

Expository Thoughts On Luke - Luke 8:4-15

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Transcript

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

The parable of the sower, contained in these verses, is reported more frequently than any parable in the Bible. It is a parable of universal application. The things it relates are continually going on in every congregation to which the Gospel is preached. The four kinds of hearts it describes are to be found in every assembly which hears the word. These circumstances should make us always read the parable with a deep sense of its importance. We should say to ourselves, as we read it--"This concerns me. My heart is to be seen in this parable. I, too, am here."

The passage itself requires little explanation. In fact, the meaning of the whole picture is so fully explained by our Lord Jesus Christ, that no exposition of man can throw much additional light on it. The parable is preeminently a parable of caution, and caution about a most important subject--the way of hearing the word of God. It was meant to be a warning to the apostles, not to expect too much from hearers. It was meant to be a warning to all ministers of the Gospel, not to look for too great results from sermons. It was meant, not least, to be a warning to hearers, to take heed how they hear. Preaching is an ordinance of which the value can never be overrated in the Church of Christ. But it should never be forgotten, that there must not only be good preaching, but good hearing.

The first caution that we learn from the parable of the sower, is to beware of the devil when we hear the Word. Our Lord tells us that the hearts of some hearers are like "the wayside." The seed of the Gospel is plucked away from them by the devil almost as soon as it is sown. It does not sink down into their consciences. It does not make the least impression on their minds.

The devil, no doubt, is everywhere. That malicious spirit is unwearied in his efforts to do us harm. He is ever watching for our halting, and seeking occasion to destroy our souls. But nowhere perhaps is the devil so active as in a congregation of Gospel-hearers. Nowhere does he labor so hard to stop the progress of that which is good, and to prevent men and women being saved. From him come wandering thoughts and roving imaginations--listless minds and dull memories--sleepy eyes and fidgety nerves, weary ears and distracted attention. In all these things Satan has a great hand. People wonder where they come from, and marvel how it is that they find sermons so dull, and remember them so badly! They forget the parable of the sower. They forget the devil.

Let us take heed that we are not way-side hearers. Let us beware of the devil. We shall always find him at Church. He never stays away from public ordinances. Let us remember this, and be upon our guard. Heat,

and cold, and draughts, and damp, and wet, and rain, and snow, are often dreaded by Church goers, and alleged as reasons for not going to Church. But there is one enemy whom they ought to fear more than all these things together. That enemy is Satan.

The second caution that we learn from the parable of the sower, is to beware of resting on mere temporary impressions when we have heard the word. Our Lord tells us that the hearts of some hearers are like ROCKY ground. The seed of the word springs up immediately, as soon as they hear it, and bears a crop of joyful impressions, and pleasurable emotions. But these impressions, unhappily, are only on the surface. There is no deep and abiding work done in their souls. And hence, so soon as the scorching heat of temptation or persecution begins to be felt, the little bit of religion which they seemed to have attained, withers and vanishes away.

Feelings, no doubt, fill a most important office in our personal Christianity. Without them there can be no saving religion. Hope, and joy, and peace, and confidence, and resignation, and love, and fear, are things which must be felt, if they really exist. But it must never be forgotten that there are religious affections, which are spurious and false, and spring from nothing better than animal excitement. It is quite possible to feel great pleasure, or deep alarm, under the preaching of the Gospel, and yet to be utterly destitute of the grace of God. The tears of some hearers of sermons, and the extravagant delight of others, are no certain marks of conversion. We may be warm admirers of favorite preachers, and yet remain nothing better than stony-ground hearers. Nothing should content us but a deep, humbling, self-mortifying work of the Holy Spirit, and a heart-union with Christ.

The third caution contained in the parable of the sower is to beware of the cares of this world. Our Lord tells us that the hearts of many hearers of the word are like thorny ground. The seed of the word, when sown upon them, is choked by the multitude of other things, by which their affections are occupied. They have no objection to the doctrines and requirements of the Gospel. They even wish to believe and obey them. But they allow the things of earth to get such hold upon their minds, that they leave no room for the word of God to do its work. And hence it follows that however many sermons they hear, they seem nothing bettered by them. A weekly process of truth-stifling goes on within. They bring no fruit to perfection.

The things of this life form one of the greatest dangers which beset a Christian\

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