

The New Testament Church

by Stan Ford

The sermon emphasizes the essential characteristics of a New Testament church, including Christ's lordship, Spirit's leading, and the importance of love and service among believers.

Duration: 43:01

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 8:11, Acts 4:13, 1 Corinthians 14:15, Ephesians 4:11

Topics: "The Gospel", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the parable of the sower from the eighth chapter of Luke. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing our need for a Savior and how God has provided Jesus Christ as that Savior. The preacher then focuses on the four different outcomes of the seed in the parable: stolen seed, starved seed, seed among thorns, and seed on good soil. He explains how these outcomes represent different responses to the Word of God and challenges the listeners to bring forth fruit with patience. The sermon concludes with the reminder that the seed in the parable represents the Word of God, and the preacher encourages the audience to embrace the challenge of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Friendship of Christ is unchallenged. Now that's the very first thing that we seek to practice. That we own allegiance to no one but Jesus Christ.

To no name but His name. And we believe that a Christian church on the authority of Ephesians 1 and 22, and on the authority of Colossians 1 and 18, that a church, a New Testament church, is a place where the lordship of Christ is unchallenged. We have but one leader here in this gathering of God's people.

And we acknowledge him as the head of the church. We believe that a New Testament church is not only a place where the lordship of Christ is unchallenged, but where the leading of the Spirit is unquenched. When the apostle wrote to the church at Thessalonica, he said, quench not the Spirit.

And the choir this evening, in the words of their very lovely people, reminded our hearts that we believe that that risen Christ has given unto this scene His Spirit, that He may lead us into all truth. And a New Testament church is a place where the leading of the Spirit is unquenched. Need I quote the Scriptures, 1 Thessalonians 5 and 19? Dare I go again to 1 Corinthians 14 and 15? But we believe that a New Testament church is not only a place where the lordship of Christ is unchallenged, where the leading of the Spirit is unquenched, but where the liberty of gift is unhindered.

You see, the fourth chapter of Ephesians says, and God gave gifts to men. He gave some to be an evangelist, and some to be a pastor, and some to be a teacher, and some... God gave gifts. And please, may I just say this, very lovingly, very lovingly, may I say this, that those are names of gifts and not names of people.

This is why those who labor amongst us never call themselves a reverend or a pastor. It is the name of a gift and not the name of a person. Then when we look at the New Testament we find that it is not only a place, a New Testament church, where the lordship of Christ is unchallenged, where the leading of the Spirit is unquenched, where the liberty of gift is unhindered, but it's a place where loyalty to God's word is uncompromised.

If the word of God says it, that's it. There's no argument about it. I have never attended one of the elders' meetings of this fellowship, but of this I am absolutely certain.

If someone in that elders' meeting said, Brethren, the Scripture tells us that we should do this, and he showed the Scripture, then it would be done. It is not what men have said, but what the word of God has told us, and loyalty to the word of God is uncompromised. For we believe that 1 Peter 1 and 20 and 2 Timothy 3 and 16 reminds us that this is the living word of the living God.

But we believe that a New Testament church is not only a place, I'm going to repeat later, it's not only a place where the lordship of Christ is unchallenged, where the leading of the Spirit is unquenched, where the liberty of gifts is unhindered, where loyalty to God's word is uncompromised, but we believe that a New Testament church is a place where likeness to Christ should be unmistakable. Oh, we do hope it's true. We hope that when you come here, you feel the very warmth of those that love the Saviour in a welcome to you.

For we believe that the Lord welcomes men and women. And likeness to Christ should be unmistakable. Was it not the thirteenth chapter, I beg your pardon, the thirteenth verse of the fourth chapter of Acts, where it was said to those early disciples that people took note that they'd been with the Lord.

That we believe that a New Testament church is not only a place, not only a place where the lordship of Christ is unchallenged, where the leading of the Spirit is unquenched, we believe it not only to be a place where the liberty of gifts is unhindered, where the likeness or loyalty to God's word is uncompromised, and likeness to Christ unmistakable, but we believe it to be a place where the love of all the brethren is unfeigned. Peter spoke of the unfeigned love of the brethren. And please, please, that's all Christians.

That is not just Christians who gather like we gather. But it's all who love the Lord. We do not believe that we're the only collection of Christians in Greensboro.

Of course we don't. We would seek to love all those who love the Lord. But in our own fellowship we would seek that love for one another is unpaired.

And I expect you would expect me to say this, wouldn't you? That we believe a New Testament church is a place where labor for the Lord is unceasing. Do you know there's one sure thing about coming here? They'll find you a job of work to do. By the will.

And if you feel you're being left out and you've nothing to do, I tell you what to do. You go and see my friend Mr. Andrews. He'll soon put you to work.

Well you saw that tonight with the typing, didn't you? You saw that with the typing. Please, may I just repeat myself and then we'll sing a chorus of it. That these are the marks of a New Testament church.

I believe from what I have seen, these are the marks of those that gather in this place. That it is a place where the lordship of Christ is unchallenged. Where the leading of the spirit is unquenched.

Where the liberty of gift is unhindered. Where loyalty to God's word is uncompromised. Where likeness to Christ is unmistakable.

Where love to all the saints is unpainted. And where labor for the lord is unceasing. Now that's a New Testament church.

And if you want a New Testament church, you look around for a church where those things are true. And you throw your weights right in there. Right in there.

Now please, I haven't answered all the questions because I'd have to spend the evening and talk about it, wouldn't I? You're granted that. I speak to thee, and thou dost hear us, and thou art willing to answer us. And we pray now, that as we open thy word to listen again to what thou didst say in the veins of thy flesh.

That we may be conscious that thou art talking to all of us. Grant, we pray, that someone tonight may turn to thee. And find thy salvation.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. A few verses, please, in the eighth chapter of the gospel of Luke.

Luke, chapter eight, if we may. Words that are familiar to every one of us. And in one context and in another have been read over the course of the years as much as almost any portion in the word of God.

Verse four of the eighth chapter of Luke. And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable. A sower went out to sow his seed.

And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

And others fell on good ground, and sprang up and bear fruit a hundredfold. And when he had said those things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said unto them, I'm sorry, and he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

But to others in parables that seeing, they might not see, and hearing, they might not understand. Now the parable is this. The seed is the word of God.

Those by the wayside were they that hear. Then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the walk are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy.

And these have no roots, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. That which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

The Lord will add his blessing, I'm sure, to that which we have read this evening. Is it not wonderful that while in past evenings we have sometimes turned to the words that were spoken by Peter and by Paul, and the words that were spoken by some of the Old Testament, tonight it is to the words that were spoken by the Lord Jesus himself that we're going to turn. The Saviour has somewhat to say to every one of us tonight.

Under the words of the parable that most of you learned in Sunday school, and almost every one of you knew by the time you reached Bible class, in these words I want to seek to present to you the challenge of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is not a man or a woman here tonight who can deny that when the Lord spoke the parable and said, a sower went forth to sow, that what he was sowing was the word of God. For the Lord Jesus said, the seed was the word of God.

Now I have tried, I know not whether I have succeeded, but I've tried. I've tried in past evenings to sow the seed of the word of God. I have sought night by night to take the word of God and to show its relevance for our day, its significance to our heart.

And I have tried evening by evening to say to you, Madam Sir, what about this, the word of God in your life? Although I may not have used those words. Now you would not expect me to start in the first verse of Genesis and go right through to the last chapter of Revelation tonight. For if I was to even try to do it, I've got a strong feeling my good friend Mr. Andrews wouldn't be shaking his watch.

He'd be holding it up. So may I be permitted to make a selection. The Lord Jesus said, the seed is the word of God.

Would you come with me in thought to the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. This is the gospel, says the word of God. That Christ died for our sins according to the word of God, according to the scripture.

I say here is seed and it's good seed. Jesus said it was the word of God. Jesus said it was good seed.

That Christ died for our sins according to the word of God. He was buried and the third day he rose again according to the word of God, according to the scripture. None of us here tonight would deny, would we? That this is the seed of which Jesus is speaking.

He said the seed is the word of God. Twice over, according to the scripture, according to the scripture. That Christ died for our sins.

Oh sir, madam, this is the very message of the gospel. It is the message of a person, Christ. It is the message of a passion, he died.

It is the message of a purpose for our sins. That a person, Christ. The last time I was with you, I remember, we dealt just a little about this wonderful title that the Lord Jesus bears.

May I very quickly remind you of what I said those years ago. I reminded you that Christ is not his name, Jesus is his name. Christ is his title.

If you thought I reminded you a Greek word, for they have not given us. I'm sorry it is not an English word, for they have not given us a translation, they have given us a transliteration. They have taken a Greek word and they have brought it into our vocabulary, into our language.

Christ. But I'm not a Greek. If I were a Jew, I would not say Christ.

I would say Messiah. It is the same word. It is just a different language.

The Messiah. But I'm not a Jew. But because I'm an Englishman, I would not say Christ and I would not say Messiah.

If I was to say it in my own language, I would say the same as you would say. I would say the Anointed. For Christ is the Greek word for Anointed and Messiah is the Hebrew word for Anointed.

And now we read that the Anointed died for our sins. It makes sense now, doesn't it? You remember that God said that three classes of people had to be Anointed. Prophets had to be Anointed.

Priests had to be Anointed. Kings had to be Anointed. And God says that Jesus is the Anointed, the Prophet, the Priest, the King.

The work of the Prophet to reveal. The work of the Priest to reconcile. The work of the King to reign.

And when we read that Christ died for our sins, we're daring to say that the revealing, reconciling, reigning Son of God, that Christ died for our sins. Oh, the wonder of it all. Oh, the wonder of it all.

What a person. But what a passion. He died.

It is so simple. It is hardly necessary for me to say it. But you know as well as I do that the Bible says that the wages of sin is death.

And when we look at this One who is the Christ, the Bible tells us that He did no sin. He knew no sin. In Him was found no sin at all.

And the very God of Heaven split the heavens and said, This is my beloved Son in whom I find all my delight. Then if He be the sinless, spotless Son of God, why is He dying? It's the wages of sin that's death. And the Bible tells us He did no sin.

Why is He dying? Oh, Christ died for our sins. Oh, the wonder of it all. The wonder of it all.

For here is a person, Christ, and here is a passion that to Calvary's cross He went and laid down His life for us. But here's the point. That He died for you and me.

The Bible tells me that Christ died for the ungodly. The Bible tells me He died even for those who were His enemies. And this is according to the Word of God.

And the Lord Jesus said, The seed is the Word of God. And night by night I've looked in your faces and I've tried to tell you this. Friend, there's One who loves you.

There's One who cares for you. There's One who gave Himself for you. He died for you.

He was buried. That's wonderful, isn't it? He was buried. Oh, it seems to me that God says, Thus far and no further.

Take My blessed Son and pluck the hair from His cheek. And drive the nails in His hands and feet. And put the crown of thorns on His brow.

But thus far and no further. For He made His grave with the wicked, but with the rich in His death. Oh, His grave was made with the wicked, for there were three.

Christ was there and on either side. One, Jesus in the midst. And as was the custom, they dug a hole into which the three bodies would have been shrouded.

He made His grave with the wicked. But He never laid there. They took Him down.

They put Him in a tomb in which man had never laid. And hallelujah. He rose again according to the Scripture.

In the words of the little chorus we have sung, Up from the grave He arose with a mighty triumph over His foes. He arose the victor of the dark domain. And He lived forever with His saints to reign.

And night by night, maybe I've not succeeded. By night by night I've tried to sow that seed. But we all need a Savior, for we've all sinned.

And God has in Jesus Christ provided a Savior. But now let's go to the parable. What happened to the seed that's been sown? One of four things.

There were four things that happened to the seed. You will notice in the story there is stolen seed. Then cometh the devil and taketh away the seed.

Then you will notice there is not only stolen seed. There is starved seed. There was no root.

Then you will notice that there was strangled seed. Strangled seed for some telemon forms we read. And they choked it.

But isn't it wonderful? That although there was stolen and starved and strangled seed, there was successful seed. There was some that fell in good ground and it sprang up and it brought forth a hundredfold. It brought forth fruit with patience.

May I ask, Madam Sir, as the Word of God during these last days, and may I suggest, for I'm not the only person that speaks the gospel here, for months and maybe the years of your life, the Word of God has been sown in your heart. You know God loved you. You know Christ died for you.

You know He was raised from the dead for you. You know that you should receive Him. What happened to the selling of the seed? In the parable Jesus said the birds of the air came and pecked away that, stole that that had fallen by the wayside.

But in His interpretation He dares to say, then come up the devil and take of it away. And dare I suggest this for your consideration, I haven't time to talk about it, but may I suggest this for your consideration, that Jesus Christ is telling us of the awful conflict that ever is before us between good and evil, between God and the devil. The seed is the Word, but it's the Word of God.

But the devil comes to snatch it away. Oh my friend, have you permitted indeed, have you permitted that seed to be snatched away? There is one certain thing, there's nothing wrong with the seed. What was wrong was the ground in which the seed fell.

It fell upon stony, rocky, hard ground. Have you permitted your heart to be like that? I don't think it would be necessary in an area like this, which if I judge things are right, is somewhat of a farming area. Although you do not have farms of course in your city, but you are surrounded with farms.

It would not be necessary for me to remind you that no man can produce a crop in his field unless he kills his fields and cares for his fields and provides for his fields. And here was stony ground, all they did was to walk upon it. Put nothing back into it, take everything from it.

How many men and women are like that? Their hearts are hard and stony. And the Lord in His Word asks a question in the Old Testament, is it nothing to all ye who pass by? Oh, if there's someone here tonight and you've allowed your heart to get so hard, so flimsy, that night by night the Word of God is snatched away. Stolen, stolen seed.

But then there was some and it was starved seed. Now when this seed fell, it fell on rocky ground, and do you know the moisture came upon it? And the sun shone. And that seed sprang forth, and would you please remember it was nothing to do with the ground, it was the moisture from heaven and the sun from heaven that made it swell and it brought forth a shoot.

But the tragedy was, it was all on the top and nothing below. It was all show and no reality. When the sun shone hard in the heavens and hard on the sand and the soil, that corn crumpled and died.

And the Lord Jesus when He tells the story, the Lord Jesus dares to say this of it, He dares to say it's like those who receive the Word with joy. I mean, it's actually receiving the Word with joy. But the tragedy is there's no root.

Oh please, I do hope coming to the services that you have felt at home, I do hope in the singing of the choir, in the singing of the choruses, in our whole attitude you have felt that there has been a happiness about these services. I can only speak for the choir, and I can only speak for, you know, the boys who come and sing with me, that we've got a happiness in our heart. But my friend, the Christian faith is more than that.

If that is all you have got out of these services, that you have received it and received it with joy, you've gone out feeling sort of chuffed, as we would say in a colloquialism of my own country. You've gone out of this place chuffed. There's no root.

I want you and I to allow the Word of God to get hold of us. Not that we shall just get hold of it, but it shall get hold of us. This seed, it sprang up, it gave some evidence of something being done.

Oh friend, friend, I'm often asked, how many folk were saved in the meetings, Mr. Ford? And my answer is always the same, I don't know. I don't keep the Lamb's Book of Life. I don't know.

I know this, God knows those where the Word of God has gone down into their being. How about you? How real has been your Christian experience? Is there someone amongst us this evening, and oh friend, we say it kindly, we say it lovingly, but don't whatever else you do, don't let your Christian life just centre around going to meetings. It needs to be deeper than that.

And then there were some, and you will notice in the first two, neither of them were saved. Neither of them. It was just an outward show, but there was no inward conviction.

But then we come to the two in this story who were saved. It is seed that is not now stolen or starved, it's seed that strangled, it fell among thorns, it fell among weeds, it fell among that which would strangle, choke it, and it brought forth no fruit to perfection. It brought forth some fruit, but it wasn't to perfection.

It wasn't as good as it could have been. Do you know, I come across a number of folk like that. Oh yes, the Word of God falls in their heart and they turn to Christ, they know Christ died for their sin, they receive Him, but then, watch what Jesus said, I didn't say it, the Lord Jesus said, the cares and the riches and the pleasures of this life.

The weeds, they choke it. May I be permitted, please, to remind you farming folk of a principle of farming. I don't know very much, but I do know a little of it.

Is it not a fact that any man who is a good farmer or a good horticulturist will never waste any of the weeds on his land. Years ago, I taught my son when he started, as we walked around the field that he wanted to buy, I taught him something of how to judge a good field. You judge a field by the herbage that's there.

If you look and you see nettles, you know your ground is rich, but it's sour. If you see, and I taught him by the herbage how he could tell a good field. And when the time came and he set out in the starting of a nursery business, what he'd been taught, he put into practice.

One of the things I taught him was this, that in the corner of his nursery, if there was one thing he must have, he must have a compost heap. And the weeds were cut off and they were put in the compost heap. And they went back to make that ground rich so it could produce crops.

Isn't that the very first principle of farming? The husbandry of one's land. And isn't it a remarkable fact that if you look at your crops, if you're a horticulturist and you find between your cabbage and between your other plants weeds, why, you feel what an awful thing those weeds. But the thing that would choke your crops, you take them, you put them in your compost heap and you plough them back into the land to make better crops for next year.

Have you ever wondered why on life's journey God permits cares? Ever wondered why it is that God on life's journey permits indeed riches or even pleasures? I'll tell you why. That you'll use them and plough them back for His glory. Some of the greatest saints I've ever known have been the saints that have had the greatest cares because out of those cares they've learned lessons that would bring forth fruit to perfection.

Some of the Christians I know they may have some of this world's goods and if God has blessed you such may I suggest to you that those very riches could choke you and stifle your Christian experience. But God says take them, plough them back. Plough them back.

You'll bring forth some fruit out of perfection or unto perfection. And even the pleasures of this seed. Those things that would make a man a woman healthy and strong.

Oh let's plough them back that we shall use our strength and our resources for His glory. But here they were strangled. Oh friend, what is you permitting to happen to the seed that's fallen in your life in these five days? Are you going to permit it to bring forth fruit or it's going to bring forth fruit not to perfection? Bring forth something for the glory of God but at the end of the journey perhaps to say Lord I've so little.

I often say when I preach on the story of the thief on the grass that I wouldn't like to be the thief on the grass. Not me. To be saved by the skin of His teeth and that's all.

To hear the Lord say today thou shalt be with me in paradise and the next moment be in heaven. Wonderful that He was in heaven. Praise God for a Savior who can save like that.

But I wouldn't like to be the thief on the grass. Would you? Would you? That day when He stands before the judgment seat of Christ to have nothing to lay at the feet of the Master. Just saved.

Oh please don't come to me and say but just a moment you know He witnessed for the Lord. He said to the other thief doth I not fear God. Don't say that to me please because He said that before He was saved.

So that won't come up at the judgment seat of Christ. He was saved and had nothing to offer the Lord. When I stand before Him oh please God I may be able that I may have some crowns to cast at His feet and say Lord Lord Lord on life's journey I didn't let the cares and the riches and the pleasures choke me.

I tried I tried to plow them plow them back Lord. I tried I tried to use them for Your glory. Stolen Starved Strangled Successful Not grand Fell in good ground Oh I like that I like that.

Been done well Plowed well Pardon me I know a little crude But manured well. Been prepared They put the compass in it And it brought forth a hundredfold. You know people talk about there's no miracle.

Shall I tell you the biggest miracle? The biggest miracle is when a man or a woman trusts the Savior and then brings forth a hundredfold in his life. Oh oh oh That's the miracle I like. Oh I do.

Brings forth a hundredfold. He brings forth fruit unto perfection. Brings forth fruit.

And this is what Jesus said with patience. I like that don't you? I like that. To bring forth fruit with patience.

To realize Lord Lord I've allowed Your Word to affect my living. It's affected my home. It's affected my business.

It's affected my students. It's affected my colleagues. Lord I've allowed Your Word.

But it's brought forth with patience. Lord I'm still carrying on. I'm not satisfied.

I'm not sitting back and saying Lord there's something in my life for You. For the man who says that I wonder if there's anything in his life for God. But patiently day by day to continue with Jesus Christ.

Some of you heard the radio program that we had today. You know the questions that were asked me. And I tried as hard as I could to get this over.

And I'd like to try and get it over again and again and again. But it isn't just enough to say I've trusted the Lord. It's got to be worked out in our living.

It's got to be seen day by day. To bring forth fruit a hundredfold. Ah yes.

But with friend here is the seed. Christ died for our sins according to the Word of God. He was buried the third day He was raised again according to the Word of God.

That's the seed. Night by night it's been sown and fallen into the field of your life. What happened to it? Stolen? Starved? Strangled? Are you willing tonight to say Lord I'll let it be successful.

I'll let it be successful. You and I have nothing to do with the seed. It's the Word of God.

But we've everything to do with the ground in which the seed falls. Are you prepared tonight to say to Jesus Christ Lord I'll receive it. If you died for me I'll trust you.

If you died for me and gave your life for me if you live for me today I'm willing day by day not only to ask thee now to be my Saviour but day by day to crown thee as my Lord. Will you do that? If you've not done it would you do it tonight? Oh what will the answer be? I wonder if in closing we could sing just two verses of 246 please. 246 just two verses of 246.

Why do you faint dear brother? Do you not think Lord we have sought very simply and yet very earnestly to face the challenge of this. We do not believe that you just told it for the sake of you told it that men may trust it. God grant that it may not be stolen or starved.

God grant it may not even be strangled. That the word of God may be successful in our life. That we may trust that Christ who died for our sins according to the scripture was buried and the third day rose again.

For we ask it in his name. Amen. Oh please friend we will not forget that if there are here tonight any who would care to speak with me about these things I hold in my hand still a few copies of that lovely little booklet God's way of salvation.

Don't go from this place without Christ. Whatever you do don't go from this place without Christ. Trust the Lord.

Trust him tonight.

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