

## 12. Which one are you?

September 2, 2007

The word was out: Jesus was coming! Jesus – the common people’s Rabbi, the Man with heaven in His touch, the Teacher who could beat the Pharisees at their own game. “He’s someone to see,” went the local buzz. “Close the shop. Pack a blanket. Bring your lawn chairs. Oh, yeah, don’t forget the baby. Let’s go see Jesus!”

Crowds gathered wherever Jesus went. Any minister would have been thrilled with such a flood of people – and after only a few months of preaching too. Jesus’ ministry was a booming success. Or was it?

By today’s bigger-is-better standard, which measures churches by their size and their pastor’s drawing power, Jesus had reached the top. It was time to consider contracts, booking agents and marketing strategies. However, as Jesus scanned the massive crowds around Him, He was thinking more about hearts than numbers.

From Jesus’ point of view, it was time to purify, not magnify the crowd. Time to separate the serious thinker from the shallow observer, to sift the casual onlooker from the devoted disciple.

Like what Jesus did on that day, I am going to do the same thing today. I am going to make some of you very uncomfortable and some of you may not want to come back. That is OK, I am not going for a popularity contest.

### A. THE PARABLE OF THE SOIL, NOT SOWER

*Luke 8:4-15 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!” 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.’ 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.*

The word ‘parable’ in Greek – from ‘Para’, “alongside,” and ‘ballo’, “to throw” – literally means “to place something alongside.” A parable, then, is a story in which the teller uses an understood truth about everyday life to teach something that is unknown, placing the familiar alongside the unfamiliar to illustrate one major truth.

Though a familiar illustration helps ground an unfamiliar truth, it still takes discernment from the Holy Spirit, who “searches all things, even the depths of God”, to understand the deeper meaning. People who resist the things of the Spirit cannot understand the truth. It is “foolishness” to them.

Here we have three elements of this parable: A sower – the person who brings the truth of God, seed which is the Word of God and four different types of soil that represent the different types of hearts. This portion of parable is known as “the parable of the sower,” but it should be “the parable of the soil.” It is all about the heart.

The farmers at that time used to grab a hand full of seeds and threw them all around his land, not like the systematic seeding they do in the American farm industry now.

### **1) The hard heart**

The first seed fell “wayside” on the hard soil, where the farmer and his farm animal walked between the rows of plants and it was packed as solid as asphalt. The seed, scattered across this impenetrable surface, had no chance to germinate. Instead, it became fast food for passing birds. In the Bible, the birds often symbolize the devil and his demonic cohorts.

The hard soil wayside represents people with unresponsive hearts. Like grains of rice on concrete, God’s Word only rests on top of these people’s hearts. Nothing the messenger says penetrates the surface and convinces them of their need for a life-changing, personal relationship with God. They may attend church or hang around Christians, but because they are hardened to the truth, the devil easily picks off whatever portion of the Gospel that lands in their minds. As a result, they remain unpentant and unsaved.

Some of you come to this church with this kind of heart. Coming to church will not save you, being baptized when you were a baby will not save you. Unless you receive Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior into your heart, you choose to be damned in hell.

### **2) The shallow heart**

Another seed fell on rocky soil, which refers to a thin “skin of earth over a shelf of limestone rock. Without enough depth and nourishment to take root in such soil, the sprouts would wither under the sun’s heat almost as quickly as they had sprung up.

The thin, rocky soil represents people with superficial, impulsive hearts. These people may receive the truth with an impulsive joy. But when temptation comes, they simply fall away because they have no root of faith.

Here comes an important question: “Are these people saved?” I don’t know. I cannot be a judge of that, but I have to wonder if they don’t show any fruit of salvation in Christ in their lives. Because when a person is truly saved, that person’s life shows the fruit of salvation which is a changed life.

Ask yourself seriously and honestly. Are you saved by the grace of God? If you are, is your life reflecting the truth of Jesus Christ and the love for Him? If not, how do you know you are truly saved?

I am going to extend this a little further. Pastor Chuck Smith, the founder of Calvary Chapel said it so well, "If you are not closer to Jesus Christ than yesterday, you have backslidden." I agree with him. How is your walk with Christ? Is it closer to Him than yesterday, last week, last month and last year? Do you still have that fervency in your heart to serve Him and love Him and love His people? Do you still have hunger and thirst for His Word? Are you still excited to hear from Him through your own daily devotion and church services?

If your answer is "No" to any one of these questions, I say, "You have backslidden." You may say, "Don't you think you are a little hard on us?" No, not really. Because I measure myself with the same standard.

What is getting between us and God? The devil is happy to provide many excuses for us:

"You need to take care of \_\_\_\_\_, so forget that prayer time,"  
or "You cannot go to the church service, because you have to do \_\_\_\_\_,"  
or "You don't have time to do the daily devotion, because \_\_\_\_\_."

Each time we come up with these flimsy excuses, it is like we are telling Him, "There are more important things in my life than You." Nothing should be more important than God in our lives.

As a matter of fact, if you are justifying what you have done right now, that is the evidence of having an idol in your life. If you've been living in this kind of life, you need to repent and get back with God and stay close to Him. You will never regret it.

### **3) The busy and crowded heart**

Seed also landed in thorny soil. Rather than go to the trouble of putting the thorny and thistly weeds out by the root, Palestinian farmers of that day often just cut or burned off the weed tops. The soil may have looked ready for seed, but below the surface the roots were still there. In due time the weeds revived in all their strength. They grew with such rapidity that they choked the life out of the seed.

Jesus explains the thorny soil with its choking weeds as the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

These people receive Christ into hearts that become crammed to capacity with anxieties over the materialism in their lives. Also jockeying for attention are hobbies and interests that sometimes become obsessions. What can you add anything more?

### **4) The productive and strong heart**

Finally, some seeds fell into good ground. It represents productive hearts, or Christians who hear, receive and respond to the seed planted within them. All of us should be like this.

Which one are you? We might be able to fool others and even ourselves, but we cannot fool God Almighty who knows all things.

## ***B. AN ACCEPTED SINNER AND A REJECTED PHARISEE***

We now are going to see the actual examples of people who display a couple of the different hearts we've just learned by going backward to chapter 7:36.

*Luke 7:36-50 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. 37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, 38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." 41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." 48 Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."*

We see two individuals in this incident:

### **1) Simon**

A Pharisee who invited Jesus for a dinner with no ulterior motives. But He didn't treat Jesus with the common courtesies between a host and a guest – washing the feet, a kiss for a greeting and anointing the head with oil. He would be the one with a hard heart who consciously rejected the truth of God so far. We don't know that he might had repented after this confrontation by Jesus.

### **2) A sinful woman**

Let's not confuse this woman with a similar one involving Mary, the sister of Lazarus of Bethany in John 12, and do not identify this woman with Mary Magdalene in Mark 16:9 as many continue to do. This sinful woman would be the one with a productive and strong heart because of her truly repented spirit.

If you check a harmony of the Gospels, you will discover that just before this event, Jesus had given the gracious invitation.

*Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

Perhaps that was when the woman turned from her sin and trusted the Savior. Her tears, her humble attitude and her expensive gift all spoke of a changed heart.

The parable that Jesus mentioned here does not deal with the amount of sin in a person's life, rather the awareness of that sin in his heart. How much sin must a person commit to be a sinner? Simon and the woman were both sinners. Simon was guilty

of sins of the spirit, especially pride, while the woman was guilty of sins of the flesh. Her sins were known, while Simon's sins were hidden to everyone except God.

Simon's real problems were pride and spiritual blindness. He could not see himself, the woman, or the Lord Jesus. It was easy for him to say, "She is a sinner!" but impossible for him to say, "I am also a sinner!"

Today many people think that as long as they are generally good people and do their religious duty – such as attending church service at least a couple times a year – should earn enough merits to go to heaven. Like this spiritually blinded Simon, they don't see themselves as sinners who desperately need the Savior.

### **C. A SELF-EXAMINATION**

So let me ask you this again so that you may examine yourself:

Which type of heart do you have?

**1) Do you have a hardened heart to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?**

Then you are rejecting Him out of your life and condemning yourself to hell.

**2) Did you once receive the truth of Jesus excitedly, but you are now interested in something else? In other words, your faith went from sizzle to fizzle in a short time.**

How do you know you are truly saved? Does your life reflect a true conversion in Christ Jesus? If not, isn't this a good time to make it right once and for all?

Some of you know that you have backslidden. Remove all that hinder your walk with Christ from your heart and get back to the Lord. He will truly bless you for that.

**3) You may have heard the Gospel message, but now it is not important to you because you have so many other things in your life.**

Whatever you have is temporal except one thing. It is your soul. You need to make up your mind where you are going to spend your eternal life – heaven or hell. The choice is yours.

**4) Do you feel the Lord's presence in your life everyday? Don't be haughty. It is not because you are special. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and stay humble. He will lift you up in due time.**