

Luke 8:16-18¹

Last week I brought you a message on the parable of the sower, which really is the parable of the soils. Because it has to do with the state of our hearts and what state of soil our hearts are as the seed – the word of God – is placed into our hearts. There are 4 states of heart, *stubborn, shallow, strangled and submissive* and it is submissive hearts the Lord wants us to have. And then I invited you to join me in a response, placing seed in the good soil, so doing you were saying I determine that my heart will be good soil, demonstrating your commitment to the Lord, to his word, to each other, and to the church.

And then we find what Luke gives us next from Jesus' teaching in 8:16-18 means we're not finished with the theme of hearing and *listening*. In fact the key line in the text I want to immediately draw your attention to is:² "*consider carefully **how** you listen*". 5 words of Jesus packed with spiritual emphasis. Why should we listen to who is asking to listen, because it's the Lord asking! And if we are determined to grow, to bear fruit, to be faithful, live in the joy of the Lord, walk daily spirit-filled...you'll listen!

But listening is a lost art. We love to fill the vacant space with our words. Silence is awkward. But hearing is a repetitive theme in scripture: Hear the word of the Lord, hear O Israel, today hear his voice, he who has ears let him hear... in Matt. 17:5 the account of the transfiguration: "*a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"*"

Listening is a lost art. Challenging his wife with a riddle, the husband began, "You're the engineer of a train. There are 36 people on board. At the first stop, 10 get off and 2 get on. At the next stop, no one gets off, but 5 get on. At the third stop, 4 get off and 2 get on. Now for the question: *What is the name of the engineer?*" "How should I know?" snapped the wife. "See, you never listen! Right at the start I said, 'You are the engineer of a train.'"³

Whether our experience is like this, or there are other occasions we zone out and don't listen or half listen, this story and our experiences remind us how often it is we fail to *listen* carefully. We do that with others and we certainly do that with the Lord.

¹ We must be careful how we listen because it has a profound effect in this life and for the next.

² It begs the question why must I consider carefully how I listen?

³ [Lesson 35: Take Care How You Listen! \(Luke 8:16-21\) | Bible.org](#)

What's true in the physical is true in the spiritual. I do not want us to underestimate the importance of how we listen, to God.

One of the common complaints I hear is: "I'm really struggling to hear God but he is not speaking, or I'm praying about this matter and he doesn't seem to want to give me an answer".

Folks, usually, the matter will be our listening, because more often than not what we're listening for is we want to hear. We all want to hear about God's grace, his love, his care.

Less about him disciplining us, our sin, taking us in a direction we'd rather not go. God, has spoken, God is speaking. God, is always speaking, by his spirit through his word.

Whether our issue is relationships, money, sin, serving, missions, God is speaking; *"consider carefully how you listen"*

In fact, we'll learn what kind of listener you are, will reveal your true spiritual condition. Today's passage reveals serious implications in regards to how we listen. To what? Him, and every word he gives us.

(READ)

¹⁶ "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light.

¹⁷ For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.

¹⁸ **Therefore consider carefully how you listen.** Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them."

One of the greatest dangers for the Christ-follower is the place and prominence of the word of God and our listening to/of the Lord through his word, with consistency from day-to-day. For many the conversation about our personal spirituality is approached with some hesitancy because often – and I know this anecdotally – it reveals a struggle and perhaps an absence with daily devotions, reading of God's word and prayer.

The danger I refer to is – if such disciplines are not part of our worship every day, *how then are we positioning ourselves to listen to God?*

And furthermore to let his light in and to be the light that he has called us to be? How do we do that if we are not positioning ourselves to listen to God? That's the challenge before us today.

In Luke 8:16-18 Jesus is calling first, those in the crowd, secondly, us, to pay serious attention to what he says. And what he says, at first glance in these 3 verses may seem a little disjointed, but the opposite is true.

Jesus said in Luke 8:15 when the seed of the word of God finds good soil, you will produce a crop, there will be and others will see fruit. And when you and I are fully plugged into Christ one of those fruit is being light...

Being light.

¹⁶ *"No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. (also in Matt. 5:15; Luke 11:33)*

It would seem like an absurd thing to do, to turn a light on and then cover it up so that the light can't be seen, but that absurdity is precisely Jesus' point. Ignore the value of the illustration but it will make the point: imagine going down to Briscoes and buying a \$10,000 lamp, and this is the best lamp money can buy, you bring it home, then you run out of time, can't be bothered with it, so it gets chucked in back corner of your garage, in behind all your junk with a tarp over it.

Sounds absurd right?! Jesus is in fact saying how absurd it is to hide me (light) and my message (gospel) in the busyness and business of life, when your business is, me, Jesus.

The idea of a light is to be a light and is to bring light, and have that light in a place that is not hidden away, but in a prominent place, out in the open, where it best provides light so that it can illuminate where there is darkness (*flat clay lamp, placed up to provide light*). Jesus himself was/is the light, not hidden away. We likewise are to be light, displaying Christ. Fruit of our hearts being good soil, committed to Christ and listening to him, is **being light**.

Luke 11:33 *"No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light.*

We read also in Matt. 5:14-16 that the fruit of being light (not hidden) means good deeds that help people come to saving faith in Christ...

*"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.***

Now you'll recall from last week's passage that not everybody sees, hears or understands (see Luke 8:10). Some don't listen and won't listen and are fixed in unbelief. Not everybody will choose to follow Christ. So then why be light to everybody?

So that Jesus' disciples weren't confused he says 'your task is to shine your light everywhere and to all people...go into all the world...' Jesus' point in v.17 is, despite others' challenge of hard hearts and unbelief, hearing and openness to the gospel, it does not prevent gospel sharing. I.e. our task is never to presume what God is or isn't doing in the heart of a person, never presume on his sovereign purposes and is always to be light and seek speaking the truth of Christ to them.

It is God's business who he makes judgement on, our business is to be light. These verses make that plain. Because though some will not see or hear, everyone will have that opportunity.

Gaylene B has been preparing for a garage sale of most of Tony's tools and bits and pieces, I've said to Gaylene several times this is a treasure trove. Everything from power tools, through to the smallest little bulbs, bolts and bits, lots of stuff with tremendous value. And one of the tasks has been getting everything out laying it all out on the table... no longer hidden away, in the back of a cupboard, inconspicuous...it's got to be brought out. When Jesus Christ is your Lord you have something of unspeakable value...

Let's not shy away from the truth of Christ, let's not let busyness of life get in the way of God's business. Let's let Jesus do the saving or hardening of hearts, let's us do the being light.

Matt. 10:27 *"What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs*

Phil. 2: 14-16 *Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them (who is the them?)...like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.*

If you're a genuine believer, the word of God has hit good soil, your lamp is on fire, you're lit up! *Faithfulness to being light in this dark world* (meaning what?) *is fruit of genuine Christian faith*. High calling isn't it....

Yours and my salvation depends on how we hear God, how we respond to God in the soil of our hearts. That's not all, others hearing about Christ depends on yours and my hearing and listening too. That's why Jesus says...

Being Authentic

17 For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.

Jesus is talking here about what's on the inside of us as it relates to our authenticity as believers. When Jesus says "*nothing hidden...etc.*" we can assume straight away he's talking about busyness and laziness getting in the way of being light. Also about hiding things, hiding your true self, true character good or bad, hiding hidden attitudes toward God and others, and not exposing them to the light⁴

It is only for so long that we can keep up appearances before our true colours are nailed to the mast, so to speak. Because what's down in your well will come up in a bucket! You cannot hide it! You will manifest at some point! Remember we've just been talking about light, light that exposes, light that reveals, light that uncovers darkness, and sooner or later that light – *if you're listening to God* – will reveal any darkness and reveal your true condition. That's the point of v.17.

Ecc. 12:14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

When we balance some of the other things Jesus has said – like "*Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy*" ... "*build you house on rock not on sand*" ... "*they will say Lord, Lord, and I will say away from me I never knew you*" ... "*clean the inside of the cup, then the outside will be clean*" – when we hear these things alongside v.17 we realise Jesus is addressing, hypocrisy, the *opposite* of authenticity. Jesus is not averse to calling out sin and hypocrites and judging accordingly "*do not be like the hypocrites (who was he talking about?), for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full*" (Matt. 6:5)⁵

⁴ Years ago, a wealthy Chinese businessman visited England and was fascinated by a powerful microscope and the wonders it uncovered. So he bought one and took it back to China. He thoroughly enjoyed using it until one day when he looked at some rice that he was planning to eat for dinner. To his shock, he saw tiny living creatures crawling in it. He didn't know what to do, since rice was a staple of his diet. Finally, in frustration, he smashed his microscope to bits. It had revealed something distasteful to him, so he destroyed the source of the discovery! - [Luke 8 Commentary | Precept Austin](#)

⁵ Jesus knows when we're putting on a show – this is what he's addressing in Matt. 6:5. Time to get real and transparent with God. Eternity doesn't rest on impressing others around us or living a fake life it is in honouring the Lord.

The solution? Be real before God, he sees, he knows. *"I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve."* (Jer. 17:10)

Folks we think we've had challenges with Covid. That wouldn't be a stitch compared to the scenario where we as a church were so PC that we no longer talked about sin, addressed sin and hypocrisy. I think we do a good job of pointing out the 'sin' and apparent moral failings of others...*what about us, me?*

Folks, everything will be laid bare one day before God (see Rom. 2), yours and my knee will bow to the king. Get right with God, now.

Let his light in and listen to him. What is the solution to authenticity? Ps 51 *"create in me a clean..."*⁶

I keep hearing the days are dark – and they certainly are, it's easy for us talk about bad others are, how bad the government are, etc. I hear a lot of objective opinions; I see less 2 Chron. 7:14⁷. Church family just talking about the darkness of the days in which we live is not the solution to *our* hearts, or anybody's heart being right with God. If there is an urgency about anything, it is about our hearts being right, being authentic, being full of light so we can be the light to and for those who are yet to know Christ. The issue is less about days being dark and more about our preparedness for these dark days and for being concerned about your life in Christ and the salvation of the lost.⁸ *Is that something we can get focused on?*

Being Careful Listeners

1⁸ Therefore consider carefully how you listen. *Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them."*

"Therefore" – bearing in mind everything Jesus has just said...

"...consider carefully how you listen"- this is a command of Jesus that we are to make a constant habit of following. That is with the greatest of care, commitment and intentionality, listening to the Lord is to be the daily pattern of Christian living.⁹

⁶ The biggest obstacle to authenticity was the biggest mistake of the religious leaders. Thinking they don't need Jesus. There's nothing they need to do to get right with God beyond the law.

⁷ *if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land*

⁸ The darkness of the days in which we live is not a gospel solution. The good news is the gospel solution.

⁹ [Luke 8 Commentary | Precept Austin](#) - So **take care** how you listen - **Take care** is [present imperative](#) which calls for this to be a believer's lifestyle, only possible by continually depending on the Spirit's enabling power. **Guzik** reminds us "When we hear the word, we become accountable; so we must take care how we hear."

Furthermore, notice this is not 'who' you listen to, or 'what' – as important as that is – but **how! How** is the critical factor! NB: How is what ties v.1-v.18 together. **How!**

If I'm going 80kmh down a steep hill in the Coromandel and see a road sign that says 25km/h bend ahead and I don't care '**how**' I 'listen' to that, what happens? Jesus' emphasis is such, that it is like you understand you've been given the most valuable gift – his word – taking care of that gift is allowing it to change your life. *Careful listening means we love and live in and are led by the word...*

Careful listening is not prayerfully reading scripture only to go away from the word with a stink and critical attitude toward others, a complaining spirit, and undealt with sin in our hearts. We've *considered carefully how we've listened* to Jesus when we've discovered truth, found hope, and encouragement, we've made adjustments and when we have done what his words have said to do.

We've 'listened' only when we have found Christ, and my response to his salvation, the cross, his grace and his mercy is obedience to his word and movement of my life toward him.¹⁰ **How**, I listen is motivated purely by worship and gratitude...*benefits...*

(m. v.18) "*whoever has*" "*whoever*" is the born again believer. "*has*", what do they have? Salvation. If you have salvation, the greatest thing you can ever have, how do you have more of it?¹¹

If we only have Christ we have it all right, so what does "*whoever has will be given more*" mean?¹² If you follow Christ, shine his light, live authentically, listen to him, "*given more*" means grace upon grace, blessing upon blessing. The more you press into God, more grace, more blessing, to press. "*More*" means more fruit in your life. It means your faithful perseverance amounts to *yield(ing) a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.*¹³

But, there are implications for not listening carefully. For the person whose heart is hard, and hasn't listened to the word of God, (see end v.18) "*even what they think they have will be taken from them*"

¹⁰ I once asked someone to preach and gave them an OT passage and they told me no they wouldn't because they weren't inspired by it and Jesus wasn't in it. **Jesus IS the WORD!**

¹¹ See Eph. 1:3

¹² Nothing material!

¹³ Don't be thinking this is anything material or of any substance. It could be a greater measure of joy. Persevering faith in difficult times. It could be you see many won to Christ through your witness...

The devil snatches it away (Luke 8:12) There were and will be many who think they had/have salvation but they don't, because they didn't listen!

That was the case for the followers who walked away in John 6, that was the case for Judas; for the Pharisees who were zealous, knew the bible, did church good, but didn't listen to Jesus. In today's terms Jesus is speaking to the person who thinks praying the prayer did the job, bought the ticket to glory, says the rights things, does all the right things yet there's no change, no fruit, no joy, no evidence.¹⁴

What do people see when they look on at our Christian lives, when they see what we do, when they hear what we say, *is it...light, or dark?*

Is it from a place of *authenticity of hypocrisy*? Folks *salvation requires spiritual vigilance day in, day out ¹⁵. Let me summarise with this: daily expressing gratitude and worship of God is fruit of you **how** you have listened!

TAKEAWAYS

Be Light, Be authentic, Be careful listeners

Folks Jesus message to the disciples then is the same to us today. It's vital we pay attention to *how we are listening* to what the word of God says to us, your salvation depends on it (verse 12); being light and being authentic depends on it (verse 16, 17), and the spread of the gospel depends on it (Phil. 2:14-17), and ultimately the glory of God is at stake (Matt. 5:16).

"Therefore consider carefully how you listen"

¹⁴ Talk with wives, husbands, work colleagues... who tell a different story than you see in church on Sunday.

¹⁵ And now all the Calvinist purists will know I don't agree with once saved always saved