Luke 8B

• Last week we examined the parable of the sower and the four seeds
  ▪ The definition of a good sermon: It should have a good beginning. It should have a good ending. And they should be as close together as possible.
  ▪ But that’s why we serve coffee before the service – to make sure you’re fully awake when you drive home
  ▪ This week the two ends should be a little closer together

• When we examined the parable last week, we paid close attention to the detail, we interpreted the parable by breaking it down into two halves
  ▪ And each half could itself be divided into two conditions, leaving a total of four conditions

• In mathematics, you would call this breakdown a Latin Square
  ▪ The first half of the parable, Conditions 1 & 2, we said were pictures of the unbelievers
    ▪ One group showed an unbeliever who made no attempt to hide their disinterest for the Word of God
      ▪ They were unbelievers with a hard heart and no interest in changing
    ▪ The second group of unbelievers actually left an impression of being believers, at least at first
      ▪ But after some time, a trial besets them or some test of faith comes upon them, and they reveal the lack of a root and they die – they give up the act and show their true nature
  ▪ The second half of the parable, Conditions 3 & 4, we said were believers based on interpretation provided by Jesus Himself
    ▪ But like the unbelievers, there were two kinds of believer depicted in the parable
• In the fourth condition, for example, you had the strong, mature Christian
  • And their maturity was demonstrated by their ability to reproduce – to bear fruit –
  • Which we called seed, or the ability to spread the gospel or the Word of God and reproduce faith

• But the most troubling condition was Condition 3 – the Condition 3 Christian – the believer who never produces fruit

Mouse Trap Example
• You may have been wondering what the main point of Jesus parable
  o Was it merely the fact that the Word will produce different reactions among those who hear it?
  • Well, to a degree, yes, but that wasn’t the main point

• Last week we read through verse 18, but I only exposited through verse 15. Today we will pick up in verse 16 again, because in 16-8 we learn the purpose of the parable

Luke 8:16 ¶ “Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. Luke 8:17 “For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light. Luke 8:18 “So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.”

• Thought we may not have noticed it or fully appreciated it, Jesus transitions out of the parable to an application in these verses – and ultimately to a warning

• Lighting in Jesus day was nothing like it is today, of course
  o Light came from oil lamps
  o It’s like when you go camping, for example, and you’re inside a tent at night
  o You light a propane lantern or an electric lantern
  o The light for the room all comes from one concentrated source
You work hard to find just the right place to put the lamp, hang it high

- You try to avoid blocking the light or casting shadows
- Your ability to see your way around in the tent depends entirely on making sure the light is on and unobstructed

Now in Jesus’ day lighting a lamp was not necessarily difficult, but it wasn’t trivial either

- First, the effort to produce a flame was significant – no lighters, no matches
- Secondly, the oil for a lamp was cheap – so burning a lamp was costly and not done without thought
  - Unlike today when we casually leave lights on for hours in empty rooms without concern

- So when Jesus says that no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container or puts it under a bed – He’s really making a bit of a joke
  - The crowd might as well have laughed at this suggestion
  - Jesus says the person would place it on a lamp stand - naturally

- Now we don’t have to work very hard here to understand what Jesus is saying in verse 16
  - The imagery is fairly obvious
  - But if that weren’t enough, we have Matt’s account to help us

Matt. 5:14 ¶ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;
Matt. 5:15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.
Matt. 5:16 “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

- In Matt’s account we hear Jesus say that believers - the church – have been elevated, raised up, like a city set on a hill
  - And in that position, you can’t help but be noticed
- Just like a lamp that’s been lit – and like a lamp, we are the light of the world
• Just like that camping lantern, we are the ones through whom God will shine the light of the truth of His word to the world

• We are the ones who will demonstrate by our lives the power of God to save and transform – or at least that’s supposed to be our purpose

• So why does Jesus feel the need to end his parable by saying that Christians, the light of the world, shouldn’t hide their light under a bed?
  o It’s seems Jesus was concerned that Christians might not want the world to know that they were different
  o And that was the main point of the parable?
    ▪ Don’t be a C3 Christian
  o This is exactly what some Christians, in fact many Christians, are doing and have always done
    ▪ These are the Condition 3 Christians
    ▪ They’re the Christians who are hiding their light – withholding their witness to the world – never producing fruit
      • These are the Christians that hear the Word, and respond with some amount of healthy growth
      • But the cares and riches and pleasures of this world choke off the production of fruit
    ▪ They are distracted by the interests and cares of this world
      • There’s no time to be a mature Christian, no energy, no desire, no commitment
      • The things of this world are just too attractive, they seem too important, too demanding
      • Consequently, there’s little energy left for spiritual development – and what is must be used exclusively for themselves – just to stay alive
• That’s the key to understanding the C3 Christian – it’s self-centered Christianity…they are self-focused
  o Think about it like the plant surrounded by weeds
    ▪ The plant produces no fruit because all it’s energy is devoted to its own existence as the weeds taking so much of the plants energy – the sunlight and water
    ▪ A C3 squanders their time, resources and energy on the cares of this world, so when it comes time to devote time and energy to the things that truly matter – spiritual things, they have nothing left to give.
    ▪ They’re selfish because they only have enough spiritual energy for themselves
    ▪ This is like a field planted by the farmer, but all the plants it produces lack fruit…what a wasted harvest

• So spiritually speaking, here’s what a C3 Christian might look like
  o First, they aren’t necessarily devoid of any Christian-like behavior
  o They probably do many Christian like things
    ▪ They go to church when it fits the schedule
    ▪ They attend a Bible study now and then
    ▪ They tithe when the budget allows
    ▪ They volunteer when they have spare time
  o These are good things, fine things – necessary things
    ▪ But these activities are not fruit

• So what’s the point of the parable
  o First and foremost, we can't allow ourselves to be content with being a Condition 3 Christian
    ▪ We all start there, to be sure, with our light hidden
    ▪ But don’t be satisfied to remain a closet Christian or a self-centered one
- And it begins by recognizing that as a culture we devote too much time to the wrong things, including the wrong spiritual things.
- And there is a price to pay for neglecting our responsibilities in this area.

- Jesus presents a warning in verses 17 & 18 for those who neglect to hear this message.

Luke 8:17 “For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light.
Luke 8:18 “So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.”

- If we are content to leave our witness buried, to fail to produce fruit, to remain a C3 Christian, Jesus warns us that there will be no secrets one day to come:
  - All things will be known
    - The unbelievers will be known for who they are
    - And the Christians will be have their work tested

1Cor. 3:9 For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.
1Cor. 3:10 ¶ According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.
1Cor. 3:11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
1Cor. 3:12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,
1Cor. 3:13 each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.
1Cor. 3:14 If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.
1Cor. 3:15 If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

- Pauls reminds the Corinthian church that you though they were saved by their faith and not their works – to be sure - but much is still riding on their works:
  - Today we live in an existence and an age where everything has a beginning and an end
  - We can’t begin to comprehend eternity
But when we reach the other side of this life – we enter into a time and age where we come face to face with eternity

No more death, no more transitions...just endless time

And Jesus says that what we experience in that immense time is dependent on what we do with this handful of decades

And here’s the rule: whoever has, to him more will be given

Have? Have what?
  - Fruit, or more specifically, reward

And what will he be given? More opportunity to serve, to have responsibility and honor and perhaps other kinds of privilege in some form – we can’t be sure of all that is to be handed out
  - Paul just calls it a reward

But to the one who has nothing, even what he thinks he has will be taken away

What is it that this person has nothing of? Fruit.
  - What does he think he has...fruit

You see, the C3 Christian is living a life of fooling himself

- He thinks since he’s a mainstream Christian
  - A regular guy –he’s just killing time on Earth waiting for his reward when he reaches heaven
  - The C3 Christian is self-deluded because he never took time to understand what the Word says about the expectations for fruit
    - So when the fire reveals the quality of this person’s work, he will be found without fruit
- He was too busy pursuing what this life offered –
  - It looked like he had everything but he sacrificed an eternity for it

And just to be clear, there is another, complimentary meaning for these verses
To those in C2, the same comments have a dramatically different meaning

- To the one who thinks he has salvation, Jesus says what he thinks he has will be lacking on the day of judgment

- After all, only 2 of the four conditions can learn from this parable

  - C1 is hopelessly and decidedly lost
  - C4 is a mature Christian already leading the class
  - But C2 and C3 are the ones with a need
    - For C2 the need is to stop pretending and start believing
    - And for C3, the need is to stop pretending and begin maturing

- Are we taking this warning seriously?
  - Oh man, I hope so.
  - I hope we’re not too proud to stop in our tracks and re-evaluate our lives to see if they measure up.
    - And if they don’t, what are we prepared to do about it?
    - If we do nothing, I fear the day to come when we may deeply regret our shortsighted and foolish decisions to favor the needs of this world over those of the next

- To place an exclamation point on Jesus’ teaching, Luke inserts a description of a passing moment in Jesus ministry

Luke 8:19 ¶ And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd.

Luke 8:20 And it was reported to Him, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.”

Luke 8:21 But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”
Matt and Mark place this comment at a different point in Jesus ministry, back when he was confronted by the Pharisees over the disciples gleaning of the grain on the Sabbath

- Perhaps Luke’s careful investigation of the facts led him to conclude that this was the actual place it occurred
  - Or he decided that specific moment wasn’t important and chose to insert it here to help make the point of Jesus’ parable

- It’s apparent how large the crowds around Jesus had become by this point
  - They have to relay a message to Jesus that his family wishes to see him
  - Matt has Jesus in a house at this point, but either way they are not able to get close to him because of the crowd surrounding Jesus

- Do you think they came to be His disciples? To hear his teaching? To follow him?
  - We don’t know why they are trying to see Jesus
    - But I think it’s safe to assume that they are probably amazed at what has transpired around Him since he left home
    - Perhaps they have come to understand what’s going on or even be a part of it

- So why did Jesus dismiss his mother and brothers?
  - Well, first He doesn’t criticize them – His comment isn’t a slight against them
    - He may have received them eventually in fact
    - Really the only reason the event even warrants mention in scripture is because of what Jesus says at that moment
  - He uses their arrival as a teaching opportunity
    - Jesus says those who are in his family are those who hear the Word of God and do it
- Coming on the heels of the parable, we can certainly understand it more fully.
- Jesus statement makes even more clear that hearing the Word of God is the one and only means to becoming a part of the family of God.
- As Paul says in Rom 10:17

Rom. 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- This statement would have been very surprising to his audience
  - In Jewish culture, family relationships (tribes) were all important
    - So to suggest that a family tie is secondary to faithfulness to the Word of God – as strange as it may seem to some of us now – would have been a radical statement
    - And it still is radical for many people today
    - We can expect that Jesus surely had normal loving relationship with his earthly mother and no doubt He had affection for his earthly brothers,
      - But once His ministry began in earnest, Jesus saw the things of earth with an appreciation that there was an eternity waiting
      - Jesus knew He had existed before Mary and his brothers were even born – before Adam was even created
      - And He knew that the earth and everything in it would end one day while God’s children would continue on in eternity
  - There is no one who can say they were born into the family of God – not by the flesh
- I know what this feels like
  - I grew up calling myself a Christian – actually a Catholic
    - I was a Catholic because I was born a Catholic
    - And if you were to challenge that statement, I would get very offended – how dare you say what I am or am not
o Jesus is saying it right here – His family are those who hear the Word of God and do it
  ▪ Hear is “akouo” and it means listen, but in the sense of give heed
    • Not just hear it but receive it and then do it
    • Those who do these things are in the family of God – those who don’t are not
  ▪ Mary and James and the rest of Jesus family may have been related to Jesus in an earthly way,
    • But that didn’t give them any special ticket into heaven
    • They, like every man, had to believe to be saved
    • The only kind of relationship that matters is the one we are given by faith
• Let’s leave the teaching today fully aware of what Jesus – the Lord of all creation – is demanding of us
  o First, join His family or perish
  o And we join by faith in His Word – faith in His claim of who He is and in his provision on the cross for our sin
  o Secondly, we honor that gift of salvation by endeavoring to bear fruit
    ▪ To build the kingdom
    ▪ To spread the seed, the Word of God
  o In each week, there are 10,080 minutes
    ▪ Many Christians spend 90 minutes per week on the things of God and the other 9,990 minutes on whatever interests them
    ▪ Let’s agree we will do better
      ▪ Let’s agree that our reputation as followers of Christ is that we followed him without regard for ourselves

2Cor. 5:15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.