Jesus asks the disciples who THEY say that he is, Simon Peter makes the incredible proclamation, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!"
 - i. Jesus doesn't respond by saying to Peter, "Well done Peter, you finally figured it out!"
 - b. No, in verse 17, Jesus says to Peter,
 - i. *¹⁷"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*
 1. TO YOU, my disciples, it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God!
 - a. And Jesus goes on to say that upon THIS proclamation, that he is the Christ, the Son of the Living God...
 - i. Upon THIS proclamation that can only be revealed to us by the Father
 - ii. Upon THIS proclamation that has been hidden from the wise and understanding
 - iii. Upon THIS proclamation HE will build HIS church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!
 - c. TO YOU, Christians, it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God
 - i. Yes, there will be some out in the world who find Christ's teachings to be wise and moral and good
 - ii. Yes, there will be some out in the world who are willing to accept Jesus as a great teacher
 - d. But when it comes to Christ as the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary...
 - i. When it comes to Christ, the perfect and sinless Lamb of God who would provide the atonement necessary for our sins...
 - ii. When it comes to Christ crucified, and Christ resurrected, and Christ now ascended to the throne as King of kings and Lord of lords...
 1. When it comes to seeing Christ for who he TRULY is – the world will scoff and mock and ridicule
 - a. For we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles

- a. But it wasn't just Paul, or Peter, or James, or any of the rest of the Apostles or Elders who were called to be ambassadors of the Gospel
 - iii. In 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Paul writes,
 - 1. *¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, WE are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
 - a. Do you see, Christians?
 - i. We are ALL sowers
 - 1. You don't have to be trained in Seminary
 - 2. You don't have to be a pastor or a Sunday school leader
 - ii. If you have been saved, then you are a sower. Period!
7. Great! So what then is the seed that we are called to sow?
 - a. As Jesus tells us in verse 11, the seed is the Word of God
 - i. But its not just reading the Word of God as just another book, or just another textbook
 - 1. You could read the Bible from cover to cover, and you could come away with the idea that, even though there's some good history in there, and maybe even some great principles to live by, in the end it's really just another good fictional read
 - a. He may never have voiced it in that way, but that's ultimately the conclusion Gandhi came to
 - b. Unless God does a great work in his heart, that is the same conclusion Elon Musk will remain at
 - c. And that is where countless millions are today, all over the world
 - i. They might have been taught a lot of Bible stories growing up
 - ii. They might have even read the Word for themselves
 - 2. But until the Word of God is given to them as THE GOSPEL, it remains powerless to save
 - a. That's why I'm not crazy about the idea of the Bible being mandated as a history book in our public schools
 - i. There are certainly still some great Christian teachers out there, but it is pretty clear that the belief system of our public-school teachers is trending more and more liberal with every passing year
 - 1. And the simple fact is, if it did happen that the Bible was mandated to be taught in the school, it is increasingly likely that it will be taught by someone who ultimately sees it as fiction, or maybe even as mythology
 - b. We are not called to sow the seeds of just another book, Christians
 - i. We are called to sow the Word of God, which at its heart is the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ
 - 1. It is the Gospel of God reconciling His wayward children back to Himself
 - 2. It is the Gospel of God making him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God
 - 3. It is the Gospel of God, who has graciously delivered us from our trespasses, and who has given US the message of reconciliation
 - a. WE – THE CHURCH – are the sowers

- ii. We see then a great war in heaven, and Satan is cast down to the earth
 - 1. Satan, who in verse 9 is called “the deceiver of the whole world,”
 - a. And in verse 10 is called “the accuser of the brethren”
 - iii. Satan is cast down to the earth, where he seeks to destroy the woman
 - 1. But God protects the woman as she is scattered out into the wilderness
 - a. Perhaps indicative of the way God watches over the people of Israel, as they are still scattered all over the world today
 - iv. But then we read in verse 17,
 - 1. *17Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.*
 - a. Friends, Satan has come to make war upon US
 - i. He does it through direct attacks, as we’ll see in a moment
 - b. But he also does it through indirect attacks, as he seeks to kill and destroy those we strive to share the Gospel with
4. We are to faithfully share the Gospel with everyone
- a. But the tragic reality is that, for many, their hearts are so hardened that as soon as they hear the Word that we proclaim, Satan comes and takes it away from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved
 - i. As John 10:10 says, he is the “*thief that comes only to steal and kill and destroy...*”
 - ii. As John 8:44 says, “*He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*”
 - ii. The first soil is the soil of the dry and hardened path
 - 1. And it is there that Satan reigns as the god of this world who has blinded the minds off unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God
- d. Hardened soil (the path)
- i. The Devil comes and takes away the word from their heart
 - 1. 1 Peter 5:8-9
 - a. *⁸Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*
9. The second soil is the soil that is full of rocks
- a. Those whose hearts are represented by this soil are those who hear the Word of God, and they actually receive it with joy
 - i. That’s the response that we all LONG to see when we talk about the Good News, isn’t it?
 - 1. That our hearers would hear this life-changing news from God Himself, and that their hearts would overflow with joy in response to the message

- a. But sadly, these types of people don't TRULY hear the message, do they
 - i. OUTWARDLY, they might be filled with joy about all the wonderful things promised in the Scriptures
 - ii. But on the inside, their heart is still the stony heart described by Ezekiel in Ezekiel 36
 - 1. God has not sprinkled clean water on them
 - 2. He has not cleansed them from their uncleanness
 - 3. He has not removed their heart of stone and given to them a heart of flesh
 - b. And so the Good News never takes root
 - i. And in a time of testing, they fall away
 - 1. The contrasting picture of this person is found in Jeremiah 17:7-8, as the Lord says,
 - a. *⁷"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. ⁸He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."*
 - 2. The one who trusts in the Lord has deep roots that allows them to flourish, even when the heat comes, even in the year of drought
 - 3. The one whose heart is full of rocks...
 - a. They might rejoice for a little while
 - b. But when testing comes, they fall away
 - i. For their roots were never grounded in Christ
2. This is why Jesus was so adamant in Matthew chapter 24
 - a. As the disciples were talking about how awesome the Temple was that Herod had restored, Jesus somberly tells them that it was all going to be destroyed
 - i. Wars are coming
 - ii. Natural disasters will be on the rise
 - iii. More and more false prophets will come to lead people astray
 - iv. Satan will continue to prowl around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour
 - 1. The time of testing is on its way
 - a. But what does Jesus say in verse 13?
 - i. The one who endures to the end will be saved.
 - b. Yes, Jesus holds us fast in his grip, and he will never loose ANY that the Father has given to him
 - i. But at the same time, he calls US to endure
3. Those who fall away in the time of testing DO NOT show that the Lord is incapable of keeping those whom he has saved
 - a. But instead, they show that their stony heart had never truly been removed
 - i. And therefore, the Word of God never took root

10. The third soil that Jesus explains is the soil that is full of thorny bushes

- a. It appears that these also receive the Word to some degree, just as those with the rocky soil heard it
 - i. Maybe some of them also even received it with joy as well
 - 1. But its not the testing that causes these to fall in their faith

- a. Instead, Jesus says that the thorns choke them out
 - i. The thorns of the cares of life
 - ii. The thorns of the riches of life
 - iii. And the thorns of the pleasures of life
- 2. As John Piper has said before – and I wholeheartedly agree with him – this is where most of us here in the affluent West reside
 - a. We don't live in a place of testing like our brothers and sisters in China, or Iran, or North Korea
 - b. But we do live in a place where the desires of our flesh can be met in an instant, whenever and wherever we want them
 - i. Like the church in Laodicea, we're able to say that we are rich, and that we have prospered, and that we need nothing
 - 1. And Jesus would say that we don't even realize that we are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked
- 3. How else can you describe it when many churchgoers would rather go to the lakehouse during the summer weekends, than come to church on Sunday mornings?
- 4. How else can you describe it when Sunday afternoon football or golf has taken the place of the Sunday night church service, or Sunday afternoon fellowship?
- 5. How else can you describe it when the vast majority of so much of our churches budgets go toward building multi-million dollar concert venues?
 - a. Even in the church, our cares tend to be strikingly similar to the cares of this world
 - b. Even in the church, we all really wish that the prosperity gospel and its promises of riches for the faithful were at least PARTLY true
 - c. Even in the church, the pleasures of life are increasingly taking the place of the gatherings of the saints, and the works of ministry we have been called to throughout the week
 - i. And these thorns are choking out the faith of COUNTLESS churchgoers each and every weekend
 - 1. They might begin to show signs of fruit
 - a. But their fruit never matures, and as a result, they fail to prove that they are truly Christ's disciples

11. Which leads us to the fourth and final soil...

- a. The soil of those who hear the Word of God, they receive it, and they HOLD FAST to the Word with an honest and good heart
- b. This is the soil of those who not only bear fruit, but they bear fruit with patience
 - i. When the time of testing comes, they don't fall away because life has gotten harder than they expected
 - 1. They simply hold fast to the Word, they keep bearing fruit, and they patiently wait on the Lord to deliver them in His perfect timing
 - ii. When they are faced with the lusts of the eyes and the lusts of the flesh and all the temptations that Satan throws our way, they don't get choked out because they want everything everyone else is chasing
 - 1. They simply hold fast to the Word, they keep bearing fruit, and they patiently wait on the Lord to provide for them everything that they need, with the promises of all the riches of Christ that await us in the life to come
- c. My friends, this is the calling for all those whose eyes have been opened to see Christ for who he truly is

- i. This is the calling for all those whose minds have been opened up to know the mysteries of God
 1. Hear the Word
 2. Hold fast to the Word, even as the world calls you a fool
 3. Bear fruit, as you abide in Christ and prove to be his disciple
 4. And do it all with patience,
 - a. Knowing that the God who has given to you all of these things is sovereign, He is wise, and He is GOOD
 - i. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!