

Luke 8:1-21

A Heart to Hear and Do

Well, Good morning, I hope your week was blessed.

What a joy it is to start the new week off here in the house of the Lord with God's people.

This morning we will continue our study of the Gospel of Luke, we will starting chapter 8.

Let's pray before we get into it.

So our study picks up now in verse 1 of Luke chapter 8...

Many Women Minister to Jesus

8:1 Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, 2 and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities — Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, 3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

Luke picks up his record as he puts it, after the incident with the sinful woman and her worship with the alabaster flask and costly oil.

Jesus left there and begin another circuit though every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus' fame is spreading, His reputation as a miracle worker is getting around.

The Nation of Israel has hope stirring in their hearts once again.

Is Jesus the One, the Deliverer, the Messiah?

He now has an impressive entourage, we see the twelve Apostles are with Him.

And many others.

But something really stands out here in Jesus' inner circle.

In this culture, and in many cultures of the time, women played invisible roles, and were often times simply viewed as property, and were producers of the family's offspring.

But understand when Jesus came to this earth, He brought a clarity and a divine understanding to the role of women in a society.

Maybe you were here for our study through the Pentateuch, when we studied the Law of God, we saw, in God's Law, a radical view on women, as God's Law lifted them above the societal norms, and gave them rights for the first time in History.

Well, when Jesus came, He brought a fuller understanding, and lifted women up higher than ever.

Those who have little knowledge of our Bible, accuse it of subjecting women to a male dominated belief.

But that is so far from the truth.

The Bible, while giving men and women different roles, very specific roles, it actually is a belief that brings women into an equal relationship with men.

God defines the roles of a man and woman, and He sees no one greater than the other.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

As we learned about Jesus last week, He was no respecter of persons, He exalted a sinful woman over a spiritual man, who was a fraud.

And here in Jesus' entourage, Luke mentions certain women traveled with Jesus.

Mary Magdalene who Jesus freed of seven demonic spirits, Joanna a prominent woman whose husband worked for Herod, and Suzanna, who we know nothing about, but Luke knew something of her, and thought it was important to write her name down.

Luke names these three along with as he puts it "many others."

And notice they were among those who provided for Jesus' earthly ministry.

You see sometimes we read the Bible with our modern minds, and here in America, we think the rest of the world is like us.

But there would have been no Denny's or McDonalds, no In and Out for the more holy Christians.

There were no Holiday Inns or Travelodges, so there had to be preparations made along the way, everywhere that they went.

These women among many others served out of their own resources to support the ministry of Jesus.

It was considered an honorable deed to care for a Rabbi.

We see over and over again the giving spirit and faithfulness of women in the scriptures.

And today I marvel at the work and faithfulness of women in service and giving to the Lord.

You know, women for the most part are the doers in the ministry.

Men, they like to gather, and reason and debate, and talk politics, and discuss doctrine.

When men get together, there is usually little doing, but a lot of discussing.

But in every ministry I have ever served in, the women are sacrificing, even leading their families in spiritual matters, and they serve with a great love and passion.

Now, of course there are men who lead and are godly men, but the scales greatly favor the women today.

You can talk to any missions ministry, and especially for that 10/40 window of unreached people, the most dangerous mission fields, it is a 1 to 10 ratio men to women.

And we see this has been a characteristic from the very first women among our faith.

These same women, at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, will be found at the cross, when Jesus' disciples scatter.

Luke in particular from the start of his gospel had no problem highlighting the prominence of women involved in Jesus' ministry.

So, we see Jesus, going from town to town now, entire towns are being emptied to come and see Him, and even be healed.

There were all kinds of people in the crowd, some were simply coming to be amused, some coming to get something, some coming to because a friend brought them, and there were those who were looking for Jesus out of desperation.

So as these mixed multitudes gather to Jesus, Jesus will turn to His inner circle and give them a teaching, and Jesus will instruct them about those who are coming to Him.

He will separate the crowd into four different types of people who are gathered around them.

And understand, as applicable as this teaching was there that day for the Apostles, other disciples, and the many women following Jesus, it too can be applied to those who gather in His church today.

So, please understand each of us here this morning, falls into one of these categories, and honestly assess yourself in light of the teaching Jesus gives here.

The main separation of all who hear God's Word, is some will hear and that is it, but others, like Jesus' inner circle, will hear and do.

The doing is the main theme this morning.

These woman and disciples placed their trust in Jesus and His cause, and they were doers or as we will see Good Soil.

But what about the rest?

Look at verses 4-8 now...

The Parable of the Sower(Matt 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9)

4 And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: 5 "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. 6 Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. 8 But others fell on good ground,

sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Jesus once again uses a parable, which Jesus would use to illustrate a heavenly meaning, using an earthly picture.

Jesus uses a vivid agricultural picture here.

Please understand those listening that day would easily be able to make sense of these common pictures.

They had all seen or perhaps have even been one sowing seed into a field before.

Now the Sower of Jesus illustration is a very careless Sower.

He has His pouch of Seed on His side, and He is throwing Seed indiscriminately all around Him.

Some of the Seed we see fell in the wayside, and it could never get enough soil on top of it because the well-beaten path was too compacted.

So the birds of the air were able to easily spot the Seed, and they quickly flew down and ate it up.

Some of this careless Sower's Seed found themselves upon a stony ground, and in Israel where the soil had been eroded, there is huge flat stones with little crevices in them.

In the winter their might be puddles in the crevices.

But in these little potholes, there could be found a couple inches of soul.

And in the springtime as we even see in our desert, the seeds will blow in, and desert weeds or wildflowers will grow in these crevices.

And these Seeds are able to germinate and you will see them pop up.

But there is not much dirt in those pot holes at all, they roots cannot find any depth.

And it eventually they die after springing up so beautifully.

But they are stunted and never reach maturity before they go away.

And next Jesus shows this Sower flinging His Seed even among the thorns, and the Seedling before it can get going even, they are choked out by the cursed thorn, that thrives in any soil.

We know all too well in this desert that weeds need no cultivation, they need no nutrients, they need no water, and they can consume a backyard or overwhelm any garden.

They will outgrow any fruitful plant, and if they are close enough to anything of value, they will rob and steal and choke out anything in that soil that is needed for the fruitful plant.

But that Sower also hit His target, the ground that had been tilled, moistened, and softened received that Seed, and took it into its good soil, and there the Seed found all it needed to germinate and grow.

And any farmer would be happy with a crop that produced 7-10 times the Seed that was planted.

But Jesus speaks of a miraculous yield here, the Seed in this good soil yielded a crop a hundred fold.

An interesting illustration indeed.

And at the end Jesus cries out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Now, Jesus shouts, probably over and over again for the people to hear.

Jesus stated these Words repeatedly throughout His earthly ministry, and even from His throne in Heaven in Revelation to the Church.

Rev 3:22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.""

When Jesus is telling people to use their ears to listen, at first that mean seem obvious.

But the listening Jesus will describe is not just an information gathering kind of listening, it is an obedient kind of listening.

Church, you understand Jesus has so much more for your life, than simply being a Bible Studying Master.

Now, it is important to know the Word, to hear the Word, but as Jesus will explain this morning, our ears are to translate Jesus' truths to our heart, resulting in a changed of life, and it puts us on a mission for Him.

He who has ears to hear let him hear!

Now the disciples, that make up actually a great portion of the crowd around Jesus at this point.

They understand the severity of the message Jesus gave, but they cannot quite grasp or understand the direct meaning of it all, so they like any good students come in to ask for clarity.

Please understand, Teachers are not bothered by questions, the only wrong questions are the ones not asked.

When you are asking questions, it really means you are listening and engaged.

So if you ever have questions about a teaching, please email me through the Web-Site or make an appointment, pastors are not bothered by questions.

In fact, there are a couple of you who do this, and I get excited to hear what questions are coming.

A friend, Mark, will come up to me at least once a month, Bible open to where we were just studying and ask really probing questions.

It stirs my own thinking.

These things are good, but once again, Pastor Joe handles all the debaters, I don't like to get lost in endless debates and ramblings, you can call Pastor Joe for that.

So next, the disciples come and ask for clarity, which Jesus gives a really interesting reply before He answers the question.

The Purpose of Parables(Matt 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-12)

9 Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?"

10 And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that

'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.'

Now, what does this mean? Does Jesus mean that He does not want some people to understand His message?

Well, Jesus is actually alluding to the sixth chapter of Isaiah.

There the great prophet has a thrilling encounter with God in the temple.

Isa 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

In this vision, Isaiah is overwhelmed by his own uncleanness, and he from this place of humility, he is cleansed and invited to join in God's Work.

Isaiah is willing and accepts his calling.

Isa 6:8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:

"Whom shall I send,

And who will go for Us?"

Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

And Isaiah is then giving the strangest mission and message out of any prophet...

He is commanded to preach to the people...

Isa 6:9-10

'Keep on hearing, but do not understand;

Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'

10 "Make the heart of this people dull,

And their ears heavy,

And shut their eyes;

Lest they see with their eyes,

And hear with their ears,

And understand with their heart,

And return and be healed."

Now you would expect Isaiah to go and preach sophisticated and complex messages to Israel.

If he were commanded to teach in such a way they would not understand.

It would seem that he would go and speak in riddles and puzzles, and his message would be confusing and hard to decipher, or perhaps deep theological dialect.

But actually, the opposite was true of this prophet, in fact he was accused of by the academia of his day of being too simple.

They ridiculed him by saying...

Isa 28:9-10 "Whom will he teach knowledge?

And whom will he make to understand the message?

Those just weaned from milk?

Those just drawn from the breasts?

10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line,

Here a little, there a little."

You see Isaiah served the Lord by preaching clearly the truth of God's Word.

Isaiah brought his message down so the simplest of minds could understand his message.

He taught God's Word systematically, precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little there a little.

He was a verse-by-verse preacher.

Because of his simple approach to God's Word, the fault of their rejection lay on them.

They thought they were above, and more learned than the simple teaching of God's Word, they thought Isaiah was a poor teacher, and a weak leader, and they missed the message altogether.

Their hearts were so hard to God's truth that they rejected even the clearest presentation of it.

Some were so hard they did not even have a response one way or another to it, it was of no value whatsoever to their daily lives.

We can look to Matthew's gospel to make the connection to why Jesus makes this reference to the Prophet Isaiah.

Matt 13:12-13 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Jesus is making the point that it is the condition of the person's heart that will determine if they hear Him or not.

Jesus taught plainly and straightforward and many, especially the religious Jews rejected Him and His message.

Yet those who received His truth and become doers of His Word, those who take it by faith and obey, they will receive more revelation.

But those who hear and fail to do, even what they have heard will be taken from them.

You see Jesus' parables were full of incredible truths, and those who desired to understand and believe, they could press in, and unpack all the heavenly wisdom they offered.

However, those who had no interest in Truth, they could not discern the meaning of them.

They lose what they have altogether.

This principle is true in many areas of our lives, this principle of "if you don't use it, you will lose it."

I have seen many who have been confined to hospital beds for a time.

And because they have not used their leg muscles for a duration, they lose all strength in those muscles, and they cannot walk.

You see if you fail to exercise and live out God's Word, you might one day lose the ability all together.

Do it or lose it.

Many have sat in church their whole life hearing the Word of God taught, and they are used to hearing it.

They attend every Bible Study, they can even know a great depth of doctrine, but if they do not live out the precepts they learn, they are in danger of growing hard and religious.

Others, perhaps only come to church to please a parent or a wife, and week after week they listen to God's Word, and it is no different to them than listening to a cooking channel give a suggestion for their dinner that night, it is a little entertaining, but in their minds there is no great consequence for not following the suggestion.

These arbitrary listeners are in danger of growing so hard to the truth that it becomes too common to come and listen, and they leave the church and forget all that they heard.

Now, I understand listening today is so difficult, the busyness of our brains make it nearly impossible to sit and listen.

Some of you are so exhausted from a long week at work, or even working night shifts, that when you come to church, it is the first time you have sat and slowed down for any kind of duration.

Some might be subject to their drowsy medication they have to take.

And if I am honest, sometimes the sermon is simply a little boring.

I have sympathy for the occasional sleeper in church, I have dozed off myself a time or two in church.

Falling asleep in church is no big deal to me, it simply happens sometimes.

But the frightening and heartbreaking concern of mine is those who come to church week after week, and they fill a seat, and their physical bodies are awake, and their spirit is dead asleep.

Some who attend church, pay more attention to football scores, and their social media feeds than the Word of God.

They know every detail of the movies they watch, but have no interest in pressing into the truths in God's Word.

They can easily watch hours and hours of blogs, and try to follow someone else's life to a T, but God's Word is simply a story to them, and never manifests in their lives.

People will research diets, recipes, exercises, and follow their favorite stars wellness guidelines, but never obey the simple precepts in God's Word.

They can spend hours joyfully researching their hobbies and gaining greater insight to their weekend affairs.

One commentator said, "some churchgoers pay more attention to television commercials than to the Word of God." Hughes p.296

But you see God's Word must first be heard, and understand it demands more than listening, it expects doing.

Do it our lose it.

This is Jesus' challenge here...

And after Jesus makes this direct significant revelation, He will go on to explain the parable of the Soils...

The Parable of the Sower Explained(Matt 13:18-23; Mark 4:13-20)

11 "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13 But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. 14 Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. 15 But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

Jesus gives the meaning now very clearly.

There are four hearts that receive the Word, and only you can determine which soil you are this morning.

Jesus explains the Seed is the Word of God.

The message sent from God, by the mouth of Jesus, and today anyone who truly represents Him carries on this task of Sowing the Word.

The Soil represents the heart receiving the Word.

He first mentions the soil on the wayside, or the path, these are those who hear the Word, but before it can get any depth, the Devil, represented by birds in Jesus' picture, our great adversary comes and snatches the Word from their hearts.

These frivolous hearers treat God's Word so lightly that they are open to the delusion of the enemy.

And they are prevented from even being saved.

These people do nothing with the message they hear.

Maybe they have bitterness in their heart toward the messenger, and they just can't get passed their own emotions to hear the message.

Maybe the message confronts an area of their life they are not willing to address it, and in anger they close their ears.

Maybe it be indifference, or prejudice that closes the ear of the listener.

Whatever the reason, their hearts have become as hard as a well-used path, with hard soil.

Their vulnerable heart, has allowed Satan room, and like a bird, he comes and is able to manipulate and snatch away any truth that might save the soul.

The second person Jesus is addressing this morning is the heart with rocklike characteristics.

These are those who hear the message and respond with great emotion.

They are lively and even tearful, and they are moved by their feelings instead of the Spirit.

But these hearts are superficial and their reaction is not based on deep conviction.

These people have no root.

They are simply impulsive and uncalculated.

Understand Jesus presented His message with a warning, He warned those coming to follow Him to count up the cost.

He said things like **Luke 9:62 "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."**

He made it very clear a decision to follow Him would not be easy and a follower could expect trials and even persecution.

Those with the stony ground cannot endure the testing, and when the trials come, they are gone.

I usually always try to warn people, usually at our Baptisms, for some reason, it is usually after that public declaration that Satan strikes the person with all of his might.

And over the last few decades I see those who endure through the hardships, come out more in love with Jesus, and others disappear, and they are gone, never to be seen again.

John declares of them **1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.**

The stony hearts cannot endure the hour of trial.

Thirdly now, Jesus mentions those who received the Word, but their soil was among the thorns.

These are those who hear the message, but it can never get passed their busy minds.

They are consumed with the worries of this life.

They show interest to the message, however their entanglements in this world keep the message from having any kind of impact in their lives.

They are consumed with so many “what ifs” they remain paralyzed and unmoved by the message.

Riches are a thorn in their side, they think of only what they might lose, and they cannot bear the thought of a life of sacrifice.

They always need more money, more things, they cannot rest until they just have a little more, and that pursuit clouds their reception of God’s Word.

They also seek out pleasures and comforts in this life, they constantly have to have their minds entertained and amused.

They seek coping devices, they zone out on binge watching TV or Netflix, they get lost for hours in video games, or they are medicated and numb to the reality of their soul.

As long as they feel good now, they believe all is well.

Their comfort and ease become their motivation for living, and when God's Word speaks to their heart, they will not move one centimeter passed their own comfort, and they are rendered useless and ineffective, they can never reach any kind of maturity, because they have to maintain their lifestyle.

Their worries, riches, pleasures and comforts become thorn bushes that crowd and choke, and block all light and hope from reaching the Seedling wanted to sprout.

It is a sad existence.

God has so much more for a person's life than these things, and luckily not all the Seed falls on these uncultivated hearts.

Jesus speaks lastly of the heart that has been cultivated and broken up, worked over and softened.

Those who are humble enough to receive with a noble and good heart.

You can imagine the cultivation has been rough, and trying.

But it is all worth it, because the soil is just right, as the Seed of God's Word is received, and it germinates to full maturity through it all.

You know what else makes that soil nice and fertile, and ready to receive the seed.

Fertilizer, poo, makes the soil good for growth.

Maybe your life is full of poo right now, understand the crud in your life, these trials are for a reason, you are being made into good soil.

Not only does a strong, sturdy, green stalk grow up from that soil, but from that Seedling, an abundance of fruit comes from their lives.

Jesus said in **Luke 6:44 For every tree is known by its own fruit.**

Notice the mark of the good soil here, is that the hearer keeps God's Word, or clings to it.

Then they produce fruit themselves by giving away that Seed.

Their lives become more than that of just hearing they are doers.

There are a lot of people who like to hear, and dig deeper, and go further into God's Word, but it never ever manifests any kind of fruit.

When their lives are held up to the godly fruit mentioned in the Word, it is found they are not clinging to the Word in their lives.

You understand the Pharisees knew God's Word, they loved to gather and sit around and just go deep, but Jesus rebuked no one more than the religious phony. But it is the doers that will be blessed.

When you look at their lives and see what Paul mentioned in **Gal. 5:22-26 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

Good Fruit will manifest in the Good Soil.

Now only you can know for sure what kind of soil you are this morning.

My hope is that we are all good soil, and for those who are good soil this morning, Jesus has a little instruction next for you.

We see the soil must be productive and fertile, and fertile hearts will resemble a shining lamp.

Remember the good is fruit-bearing which is witness-bearing.

The Parable of the Revealed Light

(Mark 4:21-25)

16 "No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light. 17 For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. 18 Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."

Jesus now depicts His followers who hear and receive the Word as lamps.

Jesus is now making the point that their witness will shine for all to see.

There will be evidence in their lives, and others will be impacted by their illumination.

The follower of Christ must live their lives honestly before others, with the understanding that one day all will be revealed at the judgement.

This makes their present listening and doing so crucial.

This concept will help their witness to be genuine and grounded.

So many today try to present their Christianity as a Super-Hero Christianity, and they try protect their image and they keep their religious masks on.

That kind of phony witness will not end well, and it will be less fruitful or fruitless.

Church, when your witness is open and vulnerable with people, your light will shine brightest.

Too many make Christianity this dishonest show of perfection and an unattainable pinnacle of religion.

Remember the good soil has been tilled and tried, let people know that you are not perfect, that faith can be difficult at times, and let them know what you have struggled with and God has allowed you to overcome as you believed His Word.

Be real with your witness, understand the Judge of all the earth is watching, and we will be accountable to any falsehood we present about ourselves.

After Jesus warns that all will be revealed, in verse 18 He warns us to take heed how we hear.

You see man has a responsibility in the type of Soil they are, we are to hear readily and attentively, and most importantly obediently.

Take heed how you hear.

Church, do we really understand that this ancient manuscript we read each week is the key to the Right Life?

It is presented today, more often than not, as a just a suggestion, a way among many other ways to live.

The weight and responsibility of the hearer has been lightened and made more palatable for people.

Church, it is a matter of life and death, Take Head How You hear God's Word.

Jesus says whoever has will be given more.

And whoever does not have even what he seems to have will be taken away.

Do it or lose it.

True listeners will be changed and moved to obedience, and when they are faithful with what God gives them, they will be entrusted with more.

But if you are squandering the Word that you are hearing, even what you have will be snatched away.

So in the parable of the Soils Jesus emphasized the good ground are those who having heard the Word with an honest and good heart, they are the ones that cling to it and by persevering, they produce a fruitful crop.

And in the parable of the Revealed Light, Jesus warned to Take Head How You Listen!

Next Jesus will make evident, that it is the doers of the His Word who will be brought into unity with Him in His family.

Let's read now verse 19-21...

Jesus' Mother and Brothers Come to Him

(Matt 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35)

19 Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. 20 And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You."

21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

Now it is not clear why Jesus' family was trying to get to Him here.

Perhaps they were worried that He was not getting enough rest, or food.

Some suggest that the hostility toward Jesus was growing, and they were there to try to convince Jesus to step out of the public eye.

But Luke did not place this account here to focus on Jesus' family.

It is a continuation of the same message about the hearer of God's Word.

Jesus is making clear that those who are not simply hearers of God's Word, but are Doers are actually family with Jesus.

Our obedience to God's Word brings about an intimacy that simple head knowledge can never bring about.

Jesus is not diminishing His physical family ties here, but He is declaring there is a relationship that goes deeper than even blood.

Our spiritual ties are the deepest we have in this world.

And as Christians, we are Doers of God's Word, and this sets us apart from the rest of the World, and connects us supernaturally to another family of faith.

Those who take to heart the messages of Jesus, and God's Word, and they turn it into much fruit unto God's Glory, they belong to an eternal family, far more important than even our physical families could ever hope to be.

Many of us have found that when we came to Christ, and we believed His Word, and His Word began to change our lives, that even members of our own family rejected us.

For some of us, this place, and these people here at church, are even a refuge from those who are of our own family, where we can gather with like minded Doers of God's Word.

There is something supernatural about the bond we find in Christ.

I remember the first time Jess and I had our eyes opened to this.

We were only about a year and half old in the Lord, and we decided to join our church on a mission's trip to the Philippines.

The whole trip was a step of faith for us, it was financially burdensome, and Jess had never been on an airplane or traveled anywhere of great distance before.

She was so new to the faith, she did not really understand that there were more Christians outside of our little church in Havasu.

I remember we were flying out of LAX, and we stopped off at Calvary Chapel Montebello, and Jess saw that huge church worshipping the same Jesus she loved.

It was the most people she had ever seen worshipping at one time.

I remember seeing her eyes just water at the sound of the voices, and she said, "They are worshipping our Jesus."

Then we flew 30 hours with a couple stops in between, and we landed in Dumaguete in the Philippines.

And there met us some people from the Filipino Church.

And it was amazing right off the plane, our hearts were linked together, we loved them and they loved us.

We could not even communicate with the same language, but there was the first time it was made

clear to us, that we are a part of spiritual family that goes way beyond any earthly connection we could have.

The relationships and bonds we built there were everlasting.

Shortly after that, we were hooked on missions work.

And we joined a trip to Russia, and we found the same thing there.

In fact, some of our closest friends in the world were made on that trip, our translator Sasha just connected with Jess and I as we spent the whole trip Evangelizing Siberia together.

We made connections in many countries over the years, and here at home even, those relationships are closer than even our own blood family at times.

And you see when people become Doers of the Word together, when Doers of the Word are shoulder to shoulder in the work, there you will find the deepest bonds possible.

Jesus says it is the Doers, those who put His Word into practice that are His Family.

If you are not a part of this family this morning, the first act of obeying His Word, is to come to Him by faith, and receive remission of your sins.

You must come the way that God's Word puts forth, **Rom 10:10** declares

10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Be careful how you hear this morning, and be sure your heart is good soil.

James 1:21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

The teaching, the proclamation of God's Word is not a flippant thing to consider, it is life and death.

Understand the severity of all that Jesus has said this morning.

We are responsible for the way we hear Him, and what we DO with the Word is vital if we are going to be fruitful.

James 1:22-25 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

Don't be like the man who looks in the mirror, that forgets immediately what kind of man he was.

Let God's Word penetrate and change your heart.

Maybe this morning, you are considering these things, and you realize that your heart is not good soil.

Maybe you have allowed the enemy to come in and snatch away anything of value.

Maybe at one time you responded to the message with great energy, and excitement, but when the trials came you found your faith too costly and your roots never went deep enough to produce any fruit.

Maybe you are sitting here and the cares of this world, keeping up with the Jones's, and success have choked out any response to what God might be asking of your life in His Word.

You just cannot allow yourself to move beyond your own comfort, you only want a convenient religion, and what Christ is asking of your life is too much.

Please consider the ramifications of not preparing your heart to receive the implanted Word which is able to save your souls.

We have a part in this, we need to cultivate our heart, come to God's Word ready to receive and do what He asks.

Only you can know what kind of soul your heart is this morning.

Let's Pray...