

SEEKING A PRODUCTIVE LIFE?

LUKE 8:4-21

Most people desire to live a productive life– a meaningful satisfying life.

Luke 8 shows us **how to live a productive, meaningful, life.**

Two main suppositions:

1. A productive life doesn't come to us because we *WANT* a productive life.
A truly productive life is the result of hearing God's Word and doing what it says!
2. Hearing and obeying God's Word is the natural outgrowth of the condition of a person's heart.

If we want to have a productive life we must respond positively to the teaching of God's Word.

We will only respond properly to God's Word when we have a heart-disposition to do whatever God says. *The condition of our heart must be right!*

Luke has been tracing the early days of Jesus' ministry to show us the two alternative responses to Him: Acceptance and rejection.

He has shown that the religious, social, "IN group" among the people of Israel, God's people, has not been interested in receiving Him.

The ones who have wanted to follow Him are the "OUTCASTS" of the religious society: publicans and sinners, pagans, women, lepers, even the demon possessed!

DIFFERENT RESPONSES PREDICTED 8:4-21 – PARABLE OF THE SOILS

Acceptance or rejection of Jesus isn't based on the evidence but on the condition of the heart.

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD'S WORD WILL EITHER MAKE US OR BREAK US!

PRESENTATION OF THE PARABLE 8:4-8

=> FOUR KINDS OF SOIL

Jesus warned the multitudes that the same sower may sow the same good seed, but sowing has different results based on the condition of the ground it falls on.

– the importance of the condition of their heart.

Those who reject Him do not do so because of lack of evidence nor because of some deficiency in His message– their hearts are not willing to receive it.

Notice the distinct characteristics of the four kinds of ground.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT IN EACH CASE?

The sower is the same–our Lord uses it of Himself.

But the "who" is really not important–the story relates to a universal principle.

The seed is always the same– the Word of God.

It is always good seed.

It always does just what it is supposed to do.

The problem: **good seed won't produce fruit in bad soil!**

THE CONDITION OF THE SOIL IT FALLS ON MAKES THE DIFFERENCE!

WHAT KEY WORD IS REPEATED IN EACH EXPLANATION?

"HEAR"– used 9 times in this passage!

Why is it so important?

What does this key word teach us about the difference in each case?

The importance of hearing God's Word first.

To "hear" from a biblical perspective is more than just to turn up your hearing aid–it's more than simply listening to the words intellectually.

It involves both spiritual understanding and receptivity.

"Selective hearing" problem.

Some people come Sunday after Sunday to church, they hear the words, but they never listen to what God is trying to tell them.

The truth goes *"in one ear and out the other!"*

Why? Because we don't WANT to hear the truth and do it!

"The person with the banana in his ear."

WHAT WAS THE FIRST KIND OF SOIL LIKE? 8:5, 12

Hard soil – trampled down by the traffic.

The seed just lays there.

It never penetrates.

The birds come along quickly and take it away.

An hour later, *you'd never know it had been there.*

Represents a hard heart.

No desire to HEAR God's Word.

No desire to DO what God says.

NO LIFE RESULTS – NO FRUIT PRODUCED!!

WHAT WAS THE SECOND LIKE? 8:6, 13

Shallow soil – Rocky underneath.

Barclay suggests: "Ground which was only a thin skin of earth over a shelf of limestone rock. In such ground there was no moisture or nourishment, and the growing plant was bound to wither and die."

Don't be deceived by this one! The soil never changed.

It was always the same.

The only thing that changes is what it appears the seed is going to produce.

There is a quick response.

Almost too good to be true.

It looks like the real thing. In fact, you get the impression that it looks *better* than the real thing! It springs up quicker and looks better – at first!

The farmer rejoices because it looks like a rich crop.

An experienced sower, who knows the terrain, realizes what's beneath surface.

Spectators applaud because it looks real.

But, *it is going to dry up and die.*

Why? *The soil is bad from the start.*

Sun is good for a plant if the soil contains moisture and the plant can put down roots.

Sun dries up a plant when the soil stops the plant from developing a healthy root system.

The soil never becomes life-producing.

It's all external appearance from the beginning. Nothing has changed.

We've all seen it, haven't we?

Bruce Larson: " . . . those impressionable ones who hear the word and have an instant and positive response. They join all the groups, buy all the books, come to all the courses. They never miss worship." Suddenly one day you look around and notice they're gone.

"A great beginning and no finish. One of my friends in seminary was a gifted evangelist who while still in seminary converted thousands. He could preach and expound Scripture with dazzling skill. Today he is a militant unbeliever."

Cecil—the drug convert.

Ruthie—the enthusiastic youth group leader

The missionary friend who was sexually abusing his daughter, who later, angrily, decided to chuck it all!

Some of my most promising seminary students over the years.

The list goes on and on It could include some of YOU sitting here! For each of these, the day comes when the cost becomes more than they're willing to pay! They move on.

Why them? Why not me? Am I better than they are?

Will I someday turn and go down the same path? How can I be sure?

What makes the difference? **THE QUEST FOR TRUTH!**

Do you want to know and to do the will of God, more than anything else??!

NO LIFE RESULTS – NO FRUIT PRODUCED

This may be a lot more common than we ever imagine.

WHAT WAS THE THIRD KIND OF SOIL LIKE? 8:7, 14

Weed-filled soil *How does it differ from the previous two?*

The soil itself receives the seed. The plant survives.

There's real life here!

However, the fruit is choked out

It's unproductive life!

LIFE RESULTS – NO FRUIT PRODUCED

Larson: "Sincere believers, they make a solid beginning in the life of faith. Then God begins to bless them. They prosper. They have children and grandchildren. They succeed in their jobs, pursue many hobbies, acquire lands, summer homes, many friends. They join clubs and receive honors. The first thing you know, all these good things choke out their primary commitment. They are just too caught up in the good things of life to be concerned about the things of God."

What might cause a person who has received the Word of God to live a fruitless (unproductive) life?

– Worries

– Possessions

– Pleasure and comfort

WHAT IS THE FOURTH KIND OF SOIL? GOOD SOIL! 8:8, 15

How does it stand out from the other three?

It's the only one that's fruitful—productive.

The results are visible.

The passage doesn't define what the plant produces.

But it is productive.

Witness

Converts

Fruit of Spirit, etc.

What is different about this kind of "ground"?

LIFE RESULTS – FRUIT PRODUCED

Notice that there is no command to be fruitful!

A plant born from good seed, in good soil, WILL produce fruit.

PURPOSE OF THE PARABLES 8:9-10

Jesus spoke to the people in parables so His followers might understand the truth but the multitude of listeners whose hearts were not willing to hear might not understand.

It's clear that **Jesus isn't impressed by the crowds.**

He tells a parable so that the masses of "followers", who really aren't there to hear, won't understand what He's talking about.

You have to have an interest in hearing to think these issues through.

They really don't care.

If our Lord's proportions are significant, about one in four is a real hearer.

EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE 8:11-15

Jesus explained that this parable **shows the proclamation of God's word will produce different results according to the condition of the heart of the hearer.**

When we sow seed over and over again, we should never assume that the masses will listen. – Your hearing is not my problem.

Some walked in here today with hard soil in their heart.

They have no intention of listening.

Satan wastes little time in whisking away what God says to them!

Others will respond immediately, but eventually drop out because there is no real life.

Some will hear what I say, believe God's Word and receive life, but will never start a productive life because that life will be choked out by worry, pressure and other concerns.

Some will hear the Word, do what God says, and their life will be turned around.

How do I know that? God said it would be like that!

So when people don't walk out of here with a transformed, productive life, I know that's just how God said it would be.

It's not my problem.

That's not fatalism. *They can do something about it*, if they really want to "hear" – to know the truth and to do whatever God wants. The choice is still theirs!

God is only showing us what the odds are that they will do it!

WARNING FROM THE PARABLE 8:16-21

Jesus gives **two related warnings** based on the teaching about the importance of the condition of the heart. **8:16-18**

1. He warns us to **be sure of the condition of our heart.**

The true inner condition of the heart will show itself eventually.

Listening to God's voice is a clear indicator of the heart's condition.

We won't be able to hide what is in our heart.

If we have the light, we're going to reveal it.

If not, that will eventually reveal the condition of our heart.

The people who follow Jesus are to consider carefully how they listen.

If they hear and respond with genuine belief, they will receive more truth.

If they do not receive what they hear, they will lose it (cf. v. 12).

The warning for the religious of Israel is that they have the Word, but they have hard hearts.

The Word just lays there on the soil.

Birds will snatch that away and they will be left with nothing.

Even what they think they possess won't stay forever, unless they respond in faith to what they are hearing.

They are about to be driven away from the truth.

If they have the real thing, it will be visible, like a light on a hill on a dark night.

The second warning comes when his family comes for a visit.

He's informed that they're there and responds with a puzzling answer:
 His real family is not the persons who are related to him by bloodline.
 His real relatives are spiritually linked with Him.
 It's those who hear and do the Word of God. 8:19-21

**2. Jesus' true family ties are not based on physical descent
 but on the reception and practice of God's Word.**

While "blood may be thicker than water"

Jesus' point is that faith is "thicker than" blood.

**Jesus' real family is made up of those who want to hear
 and to do what God's Word says.**

Our attitude toward the word determines our response.

What does this passage teach us about our need to hear?

We need to be sure of our own attitude toward God's Word.

Are we really desirous of hearing and obeying God's Word?

That's the only way to lead a truly productive life!

***What does this passage teach us about evangelism, preaching or
 teaching?***

Be realistic in your expectations.

Even our Lord didn't win them all!

Some will not even listen.

Some will listen, respond, and later dry up.

Some will listen, truly believe, but get choked out by life and its pressures.

Some will listen, believe, get turned on, and lead exciting, productive lives!

The difference is in the heart.

What condition is your soil in? How's YOUR heart?