

## Scripture Passage: Luke 8:1-18

**MAIN IDEA:** Be careful to listen and obey.

**PURPOSE:** This is who we want to be! People who obey to further the Kingdom of Heaven to bring transformation to ourselves and others.

### Introduction

\*Read Like 8:1-18\*

This passage speaks to the central component of bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth: What follows after we hear the Gospel, a word that literally means Good News! If you have heard what I consider to be the greatest story ever told, think back to when you first heard this good news of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. For some, your earliest memories are full of this story, and you have built your life on obeying how it asks you to live. For others, you found this good news in the midst of suffering or desperation that set you on a path to find meaning and joy in your adult life. Or, you may have heard this good news, believed in it, but no longer see the benefit in including it in your life. And for others, this may be the first time the word "Gospel" has ever been explained, much less described as something good. No matter where you fall, this story has been told around the world for over 2,000 years, and many before us and many after us will consider the same question once they hear it: What do I do with the stories of the Bible that all point to God's great love for me through the life of His Son, Jesus?

As we take a look at the start of our teaching text, we can see that exactly what I just described is happening! Verse 1 says

"Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God."

And, if you're wondering what the good news actually is, Jesus explains it before this in Luke 4:18:

He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free."

We see powerful examples of this on display in many of the people who choose to travel with Jesus, and one of those people is mentioned here. Mary Magdalene was a prostitute who experienced severe demonic oppression. We see multiple times in Scripture that not just 1 but 7 evil spirits plagued her. Yet, here she is, choosing to follow and obey Jesus, proclaiming the good news with Him from town to town. Not only that, but she was also one of the women financially supporting Jesus, and the Bible does not shy away from how she made that money. We see a life marked by freedom from the prison of prostitution and demonic oppression, and the redemption

of money originally spent for selfish gain being used for the good of others. This is the evidence of the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven operating on earth.

### Body

So what are the possible responses to the Gospel that Jesus surely experienced as He traveled from town to town, and that we still experience in sharing the Gospel today? To explain this, Jesus uses a parable, which is a story that He uses to explain part of how to live for the Kingdom of Heaven. He sets this story in a setting of deep importance during this time: a farmer planting crops. Many who listened to Jesus were farmers, so He was communicating in a way that spoke to the realities of their daily life. Not only that, but how well your crops did was a matter of life and death not just for you, but your family and those around you. If the farmers did not have a good harvest, everyone suffered. As Jesus gives each of the four examples, there is an automatic connection to the significance they represent. As we go through these, I want you to think about where you feel like you may fall, and you may be like me where you can see evidence of more than one example in the story of your life.

In the **first example**, the seeds that the farmer throws do not have a chance of survival. They never make it to the soil, they are trampled, and they are eaten by birds. In Jesus's explanation of this parable, He points to spiritual warfare as the cause of this loss. The Devil, the one whose sole desire is to steal, kill, and destroy, comes to remove any hope of growth before the Gospel can take root in these lives.

In the **second example**, the seeds make it to the soil, but they are surrounded by rocks so that they do not receive the necessary moisture to grow. Jesus explains that these people initially experience the joy of receiving their salvation, but they are not deeply rooted enough for when times of suffering and hardship come. They experience what feels like a drought that tests their faith, and they wither away in the waiting. Whether you identify as a follower of Jesus or not, every person here has experienced some degree of suffering. It is a guaranteed part of life on earth, and this speaks to what we do in the face of that suffering.

In the **third example**, the seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns literally choked the plants to death as they grew together. Jesus explains that the thorns are life's "worries, riches, and pleasures". Really let that sink in. The thorns are not just "bad" things. Our riches and our pleasure can kill our desire to live for the Kingdom of Heaven just as quickly as suffering and pain.

In the **fourth and final example**, we find hope and life. The seeds fall on good soil! Not only is it good, the crop that is yielded is ONE-HUNDRED times more than what was sown. Imagine if farming was how you sustained your life. How you fed those you love and financially made it through year after year. Your ears would immediately tune into a yield and profit like this. It is the dream! Jesus says in verse 15 that these are the people who, "with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."

Since our time together is shorter today, I am going to spend the rest of it on what it looks like to respond to hearing the Gospel so that you fall on the good soil of the last example. An important thing to notice in reading the Bible is repetition! We believe that all of God's Word is inspired and written through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let me tell you, the Holy Spirit is not wasting anybody's time by repeating things that don't matter. I remember reading this passage as I was growing in my faith in my early twenties and thinking "man this is bouncing around a lot". We've got Jesus traveling with some people then talking about a farmer then jumping to a lamp under a jar. Honestly, these 18 verses didn't feel connected or logical to me. Then, a person who's devoted their life to teaching God's Word pointed out the importance of repetition in the Bible. In these 18 verses, Jesus talks about hearing or listening 7 times!

I suggest going through and finding them for yourself, but let's look at the first and the last, which are essentially bookends to the parable. Jesus calls those around Him to attention in verse 8 by saying, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." As I've explored and fallen in love with the Bible, one of the great cries of my heart has become, "Jesus, give me ears to hear." Once you start to notice that phrase, it is everywhere, and the promises for those who have ears to hear what matters in the Kingdom of Heaven are better than gold.

He then ends in verse 18 by saying, "THEREFORE, consider carefully how you listen." The word "therefore" in the Bible is a big flashing sign that the answer is about to be given for what came before. "Therefore" brings together the work of God and the response of humanity by showing how we should respond to what God has done for and asked of us. We don't respond to earn His love, we do this because we understand how much He already loves us. In this case, Jesus is saying in response to the parable of the farmer, be careful how you listen! How you listen determines the trajectory of your life and the impact you can have for the Kingdom of Heaven.

There's one vital component to add to this though. If anyone has asked a friend or child or co-worker to do something, you know that listening is a gift, BUT how would you feel if they listened to every word you said, but nothing changed. Listening without action is pretty much meaningless. What this passage is saying is to listen then OBEY! That is how we fall and REMAIN on good soil. We listen to Jesus, the King who sits on the throne, and obey what He asks us to do. One of the things that I love about this parable is that it is not a one time thing. Each of you thought about when you first heard the Gospel at the start of this sermon, but the reality for most of our lives is that we need to hear this truth again and again as we learn how to obey. It is a lifelong journey to stay on good soil. For the entirety of my life, I will be praying "Lord, give me ears to hear" as I continue to learn to listen and obey His voice regardless of the attacks of the enemy, the suffering that has and will come, and the distractions of this world that are desperate to win my attention and affection.

## **Conclusion**

At the end of verse 18, Jesus says, “Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them.” He is promising revelation and a rich harvest to those who hunger to see the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth more than anything else. He is speaking to those who say I will listen and obey what you ask of me. I pray that we will be people who join in this together so that we will all fall and remain in the good soil. We must see that Jesus is the most beautiful so that we live life with listening ears and an obedient heart.