

Luke 8:1-15

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[0 : 00] Thank you very much for the invitation. It's a pleasure to be among you.

He was an attraction.

They were coming, people were coming from all directions, like fans converging on a football ground. They came along, they came in groups.

Husbands brought their wives, mothers brought their children, youth brought their mates. Everybody wants to see him. Everybody wants to see him.

Some seem to have brought the whole town with them. They came because they were sick and handicapped and thought he might heal them.

[1 : 09] They came because they were poor and oppressed and they thought he might deliver them. They came because they were bored and curious and they thought that he might amuse them.

They came, well, they came, well, some of them had a hard job explaining why, why exactly they had come, except that everybody was coming.

And we are like that, no? People goes where everybody goes, no? Where the attraction is, no? So everybody was there in town. Everybody came to see Christ. What he will do on this occasion.

So, but whatever company and whatever motivation, for whatever, with whatever company or whatever motivation they came, there was one war in Jesus' lips which intrigues them all.

And this war was the kingdom. Christ was speaking about the kingdom. And they were expecting a king. They were expecting the Messiah. There was a lot of prophecies in the Old Testament just pointing the coming Messiah, the one that will deliver them from their sins and also perhaps from the Romans and from the oppression.

[2 : 33] So this parable is telling us about the kingdom, about the king, how this king and how this kingdom will progress. There is the meaning of the parable.

The text telling us the seed is the word of God. This is the meaning of the parable. So this parable is speaking about the gospel, about the seed, about the sowing this seed and what will be the results of sowing the seed.

We began with Jesus' gripping announcement of the kingdom of God. The powers of evil are fleeing before his face. Demons are being exorcised.

Cripples are being healed. The signs of his messianic mission to transform the world are clearly apparent. Everybody can see that Christ is not like any other prophet.

Christ is different. What he's doing, he needs that God will be with him, empower him to do his almighty works. But how the world is going to be changed?

[3 : 38] And this is an important question, not that we ask ourselves. We want to see more changes in the world. We want to see people living as a Christian. We want to see Christian influence society, politics, etc.

But how is the world going to be changed? What is going to be used to change the world? So how the kingdom is going to be brought in?

What strategy will Jesus employ to precipitate this decisive transformation in world history? Will he rise to an angelic army and march on Jerusalem or Rome?

Will he call down supernatural fire from heaven to consume the wicked? What he will do? What will be the means that he will use to extend the kingdom, to make the kingdom progress?

So what strategy will Jesus employ? The kingdom of God will arrive, this text is telling us, in three different moments. And the first moment is the moment of planting.

[4 : 48] The moment of planting, the face of planting the seed. As the seed. As the Messiah arrives, he will be disguised to sow the seed of the kingdom in the heart of a few chosen disciples.

He has chosen a few disciples. He sowed the seed in their heart and is going to be through those disciples and their preaching. How the kingdom will expand.

How the kingdom will expand. How the kingdom will progress. So the first moment of this sowing is the moment of planting the seed.

The second moment is the growth of the seed. Then there will be a period of growth as the seed multiplied through their testimony and fertilized many other lives.

And it's interesting, you know, that with a few chosen disciples, there were just 120 waiting for the promise of the spirit coming in Jerusalem.

[5 : 55] And just these 120 persons changed the world in a few years. In a few years, the spores of this seed throughout the world reached many, many hearts.

Changed many people's lives. So, 30 lives, many other lives until eventually the spores of the kingdom had become distributed throughout the world.

And it's amazing, you know, that we have Japanese brothers and sisters here from many nations today. And so, where is in the world that there is not a church?

Those spores of the gospel reach out throughout the world. And you could come to Spain and you have in Spain brothers and sisters. We are united in Christ.

It's even more important than our nationality. We are Christians. We belong. We are the people of God. So, it's wonderful that the Lord is just growing.

[6 : 55] You know, he's making to grow this seed that has been planted. And finally, the third thing is that there will be a time of reaping. A time of reaping when the Messiah will return.

This is a time of universal public accommodation to harvest the fruit which the seed had been sown and had produced. So, there is this time of reaping.

This time of reaping. And we have to go on, press on, preaching the word of God because it will be a time of reaping. It will be a time of reaping. How the kingdom then will arrive.

The seed, the seed is what the text is telling us is the vital instrument. There is no other way through which people will change from inside to outside.

So, it's the seed of God. It's the word of God. It's the preaching of the word of God. The instrument, the vital instrument by which the new wall of the kingdom is sown in the very midst of the world.

[8 : 00] The preaching of the gospel will be, is the seminal agent of change. It will germinate in God's cosmic revolution. The seed is the word of God. So, we have to be committed with this preaching.

We have to be committed with the gospel. It's the only way through which the people will change. So, we have to take the word seriously and to preach the gospel.

So, sadly, through history, the church has not taken always the word of God and the preaching of God seriously. Through the centuries, it has not always believed that the word of God and the preaching of the word of God is enough.

It's sufficient. And we have to remind ourselves today that the word of God is sufficient. It's sufficient for us. It's the way God reaches people, calls people to repent, change people, transform people completely.

So, again and again, other things have taken the prime place of the word ought to be on the Christian agenda. And in churches, in churches, they don't pay too much attention to the preaching of the word of God.

[9 : 13] The preaching is not central in the services and in the churches. And it's very sad because it's through the preaching. It's preaching the cross of Christ.

It's preaching the Lord, just offering his life, taking our place on the cross. We are preaching his blood that cleanses us from everything.

We are just preaching the grace of God in Christ. By faith alone, in Christ alone. So, we have to remember this, that this is important.

The preaching has to be central in church. Well, for instance, the church revered bread and wine more than the Bible. And just revered more the sacraments than the Bible, than the preaching. And we know that the Bible says signs, visible signs of what? Of the gospel. The bread and the wine. What is telling us the bread and the wine?

[10 : 14] The body of Christ. On the cross. What is telling us the wine? His precious blood that cleanses us from everything.

So, the signs are signs of the gospel. The gospel has to be there. And sometimes, the sacraments take the place of the gospel. The altar, instead of the pulpit.

And we go to some churches, and what do we see in a cathedral? What is the central place in a cathedral? The altar. What should be the central place in a church?

This one, the pulpit. Why? Because we preach the living word of God. The living word of God. The word of God. We are sowing the seed.

So, just not the altar, instead of the pulpit, at the center of the architecture of many churches.

[11:10] But also, in the theology. The theology of the sacraments, but no, the theology of the scripture. The word of God. Of the preaching. So, God, new society is not going to be brought by the heart of the parliament.

Of course, we want to see the laws change, and the law change. And we want to see that the government and politics will be more sensitive to the Bible and to the scripture.

But the law is not going to change anyone. It's not going to change anyone. Think about us. When we drive our car, sometimes we just drive carefully because we know that there is a camera or we can get a bill.

So, the law doesn't change anyone. The law points us, points our sin, and points us Christ. That is our sufficient savior.

Law doesn't change. Of course, the law is wonderful. I am not denying how wonderful is the law of God. It's wonderful, the law of God.

[12:14] But it's not through the law that we are saved. We are saved by grace in Christ alone. It's by grace. So, Jesus was familiar enough with the revolutionary politics of his time.

He has a disciple that was a zealot, was an ex-revolutionary, a freedom fighter. But Jesus knew that this was a wrong seat. This was not the right seat.

The right seat is the word of God, the preaching of the word of God. When we are preaching the word of God, we are addressing people.

We want to see our societies change. It's true. We want to see more Christian influence in society. But we are concerned with people, with individuals. We are concerned with families that change from inside to outside.

People that radically change because they are under the influence of the word of God, through the spirit of God. And they change. So, it's the only way that there will be a radical and an authentic change.

[13:23] It's true, the preaching of the word of God. There is no other way. God decided that this is the way that we should use to change the world.

So, it's a word that is a personal, calls us to a personal repentance, calls us to a personal forgiveness, a personal faith, and a personal discipleship.

It's a word that is just addressing us as individuals and as families and as a church. So, I am working in Almuniecar.

It's a difficult word to pronounce, Almuniecar. So, I am working there for the past 20 years. During those past 20 years, I have to face some hardships, some strugglings, sometimes disappointments. So, there are a lot of things that happen in 20 years, you imagine, in my life, in the life of the church. So, when we are sowing, when we are preaching, when we are doing the work of God, it's inevitable to fail, to feel failure sometimes, and to feel disappointed or to be disappointed.

[14:37] It's part of the work. It's part of the work. I know that you know as me that this is part of our Christian life. So, look carefully how Jesus tells the story.

He describes you, notice, one homogeneous sowing and four different soils. So, the problem is not in the seed. The seed is perfect.

The problem here is on the soils, on the hearts who receives the seed. So, it is the quality of the soil, not the expertise of the sower, that determines the harvest.

And this is very encouraging. It's very encouraging. We preach the gospel. And there are hearts. There are people that are already prepared.

Their hearts are prepared to receive the seed. You know, they are already prepared. Spiritual fertility does not lie in the gift of the teacher.

[15:37] But Jesus insists that is the way it is. Spiritual fertility does not lie in the gift of the evangelist. And for that reason, we must anticipate in this parable four categories, three categories of disappointment.

Those along the path, the ones who hear and then the devil comes and then the word from their heart. Luke 8, chapter 12. And what is interesting is amazing because some people tell us, if I could see a miracle, if I could see Jesus performing the water into wine or Jesus walking on the Lake Galilee or doing some miraculous work, I will believe.

And this is a lie. It's not true. It's not true. It's not true. First of all, faith is not related with what we can see. It's related with unseen things, no?

So, but, you know, how many people saw Christ? How many people saw Christ performing miracles? And how many believe? So, this is not true.

It's not true that if you will see a miracle, you will believe. It's not true. Many people saw miracles from the Lord itself and they didn't believe.

[16:52] Why? They came to see him with a hardened heart, what is for me very mysterious, no? Because they came, they didn't come to see what the Lord will do, what the Lord will say and perhaps to believe.

No, no, no. They came with a hardened heart. Doesn't matter what we see. Doesn't matter what we hear. They won't believe. It's something, you know, enigmatic, no?

Something mysterious, no? And believe is something mysterious, no? True. There is something mysterious. What the people does, what are the prejudices that they, when they approach, when they are face to face with the word of God, there is some intellectual pride.

People say, do you expect for me that I will live in the virginal birth? Do you expect for me that I am to believe in Christ's deity?

Do you believe that, do you expect for me to believe in miracles? This is, you know, no, no. This is just myths, you know? It's a mythical thing.

[18:06] So this never happens. You know, the apostles and the writers of the Bible, they just describe myths, no? But this never happened, no? So there is some intellectual pride.

There is a moral obstinacy. There are people that just hear the gospel and say, I am not going to change. Doesn't matter what the Bible tells. Doesn't matter what you tell to me.

That God says, I am not going to change. I want to live as I wish. So there is a moral obstinacy that harden the hearts of people. There are also a self-righteousness attitude.

People hear the gospel and say, no, I am not that bad, you know? No, I am not a bad person. I am a good person. Yes, but nobody is good enough.

Nobody is good enough, you know, to impress God with their lives. And there is also an indifference. People that just came, curious, bored, to be entertained.

[19:07] There was just indifference also. So, but the Lord mentioned here a person, a third person.

No, a third person. No, mentioned another person and mentioned the work of the devil. And we shouldn't forget that we are in the middle of a spiritual warfare.

Warfare. This is a spiritual warfare. There are opposition to the gospel in the minds of the people, in the hearts of the people. So the devil is there. It's what the parable is telling us.

Notice the one who Jesus identifies as silently and secretly campaigning behind this defiant and cynical attitude. The devil comes and takes away the war so they can believe and be saved.

So people have a hardened heart, but also the devil plays a role when we preach the gospel. And we should be aware and we should pray.

[20:10] We are involved in a spiritual warfare. So Jesus is convinced that a personal force of evil is at work seeking to discredit the war and to distract minds from giving attention to it.

Every evangelist, every Christian who preach the word of God encounters his demonic opposition. So others in the crowd represent a superficial and initial enthusiasm that doesn't last.

They receive the word with joy. And we always, you know, a few months ago, I couldn't show you the PowerPoint, but in the PowerPoint, there was a few person that joined the church a few months ago.

Some of them, they stopped coming. And especially there was a man that told me, oh, you are the best pastor. This is the best church. And, of course, I was pleased, no? If someone tell you, you are the best pastor, this is the best church, it's a wonderful thing to hear.

He was a nice man. He's a very nice man. I like him very much. He stopped coming. And he told me, I want to be baptized. Please, let's do it as soon as possible.

[21 : 19] It takes time. Just settle in church. Read your Bible. Come to the prayer meetings. And just after a year, we will speak. What happened with this man?

Such a nice person. The devil comes and takes the seed away. So there was a superficial decision and initial enthusiasm.

Sometimes people just get enthusiastic. And I don't know if you know someone that is very self-controlled, very calm person. And you take him to watch a football match.

So there's a person that is very quiet, calm, self-controlled. And you just put it in the middle of the crowd. Everybody is shouting there. And you notice that this person is getting just excited.

And shouting too. And saying, what happened? It's initial. This is a part of emotional thing. Or being part of a big crowd that influences you.

[22 : 32] Or a kind of world fascist that you get from watching a sentimental movie. I am a person that is crying, you know, tears when I watch a movie. I'm a bit ashamed to say it.

But it's like that, no? So they receive the word with joy, says Jesus. But when the circumstances change, the adrenaline suicides.

And the intoxication moment fades. So there are people like that. They get enthusiastic. They love what they are here. They love the church.

They said, I never come across such a wonderful thing. It's wonderful to be in the church. It's wonderful, the gospel. And after a few months, they just disappear. We don't see them never more.

They have no root. The Bible tells us. The parable tells us. They have been here for a while. But in the time of testing, they apostatize. And with this man, he told me, look, my parents are very sick.

[23 : 30] My mother is very sick. I have to be there taking care of them. And I told them, yes, I understand. We will be praying for your parents. I understand. But look, instead of coming every Sunday, why don't you come once a month, twice a month, for an hour?

And I said, no, I cannot do that because my, you know. So it's this type of situation that we face time to time in church. Those among the thorns.

Those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked and they not mature. Verse 14.

There are still others who turn out to be destructive disciples.

Again, there is an enthusiastic initial response. But unlike the case of the superficial decision, these people, they don't seem to renegade, to renege of their commitment to Jesus altogether.

They retain some of the Christian identity. They don't fall in the same sense. But as the times go by, they become less and less interested in Christ.

[24 : 34] So what are those chokes? In youth, perhaps, educational goals. Educational goals, sporting achievement, sexual attraction.

In midlife, financial stress or family responsibilities or career ambition. In all age, preoccupation with health, the garden or the grandchildren.

There are always things that are there just to, you know, to be choked. There are impediments to mature in the Christian life as Christians.

They do not mature. They call themselves Christian, but it's just because it's just a church-going habit. And we need to be vital. We need to have a vital personal faith.

And we just encourage each other to have a personal, a real personal and vital faith. The seat of the world is the only way to increase the kingdom.

[25 : 35] We have to remember ourselves. The only way to increase the church is not through many activities, programs. I find the programs. I am in a very small church.

So I miss programs and I miss more people, you know. And I would love to have increasing number and to have more activities for women, for children, for marriage, couples, et cetera.

This is fine, but we should not forget that it's through the preaching of God, not through the things, the activities that we have in church, the way that we will grow as a church and we will grow in maturity as a Christian.

So the seat of the world is the only way to increase the kingdom and to increase the church and to change the world and to change people's lives. And increase it will.

In spite of the frustrating losses and wasted efforts, Jesus assures us that the farmer will have a splendid crop at the end of the day.

[26 : 38] For there are those who with a noble and good heart hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. This is my encouragement.

This is what encourages me. It's not in me. It doesn't depend on me. The only thing that I have to do is to preach the gospel, to press on, to go on, preach the gospel, find a way to reach out to the people and just sow in the seed.

At time and out of time, all the time, preaching the gospel is the way that we will grow, is the way in which the kingdom will progress, is the way that the people will really change, will be safe.

It's the only way that our society will be transformed through the preaching of the word. For me, it's really encouraging me. I don't see our church is small.

It's hard. It's a hard work. But, you know, we have sometimes those fruits from the Lord, you know, a person, two persons, you know, that comes and they believe.

[27 : 45] And this is a wonderful thing. So I encourage you. I encourage myself to go on and to press on preaching the word of God, announcing the glory of Christ, the gospel of Christ, because it's powerful.

There is nothing wrong with the seed. What is wrong are some hearts. But the seed is powerful, it's effective, and will produce a harvest.

So I encourage you to preach the gospel, and please pray for us. Thank you very much for your attention. Thank you.