

## Sermon Discussion: Luke 8:4-15

1) Before we begin to discuss this particular parable, think for a moment about the types of teaching Jesus often does: direct instruction, question/answers, and parables. Can you think of specific examples of any of these? Of the teachings of Jesus that you're familiar with, is it easier for you to learn from and remember Jesus' direct instruction (like the sermon on the mount), his answers to questions Pharisees asked ( see Matthew 22:15- 46 for example) or from parables (like the Prodigal son, Good Smartian, etc.)? Why do you think that is?

2) Read Luke 8:4-15. What did Jesus describe in this particular parable? Is this a parable about the sower, the seeds, the soil or all 3? Since Jesus explains this parable, we know that Jesus is the sower and His words are the seeds. Both the sower and the seed are perfect, so what does this parable teach about the soil? What does it say about Jesus that he sows the seed of the Word on all types of soil? When we share the Word of God with others, we are imitating Jesus as the farmer spreading the seed. What does Jesus' example as the farmer teach us about those we are to share the Word of God with?

3) Read Luke 8:9-10. Why do you think so many people heard the words of Jesus but then didn't understand them? What about Jesus' identity and teaching made Him hard to understand? Do you see similar things happening in culture today? In what ways do you see people hearing the words of Jesus but not really listening to them?

4) Modern readers can be tempted to interpret this parable as an "all or nothing" teaching. We interpret that our whole hearts are completely one of the 4 types of soils. Could it be possible that our hearts are a mixture of soil types? Are some of Jesus' teaching deeply rooted and producing good fruit in your life? Is your heart hard to more difficult teachings of His? Have some of His teachings not taken root or been choked out by 21<sup>st</sup> century American cultural standards? How can we identify the rocks in our hearts that need to be removed? What measures can we take to cultivate the soil of our hearts so that all of the Gospel becomes deeply rooted?

5) Why is it not enough to just hear the word of God? What does putting the Word into practice reveal about our commitment to Him? Read Luke 8:15. According to Jesus, what will be the evidence of a heart with good soil? Read James 2: 14-20 for more instruction.

6) We just finished a study through 1 Peter and considered Peter's words to those exiles in light of their struggles and difficulties. Often, difficult circumstances will make a believer stronger or difficult circumstances can reveal a lack of faith. Can you identify any hardships or struggles in your life? Are they strengthening your faith or weakening it? Are your struggles and difficulties causing the soil of your heart to harden or become more yielding?

7) In the Parable of the Sower, some seed fell among the thorns. Jesus said the pursuit of "cares, riches, and pleasures of life" choked out the faith of many. What is your greatest pursuit in life today? Are the things you are pursuing going to make an eternal difference or just serve you in life on earth? What are the two biggest distractions that are hindering your walk with God right now?