

The Gospel of Luke

21st – 25th June 2021



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day, and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Doctrine for the Mind and Heart

Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 86:

What is faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer:

Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace by which we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is freely offered to us in the gospel.

Proof Texts:

Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 4:16; John 20:30-31; Galatians 2:15-16;
Philippians 3:3-11

Memory Verse of the Week

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Matthew 7:24

Psalm of the Week

Psalm 119U - The words are on page 8.

Please pray for:

Mon - Jan Buchanan

Tues - Spencer Clifton

Wed - Mark Cousins

Thur - Matthew DeHaan

Frid - Mark & Alison, Robin & Irelyn Dumalski

Pray for the Holy Spirit's help as you read and study God's Word.

Monday 21st – Read Luke 8:9-15

V15. There are three elements to being good soil. First, there is the hearing of God's Word. The second is the holding fast to it with an honest heart, and the third is producing good fruit with patience. The latter two are not possible without the first. This is the second of the four times that Jesus refers to 'hearing' in these few verses. He has spoken of hearing in verse 10, and will do so again in verse 18, saying, "Take care then how you hear".

The hearing of God's Word is essential to our lives. Paul says that "faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ", Romans 10:17. Earlier in Romans 10, he had underscored the necessity of hearing the gospel because it is God's chosen means of giving the gift of belief – "how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard", Romans 10:14. The reference being to the hearing of Christ through the Word preached.

But it is not just the hearing; it is how you hear that is critical. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus declares that those who do not do the will of the Father will be cast out of His presence for eternity. This will happen even though they have called him 'Lord', and apparently done good things in the church. The point is simple – 'doing of the will of the Father' is critical to our salvation. Not that we are saved by what we do; we are not. We are saved by grace alone, through the faith granted to us by God alone. But, as we have seen, Luke 6:43-45, our salvation is revealed in the fruit we bear in our lives. The obvious, but critical, point to get is that our 'doing of the will of the Father' is directly linked to our knowing the will of the Father. If you don't know what it is you are to do, obviously you can't do it. And the 'knowing' comes by 'hearing', and that doesn't mean just with your ears, it also implies hearing it in your mind and heart. Belief and faith come through hearing the Word of God preached, and the dwelling on, considering of, and mulling over that truth for yourself. Of course, there is an instant reaction to what you hear, an immediate receiving or declining of it. But when Jesus speaks of hearing, v8, v10, v15 and v18, he is asking for more than just that immediate engagement. He is calling for thoughtful, meditative interaction.

James writes about the necessity of not only being hearers of the Word, but doers of it, James 1:22-25. He makes the point that those who merely hear are deceiving themselves. Strong language. He drives home his point with a humorous illustration of a man looking at himself intently in the mirror, who then goes away and at once forgets what he looks like. He ends what he has to say with the promise that "the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who does, he will be blessed in his doing." James 1:25. So this matter of hearing, and how we hear, is incredibly important – essential to our lives. In fact, it is the most important thing in your life as a believer and follower of Jesus.

Tuesday 22nd – Read Luke 8:16-18

V16. The purpose of lighting is to give light. The idea of putting a light source either into something that encloses it, or under a bed where it will not be seen, makes no sense. Jesus draws the obvious conclusion – anyone who has a light puts it on a stand, elevated so that it will fulfil its purpose of casting the light emanating from it as far as possible. The point is simple – live your life as a believer in, and follower of, the Lord Jesus Christ openly and honestly. Be who you say you are, so that others may see and be drawn to Christ.

V17. The point is that there is coming a day when everything in everyone's heart and life will be made known. There will be no secret hiding place. Nowhere where that thought can be tucked away for no one else to see. It will all be out there. Our role, through the simplicity of our lives, lived loving the Lord Jesus Christ before others, is to expose the dark and hidden things of the world. As we do so, God will, through our behaviour, expose their sin and bring judgement upon them. A judgment that will have its full manifestation on the day that all things are revealed. So, as we live our lives before a watching world, we are both an instrument of salvation, as we share the gospel, and judgment in the hand of God., that is, if we are prepared to let our light shine before the watching world.

V18. We come again to the theme of hearing; obviously, it was important to Jesus. He says that we are to "take care then how you hear". It is so easy to hear carelessly, and to listen without serious consideration of what is being said. But there is another reason why it is essential that we take care how we hear. Jesus says that there is a reward for taking care of how you hear. It is the reward of being given more opportunities to delight in and serve him. The reverse is also true; when you do not invest yourself in hearing and doing, you will produce nothing, and what you think you have will be taken from you. As he would later say on the night he was betrayed, "If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned." John 14:6. There are those who leave a faithful church for good reasons. It may be due to relocating, or as a result of coming to an appreciation for a different doctrinal position. But some leave biblical congregations because they come to the point where they are no longer willing to hear the Word of God. Whether that initially manifests itself in declining participation in public worship, or in a rebellious, albeit passively expressed, attitude, or both, is unimportant. What is important is that when they eventually leave, they think they are making the decision to go, and of course, they are, but there is another side to it; God is also taking away from them the privilege of hearing His Word. Some, by the grace of God, may in time find their way back to a biblically faithful church; others drift, bouncing from church to church; and

many just stop living what they so ardently previously professed. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." v8.

Wednesday 23rd – Read Luke 8:19-21

V19. The event cited in this verse is recorded in Matthew 12:46-50, and Mark 3:31-35, as taking place before, and not after, the parable of the Sower. Luke is also more concise in the information he gives us, choosing to concentrate on what Jesus says.

As Jesus is teaching, who comes to see him? Luke doesn't tell us why his mother and brothers come to see him, but Mark does. He tells us that they thought that he had gone mad, literally that he was "out of his mind", Mark 3:21. But there is a problem, and it is a problem that is supporting, even compounding their perception. They think Jesus has gone mad because he is allowing himself to be surrounded by crowds, to the point where he is not even getting time to eat, Mark 3:20. And now, here they are being prevented from getting to see him because of the crowd engulfing him. Word does get to Jesus that his mother and brothers are outside wanting to see him. Does 'outside' mean that he is in his home, or simply that they are on the exterior of the crowd? None of the gospels make it clear.

So, we have an innocuous little event, albeit significant to Jesus' family, but one which he will be able to sort out with a reassuring smile and a few carefully chosen words. Hardly worth putting into the Bible. Except that's not what happens. How does Jesus respond? For a start, he doesn't leave what he is doing to go out and greet his mother and brothers. Their collective sense of protection towards him is quickly shattered by his failure to show. It is not that he is being disrespectful, or unloving, towards his mother. That is clearly not the case given the subsequent events at the Cross, John 19:26,27. The point is, he is no one's 'possession', except for the Father's in heaven, in the sense of being told what to do, and when to do it.

In responding as he does, Jesus communicates no sense of impatience. He does not try to muddle his way through in an attempt to protect everyone's feelings. His words are simple, clear, straightforward, to the point. Who are my mother and brothers? The unasked question that Jesus answers. For Jesus, they are those "who hear the word of God and do it". That is how close we are to Jesus when we walk in the ways of God. All who are truly in Christ, and delight in him, are his family, 'members of the household of God' as Paul calls it, Ephesians 2:19. To do the will/Word of God is to believe it; it is to own it in one's heart and then live it out in one's life. This, of course, requires a work of grace in our lives, and a daily turning to God for His strength. But it is an astonishing truth when one stops and thinks about it, that Jesus regards us as part of his immediate family.

Thursday 24th – Read Luke 8:22-25

V22. Mark places this next event in the evening of the day when Jesus told the parable of the Sower, Mark 4:36-41. Jesus is leading his disciples. He gets into a boat and says to them, let's go across the Lake. Jesus is always clear about what he wants to do. Clarity of understanding, purpose and direction is a sign of godly leadership. Each congregation has its identity and reason for existing, and every generation of leadership is responsible for understanding and owning that purpose. Where such ownership and biblical vision are wanting, the people of God will quickly become stagnate, and then drift and neglect will quickly lay hold of the church. Pray that God will equip and call godly men to lead his Bride; men who genuinely understand both their role and responsibility, and have both, and the courage to exercise clear, grace-filled leadership.

V23. The disciples follow Jesus; little do they know what is ahead of them. As they set off from the shore, Jesus takes the opportunity, at the end of yet another long demanding day, to get some rest – he falls asleep. Sleep is a wonderful blessing that God has granted to man. The rest of the night is a time that we all need to recalibrate our bodies and our minds. One of the tell-tale signs that we are not doing well is an inability to sleep. If you are currently struggling with your sleep, seek the Lord's help to do so.

The Lake of Galilee lies 700 feet below sea level, between mountains on either side. Cold air sweeps down from the mountain ranges and is channelled through the gorges to the east, and as it does so, it can quickly whip up a storm. There is also an issue here of demonic activity. Luke tells us that they "were in danger". Yet, through it all, Jesus continues to sleep. Which speaks to both his need for rest and the peace in his heart.

V24. The disciplines are certainly not at peace. Remember, some of these men were former fishermen, men who would have experienced storms on the Lake before. All of them lived near the Lake and would have been familiar with storms. They knew they were in real trouble with this one. I wonder how long they left it before deciding to waken Jesus. Probably quite a while, possibly until they thought they were going to die. The words they use when wakening Jesus certainly give that impression – "Master, Master, we are perishing". It doesn't leave much to the imagination. Mark tells us that they also said, "do you not care that we are perishing?" Mark 4:38. So, it's not just that they are perishing; it's the fact that Jesus doesn't seem to care.

Sometimes the cold winds come down from the mountain ranges, sweep through the gorges, and stir up a real storm in our lives. Something of a magnitude that our normally well-honed techniques for handling life's difficulties are overwhelmed by. It is on a different scale. And it seems that God is asleep to it all. How could He allow this? Why is He not doing something about it? Can He not see just how devastating it is? God, where are you?

Friday 25th – Read Luke 8:22-25

V24. Jesus speaks. Matthew records that he speaks to the disciples first; Mark and Luke say he addresses the storm first. The order is interesting, and it would be nice to see all three accounts aligned. But again, we are dealing with real human beings who remember things in life in different ways. Regardless of whether you take Matthew's perspective, i.e., Jesus speaks to the storm first, Matthew 8:26 (which I think may have been the case because it would have gripped the disciples' souls more), or Luke's, what you hear is not words of reassurance, comfort, and encouragement, but not words of rebuke. That may come as a bit of a shock since the disciples are fighting for their lives. Despite their best efforts they're going down. The boat is sinking and they're all going to die, including Jesus. And what does Jesus do? He seeks to give them a lesson in what 'faith' is. It's not words about 'faith' they need; it's saving! Words of rebuke are the last thing we want to hear when we perceive ourselves to be in peril. So, what is Jesus doing when he rebukes these men for their lack of faith amid this life-threatening situation? Well, he's not saying that they have no faith. What he's driving at is, 'where is their faith'? He's asking them to search themselves and think about what they actually believe. If their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, the Saviour of his people is real, why are they not trusting him?

Are we any different? Yes, we can speak of how much we love the Lord, but put us in the cauldron for a time, and what happens? It's not too long before we are struggling and saying to God, 'why are you doing this to me'.

V25. Jesus rebukes the storm. Mark tells us that he said to the wind, "Peace! Be still!" and the wind ceased, and the Lake fell calm. Three words, and the situation is transformed, from one of absolute terror to one of extraordinary peace. Jesus declares his authority over creation, including any demonic activity involved, in a few words. The disciples are awestruck by the manifestation of such almighty power. And it gives rise to fear. A fear of Jesus; and note, it's not a fear which engendered a desire to run and hide, but a fear of wonderment. A fear which says, 'this man Jesus can do anything he wants. He is way beyond the ordinary; even the wind and the waves obey his commands.'

You and I need to see Jesus in this light, with this degree of wonderment. Speaking for myself, too often I live in a world of, 'Yes, Jesus can sort it, but...' There can be no 'buts'. If God is allowing something to happen in our lives that is threatening our very existence, then it is for a reason, and we must look to the Lord Jesus in wonderment, with genuine faith and trust. We must hear and believe his words when he says, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Mathew 16:18.

Psalm 119U

My grief regard, and rescue me,
For I do not Your law forget.
My cause defend; redeem my soul;
Your promise keep; revive me yet.

Rescue is far from wicked ones,
For they Your statutes do not seek.
Your mercies, LORD, how great they are!
As You have judged, new life give me.

Many are my tormenting foes;
Yet from Your law I will not turn.
I see and loathe the treacherous,
For they Your word forever spurn.

See how I love Your precepts' way!
LORD, in Your love, give life to me.
The sum of all Your words is truth;
Your judgments stand eternally.