“Receive God’s Word”

May 31st, 2015

Please open your Bible today to Matthew thirteen and to one of the LORD’s most famous parables; “The Parable of the Sower and the Seed.”

Follow with me as I read verse one. [No Scripture on screen]. [Read Matthew 13:1-9]

If possible, try to imagine yourself down nearby to the Sea of Galilee and all you heard from Jesus that day were these nine verses. Well, that’s very likely all they hear at this point in the day. You see, there was no explanation given to the multitudes that day. That was reserved for the disciples. Note in your Bible, verse ten.

[Read vv. 10-11].

What is a parable, anyway? Parables, as you’ve heard before is a simple story; a true-to-life story that Jesus used to convey spiritual truth.

If all you had that day was verses 1-9, what would you think?

Many of the parables conveyed something about the kingdom of God. Look again at verse eleven. Matthew 13:11 *“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”*

Has it ever bothered you that the LORD spoke His parables and yet many of those who heard them didn’t understand? Today I want to say something about why so many don’t understand and what can be done about it.

There are so many benefits found in the Word of God; things like this:

1. Benefit # 1 - The new birth – I Peter 1:23 *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”*
2. Benefit # 2 - Conviction of sin – II Timothy 3:6 *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof [conviction], for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”*
3. Benefit # 3 - Happiness – Revelation 1:3 *“Blessed [happy] is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein:…”*
4. Benefit # 4 - Faith – Romans 10:17 *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*

Now, when the Bible is so beneficial, why is it that so

many people miss out? And, after all we’ve learned about the heart of God, wouldn’t He want more people to understand? Of course, He does. Well, I’ve got at least one answer for you; receptivity. There are a lot of people who simply aren’t ready, willing, or able to receive it.

What’s on my heart today is this; receptivity: receiving God’s Word into your heart and life. So, I’ve titled today’s sermon “Receive God’s Word.” Shall we pray?

Receptivity. Consider what the LORD did when He made your eyes. Didn’t He made it so that your eyes need to function well in order to receive light? Those of you who have had cataracts removed or those of you who have glaucoma can attest to that fact.

And take the flowers all around you? Don’t they need a mechanism in them that enables them to receive nourish-ment, water, light, even sound in order to grow?

Well, spiritually speaking, you and I are born into the receiving mode. Simply put, God is the Divine Giver. We are the human receivers. We’ve been put on this earth to look to and find our resources in the LORD our Creator.

Do you remember the key characteristic of the Church at Berea? Acts 17:11 *“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”*

The Berean Church had stressed two important qualities that made them more able to receive the word. One, was “readiness of mind.” Two, they searched the Scriptures daily.

If you read the phrase “Our U.S. Military is ready to serve,” what would you think? Wouldn’t you think that they had been trained and were prepared to go into battle?

Suppose I said to you “When I came to the pulpit today, I was ready to speak.” Wouldn’t you think that I had prepared myself and done what I needed to do in order to deliver a sermon?

There is an interesting dictionary I discovered called “The KJV Dictionary.” It helps me understand the words in the KJV. Here’s what it says regarding “ready.” “Ready” means “freedom from hindrance; a state of preparation; fitness of condition.”

Now, if you are anything like me, you’ve probably found that many times you will read the Bible and yet, for some reason you aren’t deeply impacted by it. Maybe, sometimes we’re not even interested in it. Well folks, I’m no different than you. I have the same learning curve as you do when it comes to growing in receptivity to the words of the LORD. Just like you, I am learning that whenever I come to the Scriptures I need to be ready to receive the message of what I read there.

So, what do we see in the message of the parable of “The sower and the seeds”? We see that the LORD doesn’t make it perfectly clear. He doesn’t explain it to everyone. Instead, He explains it to those who are spiritually receptive to receiving what He says. He explains it to those who ask Him.

Here’s how Luke tells the same story. Luke 8:4 *“And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: (5) A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.*

*(6) And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung 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) And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

*(9) And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? (10) 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.”*

You see, there are many who hear and yet they don’t understand. As a matter of fact, there are far more who hear and don’t receive than those who hear and do receive understanding.

Now, take with me the lessons Jesus spoke that day and explained to the disciples.

Primary fact: each human heart is like soil.

Soil is designed for seeds which can grow and produce fruit. And soil is a bit different than dirt. Soil has dirt in it. But the one thing that makes soil soil is that it has nutrients in it. And given the right conditions, it will generate fruit or flowers or tress or bushes. Jesus compares our hearts to soil.

So, you and I need to look at mankind as Jesus sees us.

First, some people are hard-hearted.

Luke 8:5 *“A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.”*

As every farmer will tell you, he may scatter seed and some it will fall on soil that’s been trodden down and the seeds will get eaten by the birds. The soil that has become a path for people and animals is not a soil that will produce.

Jesus’ point is simple; yet both sad and true. Many people will hear the message of the Gospel and it will have no effect whatsoever. Why? Because the heart is hard. A hard heart is insensitive, unyielding, and unwilling to accept truth.

By the way, the sower in this parable is Jesus Himself. Look at Matthew 13:37. *“He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;…”*

You see, a person with a heart that is hard is unable to receive even what the LORD Jesus says to him. And as you read the NT you see that Paul and the other Apostles were also sowers of the seed. And you and I also are sowers of the seed.

And what is the seed? Matthew 13:19 *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.”*

How often have heard the Word of God and just didn’t respond to it? Isn’t it possible that you too have a hard heart? God’s living seed is being sown into you. The LORD Himself is sowing it. Yet, because you aren’t prepared, you aren’t able to respond to what He says.

But, there’s something even more dangerous than having a hard heart. That is this. A hard heart opens the door to letting Satan, like these birds, pick up whatever bits of the word fall on it. It’s as though Satan stands by, waiting and watching to see who it is that has hardened themselves against God’s word. And what does He do? He snatches away whatever has been heard so that the hearer isn’t affected by it.

Folks, the natural heart is a heart with sin in it. And that sin has not found its forgiveness in God. Did you know that there’s only one cure for a hard heart? And that is forgiveness. And forgiveness comes just one way; through believing.

Whenever a person believes what the LORD says, something happens on the inside. The hard heart softens and he or she becomes more able to receive what God says.

If you are here today and you have a hard heart, you don’t need to remain in that state. You can soften your heart by simply believing what the LORD says. A huge life-change will occur when you decide to let the LORD soften your heart and believe what He says.

First, some people are hard-hearted.

Second, some people have shallow hearts.

These are the hearts that hear the Word and immediately respond to it. But something happens and the word doesn’t take root.

Here’s Matthew 13:5 *“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: (6) And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.”*

Isn’t that interesting? The word starts to take effect and then two things have the potential to stop it from going deeper into a person’s life; one, persecution and two, trouble.

Here’s how Jesus explained it to the disciples. Matthew 13:20 *“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; (21) Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”*

Whereas the hard heart won’t be receptive to the word and the devil snatches it away, the person with a shallow heart will turn himself away because he doesn’t think he deserves persecution or trouble.

Notice, the affliction and the persecution that Jesus speaks about here comes into the life because of the Word. Folks, it does happen. But when you let persecution or affliction become your stumbling block, and you walk away from the truth, you will surely not be able to receive the word.

How often have you see those who get very impacted by the word and then when trouble arises, they quit? As you can see, their receptivity is affected. And this could very easily be you.

I will tell you what happens to a genuine Believer in Christ when they experience persecution or trouble. They accept it as part of being a Christian. And they stick with it. They don’t give in and give up. They persevere.

First, some people are hard-hearted.

Second, some people have shallow hearts.

Third, some people let the weeds snuff out the word.

Listen again to Jesus. Matthew 13:7 *“And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.”* And here’s Jesus’ explanation to the disciples. Matthew 13:22 *“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”*

Can you see how important it is to let your heart be the receptacle of truth? The cares of this life and the deceitful-ness of riches are the two things that can easily spring up and change your receptivity.

Weeds, by the way, are just here. They aren’t wanted, are they? Normally, they are unwanted. Well, in this case, they *are* wanted. The heart that won’t receive the Word wants something other than the Word. This is the heart that chooses material riches over spiritual wealth. It’s the heart of the one who lets the cares of this life overwhelm him or her. And those things choke out the word from having its heavenly effect.

Can you see this happening in your heart? You hear the Word of the LORD. You respond to it. But, you become offended. What that means is you let other things in your life take precedence over the words of Jesus.

Sometimes we have what you might call blockages; things in our hearts that hinder us from receiving the word. You may have blockages that only you are aware of. No one can look into your heart but the LORD Himself. He sees. And He wants very much for you to let His word take root in your life. But you could very well be refusing it; to your detriment.

Receptivity; are you able to receive the words of Scripture? That’s the message of the day. That’s the message of the parable of the soils.

At first glance, the words of Jesus are simple. All of our hearts are just like soil. And the more you let that truth seep into your conscience, you discover this; your heart is just like one of these soils. And that’s where the understanding either comes in. You see, to those who reject His words, you will find darkness. But to those who are willing to receive what Jesus says, you will find understanding.

Whenever you hear God’s word you will respond according to the type of soil your heart is made of. So, of course, the LORD wants His word to go deep and bear fruit. But, He also gives you a choice. Will you listen to Him?

First, some people are hard-hearted.

Second, some people have shallow hearts.

Third, some people let the weeds snuff out the word.

The fourth type of soil Jesus speaks about is the good soil. Now that you’ve heard Him speak about the first three soils, you are ready to hear about the good soil.

What do you think the heart is like that is made of good soil? Here’s the answer. Matthew 13:23 *“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”*

Check your own level of understanding today. Are you willing to honestly admit which type of soil your heart consists of? That level of understanding will make all the difference in the world. And here’s why. Receiving God’s word into your heart results in a change of mind and a change of behavior and a change of attitude. God’s mind and God’s heart are far wiser and far better than yours.

As you can see, it’s all about receptivity. Are you able to receive His word?

A.W. Tozer puts it this way develop a “lifelong habit of spiritual response.”

Closing lines of sermon Tozer “What God in His sovereignty may yet do on a world-scale I do not claim to know: but what He will do for the plain man or woman who seeks His face I believe I do know and can tell others.

Let any man turn to God in earnest, let him begin to exercise himself unto godliness, let him seek to develop his powers of spiritual receptivity by trust and obedience and humility, and the results will exceed anything he may have hoped in his leaner and weaker days.”

God’s word is alive. It’s like a living scalpel that will cut away the disease of sin and unbelief. You and I are being called to let the word dwell deeply in our hearts.

Colossians 3:16 *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom…”*

Folks, His words are alive and His words produce life. John 6:63 *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”*

So, what will you do today? Will you surrender yourself to Him? Will you ask Him to fill your soul with His word? Will you ask Him for a receptive heart? The choice is yours.

Here’s how you can become a better receiver of God’s words. Take just one of these lines and let it become your prayer for this week.

1. LORD, I am delighting myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your Word. Psalm 119:16
2. LORD, I am receiving with meekness Your implanted Word, which is able to save my soul. James 1:21
3. LORD, I am becoming a doer of Your Word, and not a hearer only, so I do not deceive myself. James 1:22
4. LORD, I am delighting myself in Your commandments, which I love. Psalm 119:47
5. LORD, Your words are abiding in me. John 15:7
6. LORD, I am letting Your word dwell in me richly. Colossians 3:16

In closing, here’s a prayer that you might choose to pray today in light of today’s sermon. “LORD, I am ready and willing; will you give me a heart that is able to receive what you say. Change my heart, O God. Make me more like you.”