

CONCERNING THE WAY

February 21, 2012

LESSON 129: THE GOSPEL OF LUKE



Chapter 8



Luke 8:1-3 After this, Jesus traveled from one city and village to another, preaching and spreading the good news about God's kingdom. The twelve were with him, (2) as well as some women who had been healed of evil spirits and illnesses: Mary, also called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out; (3) Joanna, the wife of Herod's household manager Chuza; Susanna; and many others. These women continued to support them out of their personal resources.

- The assumption is that Jesus is no longer teaching in local synagogues, He hits the road. The synagogues were more and more closed to him. He had begun where you would think a prophet or great teacher should start, in the religious centers, where any man with a message from God might expect to find a responsive and receptive audience. Instead of a welcome he had found opposition; instead of eager listeners he had found the scribes and Pharisees waiting to trap him; so now he took to the open road and the hillside and the lake shore.
- Luke specifically names three women. One is Mary Magdalene, that is, Mary from the town of Magdala, out of whom he had cast out seven demons. She must have had a past that was dark and terrible. Then there is Joanna. She was the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager. A king had many privileges and a lot of private property; his "epitropos" was the official who looked after the king's financial interests. There could be no more trusted and important official. It is an amazing thing to find Mary Magdalene, with the dark past, and Joanna, the lady of the court, in this one group of Jesus' followers. We are not told anything else about Susanna.
- There is an important respect shown to women in this passage, as their contributions were often ignored in that male-dominated society. This is something else that Jesus changed. He treated women as equals to men and they made up some of His strongest supporters, which would have been scandalous in Israel in those days. Notice it wasn't just these three women, but "many others" who were with Jesus, and these women were the financial supporters of the ministry.

Luke 8:4-8 Now while a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to him from every city, he said in a parable: (5) "A sower went out to sow his seed. As he was sowing, some seeds fell along the path, were trampled on, and the birds of the sky ate them up. (6) Others fell on stony ground, and as soon as they came up, they dried up because they had no moisture. (7) Others fell among thornbushes, and the thornbushes grew with them and choked them. (8) But others fell on good soil, and when they came up, they produced a hundred times as much as was planted." As he said this, he called out, "Let the person who has ears to hear, listen!"

- A parable is a story that communicates a specific truth Jesus was trying to get across. He generally used them because they simplified spiritual concepts the crowds could identify with.
- In this parable Jesus used a picture that all his hearers would recognize. He may have even been looking at some farmer sowing his seed as he spoke. The parable speaks of four kinds of ground.
 - The picture here for the first example is of a well-travelled path beside or through the fields the farmer was sowing in. When the seed fell on these paths, which were beaten as hard as a road, it had no chance of getting in the soil.
 - There was the rocky ground. This does not mean ground that was full of stones but ground which was only a thin skin of earth over a shelf of limestone rock. In that ground there was no moisture or nourishment, and the growing plant was sure to wither and die.
 - The ground which was full of thorns was ground which looked clean. All you have to do to make the ground look good is to turn the soil over. But the seeds and roots of the weeds had been left in it. The good seed and the weeds grew together, but the weeds were stronger; and so the life was choked out of the good seed.
 - The good ground was soil that was deep and clean and well-prepared.

Jesus used "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" on several occasions when telling parables (Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8; 14:35). The expression describes the fact that spiritual people can

understand the spiritual meaning of a parable, and unspiritual people cannot.

Luke 8:9-10 Then his disciples began to ask him what this parable meant. (10) So he said, **"You have been given knowledge about the secrets of the kingdom of God. But to others they are given in parables, so that 'they might look but not see, and they might listen but not understand.'"**

- This passage has always puzzled people. It sounds like Jesus is saying that he spoke in parables so that people would not be able to understand; but we can't believe he would deliberately hide his meaning from his listeners. Jesus did not come to hide the truth from men; he came to reveal it.

Let's see how Matthew puts it in his gospel:

Matthew 13:13-17 For this reason I speak to them in parables: Although they see they do not see, and although they hear they do not hear nor do they understand. (14) And concerning them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

*'You will listen carefully yet will never understand,
you will look closely yet will never comprehend.*

*(15) For the heart of this people has become dull;
they are hard of hearing,
and they have shut their eyes,
so that they would not see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.'*

(16) "But your eyes are blessed because they see, and your ears because they hear. (17) For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

- So let's discuss. **What do you think Jesus meant by this?**
 - Did Jesus speak in parables to help people rightly see and understand?
 - Isaiah is basically saying, "I have spoken to them the word of God and they have not understood a word of it." So is Jesus saying this is the reason for His teaching in parables or the result of it?
 - Did Jesus really mean that people can become so dull in their minds that when God's truth comes to them they cannot see it? They have become so mentally lazy, so blinded by the world system, so unwilling to see anything they do not want to see, that they have become incapable of absorbing God's truth?
 - Or is it that people, who were spiritually discerning, that is, were following Him and acknowledging His message as true would have the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God. But others who were not responding to Jesus' message of the kingdom would not understand the parable (see 1 Corinthians 2:14).
- In any case, Isaiah was describing a time in Israel that the Jews would not see the truth. Jesus was saying that what Isaiah had predicted was being fulfilled. This blindness would continue, would cause them to miss the coming of their Messiah and to kill Him. Paul spoke about this in Romans 11:25: "...brothers, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery: a partial hardening has come to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in". So this blindness/hardening delayed the coming of the Kingdom, but it was necessary in God's plan to bring salvation to the Gentiles by grace through the blood of Jesus on the cross. The blindness will finally end when Christ comes back and the Jews recognize Him as their Messiah.

- The ultimate purpose of God in everything is good. Paul basically tells us that in Romans 8:28. Chapters 9-11 tell how the Jews, the chosen people of God, actually refused God's truth and crucified God's son when he came to them. That sounds inexplicable. But what was the result of it? The gospel went out to the Gentiles; and the ultimate result is that "all Israel will be saved". The outward evil is swallowed up in a larger good, because it is all within the plan of God.
- That is what Isaiah was feeling. At first he was bewildered and in despair; then the light came on and in effect he said "I can't understand the behavior of these people; but I know that all this failure is somehow in the ultimate purpose of God, and he will use it for his own ultimate glory and for the ultimate good of men." Jesus took these words of Isaiah and used them to encourage his disciples; he said in effect, "I know that this looks disappointing; I know how you are feeling when men's minds and hearts refuse to receive the truth and when their eyes refuse to recognize it; but in this, too, there is purpose--and some day you will see it."
- There is great encouragement for us! Sometimes there seems to be nothing but rough times, nothing but failure. That may be so to our human eyes and human minds, but at the back of it there is a God who is fitting even that failure into the divine plan of his omniscient mind and his omnipotent power. There are no failures and there are no loose ends in the ultimate plan of God.

Luke 8:11-15 "Now this is what the parable means. The seed is God's word. (12) The ones on the path are the people who listen, but then the devil comes and takes the word away from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. (13) The ones on the stony ground are the people who welcome the word with joy when they hear it. But since they don't have any roots, they believe for a while, but in a time of testing they fall away. (14) The ones that fell among the thornbushes are the people who listen, but as they go on their way they are choked by the worries, wealth, and pleasures of life, and their fruit doesn't mature. (15) But the ones on the good soil are the people who also hear the word but hold on to it with good and honest hearts and produce a crop through endurance."

- The words which were being preached by the Living Word, Jesus, were the same message John the Baptist had been preaching. This is not the gospel we have today of the cross. That came later. It is the message of the king arriving and His kingdom. The people's responsibility was to accept the message which both Jesus and John were preaching, and repent.
- The hard path represents the shut mind, the mind which refuses to take it in. The first group consists of those who hear but do not believe at all, because of the work of the devil.
- The second group is those who listen and rejoice but then do not stick with the truth of the message because they have no root. The fact that they believe for a while but... fall away means that they only accept the facts of the Word mentally and then reject it when "the going gets rough." It does not mean they lose their salvation, because they were never really saved.
- The thorny ground stands for those whose lives are so busy that the things of God get crowded out. We must always remember that the things which crowd out God aren't necessarily bad in themselves, but have become impediments to serving God. The third group is those who listen but never come to maturity (v. 14). These may be those who are interested in Jesus' message but who can't accept it

because of their devotion to material things—life’s worries, riches, and pleasures.

- The fourth group consists of those who listen, retain the Word, and... produce a crop, that is, they bear spiritual fruit, evidence of their spiritual life. As Jesus’ ministry progresses, we see representatives of each of these groups: (1) The Pharisees and religious leaders refused to believe. (2) Some people followed Jesus because of His miracles of healing and feeding but refused to stay with His message (John 6:66). (3) Others, such as the rich ruler (Luke 18:18-30), were interested in Jesus but would not accept Him because of the strong pull of materialism. (4) Others followed Him and were committed to His Word regardless of the cost (vs. 1-3).

Luke 8:16-18 "No one lights a lamp and hides it under a bowl or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a lampstand so that those who come in will see the light. (17) For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and there is nothing secret that will not become known and come to light. (18) So pay attention to how you listen. For to the one who has something, more will be given. However, from the one who doesn't have, even what he thinks he has will be taken away from him."

- Christianity is in its very nature something which must be seen. It is always easy to find excuses why we should not flaunt our Christianity in the world's face. In almost every person there is an instinctive fear of being different; and the world is always going to persecute those who do not conform to its pattern.
- Hard as it may be, it is the command of Christ that we never be ashamed to show who we belong to and whom we serve; and if we think of it in the right way it will be not a duty, but a privilege.
- Verse 17 talks about how ridiculous it is to think we can hide anything from God. That’s impossible! We should remember the verse which says, "You are the God who sees me." (Genesis 16:13.)
- What Jesus says here is a logical extension of the Parable of the Sower. If we understand the Word of God our life should reflect that understanding. We’re not given “the secrets of the kingdom of God” (8:10) to keep them secret. The disciples were to make known the things Jesus was telling them. The people who followed Jesus were to “pay attention to how they listened”. If they heard and responded with genuine belief, then they would receive more truth. If they did not receive what they heard, they would lose it. **How does this truth relate to us today?**

Luke 8:19-21 His mother and his brothers came to him, but they couldn't get near him because of the crowd. (20) He was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and want to see you." (21) But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

- These brothers had to be sons of Mary and Joseph who were born after Jesus. Joseph had no sexual relations with Mary until after the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:25). So we see that after Jesus’ birth Mary and Joseph had a number of children, and these “brothers” were Jesus’ half-brothers. Joseph had probably passed away by this time, as he is not mentioned. Matthew tells us the names of his half-brothers – James, Joseph, Simon, Jude, and that there were sisters as well.
- Jesus wasn’t saying his family was not important to Him. However, it is evident from the gospels that, during his lifetime, Jesus' family had a hard time seeing Him for who He really was. Mark 3:21 tells us how his family came and tried to restrain him because they believed him to be crazy. But we know that

at least James and Jude believed Him. James became the head of the church in Jerusalem after Pentecost, and James and Jude both wrote their own epistles that we have in our Bibles.

- Let's remember that the kingdom of God is a society on earth where God's will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven. So, all whose one aim in life is to make God's will their will are the true family of Jesus. We speak of all people being the children of God; but the deepest kind of son-ship is when a person puts their trust in Christ for salvation, and puts their will in line with God's will by the help of the Holy Spirit, that's when real family begins. That person has entered into a family which includes all the saints in earth and in heaven, and will continue for eternity.
- Also, what Jesus said showed that the gospel is not limited to just the Jews, but is for all who believe, including Gentiles. Again we see the importance of hearing God's Word, but this time He adds "and do it". James, Jesus' half-brother, must have learned that, because he wrote about obeying the Word instead of just listening to it (James 1:22-23).

Now Jesus does three miracles which show His power over three aspects of the created world: the natural realm (8:22-25), the demonic realm (vv. 26-39), and sickness and death (vv. 40-56).

Luke 8:22-25 One day Jesus and his disciples got into a boat. He said to them, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." So they started out. (23) Now as they were sailing, Jesus fell asleep. A violent storm swept over the lake, and they were taking on water and were in great danger. (24) So they went to him, woke him up, and said, "Master! Master! We're going to die!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves. They stopped, and there was calm. (25) Then he asked the disciples, "Where is your faith?" Frightened and amazed, they asked one another, "Who is this man? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him!"

- It's obvious that Jesus decided to cross the lake for some much needed rest and quiet. As they sailed, he fell asleep. It is interesting to think of the sleeping Jesus. He was tired, just as we become tired. He, too, could reach the point of exhaustion. But He could relax. He trusted God; he knew that he was as near to God by sea as he ever was by land.
- The Sea of Galilee is famous for its sudden squalls. A traveler says, "The sun had scarcely set when the wind began to rush down towards the lake, and it continued all night long with increasing violence, so that when we reached the shore next morning the face of the lake was like a huge boiling caldron." The reason is because the Sea of Galilee is more than six hundred feet below sea level. It is surrounded by table lands and beyond that mountains rise. The rivers have cut deep ravines through the table lands down into the sea. These ravines act like great funnels to draw down the cold winds from the mountains; and this produces these violent storms.
- How could Jesus control the sea? "The sea is His, and He made it" (Psalm 95:5). That is how! And what about the stormy wind? He "brings the wind out of His storehouses" (Psalm 135:7). Then, "He calmed the storm, and the waves grew silent." (Psalm 107:29). This story showed the disciples and us that Jesus is God.
- Everything that Jesus did had a deeper meaning. **What is the real meaning of this incident for us?**

Luke 8:26-29 They landed in the region of the Gerasenes, which is just across the lake from Galilee. (27) When Jesus stepped out on the shore, a certain man from the city met him. This man was controlled by demons and had not worn clothes for a long time. He did not live in a house but in the tombs. (28) When he saw Jesus, he screamed, fell down in front of him, and said in a loud voice, "What do you want from me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you not to torture me!" (29) For Jesus was in the process of ordering the unclean spirit to come out of the man. On many occasions the unclean spirit had seized the man, and though he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, he would break the chains and be driven by the demon into deserted places.

- Matthew wrote that there were two demon-possessed men (Matthew 8:28-34), Luke apparently thought it was only necessary to mention one of the two.
- As with most "demonized" individuals in the Gospels, this man was shouting at the top of his voice. The demon recognized Jesus, calling Him Jesus, Son of the Most High God. The words, "I beg you not to torture me" show that the demon recognized that Jesus had control over him even though men did not.

Luke 8:30-33 Jesus asked him, "What's your name?" He answered, "Legion," because many demons had gone into him. (31) Then the demons began begging Jesus not to order them to go into the bottomless pit. (32) Now a large herd of pigs was grazing there on the hillside. So the demons begged Jesus to let them go into those pigs, and he let them do this. (33) Then the demons came out of the man and went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the cliff into the lake and drowned.

- The demon said that his name was Legion, a Latin term meaning a group of about 6,000 Roman soldiers. The point of the name was that a large number of demons inhabited the man. In Matthew 8:29 the demons ask, "Have you come here to torment us before the time?" showing that they know there is a time coming when they will be judged (Jude 1:6), and it will have to do with Jesus sending them into the "bottomless pit", or "abyss". Since the pigs drowned, we don't know if the demons were sent to the pit anyway or were free to roam around again, looking for another host.
- The abyss (Greek abussos, 'without bottom') is the place to where all evil spirits will ultimately be condemned (Revelation 9:1; 20:1, 3). It is the place where many of "the angels that sinned" (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 1:6) in the pre-Flood world had already been bound. The abyss was prepared specially for evil angels (Matt 25:41). These creatures will come out of the abyss for a time to torment people during the Tribulation (Revelation 9:1-12). The "abyss" is never used as the equivalent of the O.T. word "hell" (she'ol, Heb.), meaning "the place of the dead".

Luke 8:34-39 Now when those who had been taking care of the pigs saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and in the countryside. (35) So the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone out sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind, they were frightened. (36) The people who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. (37) Then all the people from the region surrounding the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were terrified. So he got into a boat and started back. (38) Now the man from whom the demons had gone out kept begging Jesus to let him go with him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, (39) "Go home and declare how much God has done for you." So the man left and kept proclaiming

throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

- The people of the area, who were Gentiles, as you can tell by the fact that they kept pigs for livestock, were terrified. You'd think they would have been happy for the man, but I guess they were more concerned about their pigs. This was a spiritually dark area, and the news of this miracle would have spread quickly.
- How does verse 39 speak to us?

Luke 8:40-42 When Jesus came back, the crowd welcomed him, for everyone was expecting him. (41) Just then a synagogue leader by the name of Jairus arrived. He fell at Jesus' feet and kept begging him to come to his home, (42) because his only daughter, who was about twelve years old, was dying. While Jesus was on his way, the crowds continued to press in on him.

- Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, pled with Jesus for the life of his only daughter, who was dying. Jairus must have believed that Jesus was the Messiah, in contrast to many of the religious rulers who didn't believe. A synagogue ruler was in charge of the synagogue services and was responsible for maintaining and cleaning the building.
- She was an only child, so the only light of her parents' lives had gone out. She was about twelve years of age. So, in that culture she was at the beginning of her womanhood. She could even have been anticipating marriage at that age.

Luke 8:43-48 A woman was there who had been suffering from chronic bleeding for twelve years. Although she had spent all she had on doctors, no one could heal her. (44) She came up behind Jesus and touched the tassel of his garment, and her bleeding stopped at once. (45) Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" While everyone was denying it, Peter and those who were with him said, "Master, the crowds are surrounding you and pressing in on you." (46) Still Jesus said, "Somebody touched me, for I know that power has gone out of me." (47) When the woman saw that she couldn't hide, she came forward trembling. Bowing down in front of him, she explained in the presence of all the people why she had touched Jesus and how she had been instantly healed. (48) He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

- This story caught the imagination of the early church. It was believed that the woman was a gentile from Caesarea Philippi. Eusebius, the great church historian (A.D. 300), relates how it was said that the woman had at her own cost erected a statue commemorating her cure in her native city. It was said that that statue remained there until Julian, the Roman Emperor who tried to bring back the pagan gods, destroyed it, and erected his own in place of it, only to see his own statue blasted by a thunderbolt from God.
- The woman was ashamed to approach Jesus directly because ceremonially she was unclean (Leviticus 15:19-33), because of her bleeding and could not come in contact with another person without making them unclean. "Flow of blood" means "suffering from hemorrhages." That was why at first she was so embarrassed when Jesus asked who touched him. And the One she touches reverses the process and makes her clean!
- All devout Jews wore robes with fringes on them (Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 22:12). The fringes ended in four tassels of white thread with a blue thread woven through them. They were to remind the Jew

every time he dressed that he was a man of God and committed to the keeping of God's laws. Later, when it was dangerous to be a Jew, these tassels were worn on the undergarments. Nowadays they still exist on the talith or shawl that the Jew wears round his head and shoulders when he is at prayer. But in the time of Jesus they were worn on the outer garment, and it was one of these the woman touched.

- We see Luke the doctor here again. Mark says that the woman had spent all she had on the doctors and was no better but got worse (Mark 5:26). Luke keeps that part out, probably because he did not like this negative comment against the doctors!
- The lovely thing about this story is that from the moment Jesus was face to face with the woman, there seemed to be nobody there but him and her. It happened in the middle of a crowd; but the crowd was forgotten and Jesus spoke to that woman as if she was the only person in the world. She was a poor, unimportant sufferer, with a trouble that made her unclean, and yet to that one unimportant person Jesus gave all of himself.
- Jesus' question, Who touched Me? does not imply that He didn't know what had happened. He wanted the woman to reveal herself and openly express the faith which caused her to touch Him. The woman's faith became public when she fell at His feet.

Luke 8:49-56 While he was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue leader's home and said, "Your daughter is dead. Stop bothering the teacher anymore." (50) But when Jesus heard this, he told the synagogue leader, "Stop being afraid! Just believe, and she will get well." (51) When he arrived at the house, he allowed no one to go in with him except Peter, John, James, and the child's father and mother. (52) Now everyone was crying and wailing for her. But Jesus said, "Stop crying! She's not dead but is sleeping." (53) They laughed and laughed at him, because they knew she was dead. (54) But he took her hand and called out, "Child, get up!" (55) So her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he directed that she be given something to eat. (56) Her parents were amazed, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

- It is easy to think that we can handle life ourselves. But the way to find the miracles of the grace of God is to swallow our pride and humbly confess our need and ask. Jairus asked for healing for his daughter. Ask, and you will receive--but there is no receiving without asking.
- Jairus was clearly a man of faith. He hoped against hope. In his heart there was the feeling, "You never know what this Jesus can do." And none of us knows all that Jesus can do. In our darkest days we can still hope in the unsearchable riches and the all-sufficient grace and the unconquerable power of God.
- Jesus' command not to tell others about the miracle must have been because He did not want to be openly proclaimed as the Messiah until His formal proclamation in Jerusalem.