

Sermon – 19/06/2011 am

Hear and Do

Study Text: Luke 8:16-21

When we arrived in India in 1983 I did not know a word of the local language. We were sent to language school to learn a new grammar, new words and a new script. We had three young children who started to play with local children. I decided to start a small Sunday school for these children. With the help of my language teacher I wrote out Bible stories to teach these children. This proved to be a great help in learning the language. I learnt by doing. The more I practised the language the more I learnt.

The good ground in the parable of the sower represents those who hear the word of God and take hold of it with all their being. As the word took root and grew in their hearts it began to bear fruit in their lives – enduring fruit. There was no turning back for these hearers. There was no stagnation for these hearers. The more fruit they yielded the more they produced. They were like the tree planted by the river in Psalm 1. They produced fruit in season. They produced fruit all the time.

The gospel writer reinforces the message of the parable using other sayings of Jesus, sayings about hearing and heeding what was heard. Matthew includes these sayings in other contexts in his gospel. The picture of putting a lamp on a stand so its light can be seen was probably used more than once by Jesus in his preaching (8:16, 11:33).

1. How Do You Hear?

No one lights a candle and then puts it under a bucket or under a bed. Where are the lights in your house? They are in the ceiling or on the shelf. What would you think of a person who lit a candle and then put it under the table or under the bed? They must be stupid, or blind. A stupid person does not know the nature of light. The blind person cannot see light anyway.

Take heed how you hear said Jesus (8:18). If you have truly heard the gospel and believed in Jesus Christ you will be bearing fruit. You will have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and will be bearing the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control (Galatians 5:22).

Fruit bearing is pictured here as light-bearing. If the light of the gospel has truly shone into your heart it will be reflected in your life. It is beyond comprehension that a person can continue being the same person after believing in Jesus. *If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone and all things become new. Now all things are of God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ Jesus, and given us the ministry of reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ* (II Corinthians 5:17-20).

If you are an ambassador you do not go around disguised as a local person. If you are an ambassador for Christ – and that is what you are if you truly believe – you do not go around disguised as a person of this world. You reflect whose you are and whom you serve, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are a lot of beautiful lighthouses along our rugged coastline. I have pictures of many on a calendar. But these lighthouses were not built to be photographed and stuck on a calendar. They

were built to give out light. They were built to give light that would save people from being shipwrecked.

Why did Jesus save you? For what purpose did he save you? So you could have a rich and fulfilling life? So you could get a good job and settle down and make sure you and your children have everything the world offers? Is your life as a Christian any different to the lives of other people in society? If not, why not?

'I am going to do something really mean to that person after what they did to me' the young person said. But wait a minute! Is this what Jesus teaches us? Are you listening to Jesus and obeying him? *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven* (Matthew 5:16). Light from a lighthouse saves; it does not destroy lives. An ambassador lives in a way that makes the king or government he represents look good. Are you living as an ambassador of Christ?

When was the last time you demonstrated a Christ-like behaviour? When was the last time you looked out for the interests of others, or of Christ and his kingdom? *All seek their own interests, not the things of Christ* wrote Paul (Philippians 2:21). When was the last time you prayed for an unbeliever to be saved and spoke to them of Jesus, your Saviour and Lord?

When you do pray, and when you do speak, you will be amazed at how the Lord helps you. Jesus promises to give you words to say when you open your mouth to speak of him (Matthew 10:19). Remember, you have the Holy Spirit as your helper. You will come away thinking of other things you could have said but if you have spoken of Jesus giving glory to him the seed has been sown. Have the word of God close at hand at all times; in your memory or in your pocket. Have in your hand the 'sword of the Spirit which is the word of God' (Ephesians 6:17).

Whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him (8:18). We are reminded of the parable of the minas and the man who hid his mina/coin in a cloth (Luke 19:11f). The master said 'take this mina from him and give it to the man who has used his mina to get ten more'. Jesus was not endorsing taking money from the poor and giving it to the rich. He was speaking of spiritual things. He was speaking of bearing fruit in the kingdom of God.

'Use it or lose it' some say. It is true is it not? If you stop pedalling you will fall off the bike. Right? Beware of stagnating in your Christian life; or worse still, falling back. Attend to the means of grace and let the word of God dwell in you richly. Then, when you have opportunity you will be ready to help someone, or give an answer to someone as the Lord enables you. When you do you will be pleased, and so will the Lord. He will send you out to serve him again.

For nothing is secret that will not be revealed (8:17). This verse looks a bit out of place, but notice the word 'light' at the end. Everything will be revealed and *come to the light*. This connects it with the previous verse and back to the parable. The parable was about hidden things, things that were revealed to the disciples who came to Jesus and asked. One day everything will be revealed by the Light of the world, Jesus Christ our Lord.

This verse seems to point to judgment day. On this day the light will reveal everything. *All things are open to the eyes of him to whom we must give account* (Hebrews 4:13). Meanwhile *the word of God is living and active, sharper than a two edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart* (Hebrews 4:13). This is the same word that Jesus spoke of in the parable.

There are people who call themselves Christians and live morally upright lives but the word of God has never entered their heart and they have no light. The truth is a mystery to them but they make a good show to the world. Some even study and preach, but have no light. For them being a Christian means to keep the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. If others keep these commands without being a Christian then well and good they say. Such people keep away from those who talk about being 'born again' or being 'true believers'. The Pharisees still have their followers today.

Take heed how you hear said Jesus. One day the light will reveal everything that is secret and hidden. Will it be a day of surprises?

2. Hear the Word and Do It

At this point Luke includes the record of Jesus' mother and brothers pressing their way through the crowd to reach Jesus. Matthew puts it immediately before the parable of the sower (Matthew 12:46f), but neither give a precise time frame. They came to speak with Jesus as a member of their household. Maybe they wanted to take him home to help, or to make sure he took rest. Maybe they thought Jesus was *out of his mind* (Mark 3:20).

Mary's husband Joseph is not mentioned. Maybe he had died. Who are the brothers referred to? Some theologians of the Roman Catholic tradition teach that Mary was a perpetual virgin so these brothers of Jesus were not sons of Mary. They say they were from a previous marriage of Joseph, or cousins. While the term 'brother' can be used broadly, the natural sense here is of other sons of Mary. Jesus had sisters also (Matthew 13:56).

Being perfect as he was, Jesus honoured his mother. But his primary duty was towards God. In his youth he told his parents *I must be about my Father's business* (Luke 2:49). On this occasion he makes the same point. He answered saying *my mother and my brother are those who hear the word of God and do it* (8:21).

This is a profound statement. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. In this way he is unique. But those who believe, those who hear the word of God and do it, are adopted children of God and hence brothers and sisters of Jesus. Jesus was speaking of spiritual realities. He was speaking about the kingdom of God. He was looking beyond life in this world to eternal life.

How do you feel about Jesus calling you his brother or sister – as you are if you hear the word of God and do it? This reminds us that we belong to a spiritual family. Jesus did not disown or ignore his earthly family – and neither must we. But Jesus had an even greater priority, his spiritual family – and so must we.

Looking at relationships within the church, and at splits that keep occurring, we might ask to what extent this great truth is understood. Surely it is a symptom of not hearing the word of God and doing it, as Jesus urges us to do in the parable and in these verses. Do you hear the word of God? Are you putting it into practice in your life?

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