

**THE FORGIVEN LIFE ... THE LOVING LIFE:  
THE CONTINUAL WORK OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH  
The Message, the Messenger, and the Heart – Part 2  
Luke 8:4-15 (Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23; Mark 4:2-9, 13-20)**

**Luke 8:4-15~** <sup>4</sup> And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, <sup>5</sup> “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the **path** and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. <sup>6</sup> And some fell on the **rock**, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. <sup>7</sup> And some fell among **thorns**, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. <sup>8</sup> And some fell into **good** soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” <sup>9</sup> And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, <sup>10</sup> he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’” <sup>11</sup> Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. <sup>12</sup> The ones along the **path** are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. <sup>13</sup> And the ones on the **rock** are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. <sup>14</sup> And as for what fell among the **thorns**, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. <sup>15</sup> As for that in the **good** soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. (ESV)

**Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23~** <sup>3</sup> And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the **path**, and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on **rocky ground**, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, <sup>6</sup> but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among **thorns**, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on **good** soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> He who has ears, let him hear” ... <sup>18</sup> “Hear then the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the **path**. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on **rocky ground**, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among **thorns**, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> As for what was sown on **good soil**, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

**Mark 4:2-9, 13-20~** <sup>2</sup> And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: <sup>3</sup> “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seed fell along the **path**, and the birds came and devoured it. <sup>5</sup> Other seed fell on **rocky ground**,

where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup> And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among [thorns], and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. <sup>8</sup> And other seeds fell into [good] soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” <sup>9</sup> And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” ... <sup>13</sup> And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? <sup>14</sup> The sower sows the word. <sup>15</sup> And these are the ones along the [path], where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. <sup>16</sup> And these are the ones sown on [rocky ground]: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup> And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. <sup>18</sup> And others are the ones sown among [thorns]. They are those who hear the word, <sup>19</sup> but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. <sup>20</sup> But those that were sown on the [good soil] are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

## I. Introduction

The Parable of the Sower, as Jesus titles his message in Matthew 13:18, is an extremely popular and poignant parable. It is the favorite parable for many pastors and preachers, including this one. It brings both comfort and warning.

Comfort to those who sow the seeds on why there are there are so many different responses. Not all the seeds that are thrown are productive. Not all the seeds that are planned produce the desire result of the sower.

Warning to others to pay attention to the kind of soil they have in their heart. It answers the question of why people are not producing the fruit that Jesus desires. It is a warning. Jesus, in essence, is saying, “You are responsible for the word of God that you hear.” What happen when the word of God is preached depends mainly on you.

**Luke 8:8~** <sup>8</sup> As he [Jesus] said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Please note the desire result of the Supreme Sower, namely Jesus, is that we bear fruit. He wants fruit. A Christian is marked by the fruit that he bears. Our Heavenly Father is glorified because of the fruit that we bear.

**John 15:8~** <sup>8</sup> [Jesus says,] By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Jesus wants fruit.

- The word is not sown so that we can go to heaven and escape hell. No, it is sown so that we can bear fruit.

- The word is not sown so that we can be healed from our sicknesses. No, it is sown so that we can bear fruit.
- The word is not sown so that we can be successful in this life and have all the material riches this world has to offer. No, it is sown so that we can bear fruit.
- The word is not sown so that we can find a beautiful and benevolent mate. No, it is sown so that we can bear much fruit.

No doubt that Jesus does care about all these things. He does want us to have a great partner in life for it is not good for a man or a woman to be alone (Genesis 2:18).<sup>1</sup> And he does want us to enjoy life for God “richly provides us with everything to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17).<sup>2</sup> But that is not the primary reason of the Gospel, the Word of the Kingdom. His purpose is so that we will bear fruit, and in bearing fruit, we glorify Him. That is what he is concerned about.

And please remember that the fruits Jesus is talking about are: 1) Justice and 2) Righteousness. Plainly put ... Jesus is looking for the fruit of LOVE. The fruit of love that we bear is doing good to those who need it.

## II. Three Things Needed to Bear Fruit

Look with me at the setting of the parable in Luke 8.

**Luke 8:4~**<sup>4</sup> And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him ...

A “great crowd” is gathering around Jesus. People, from one town after another, come to Jesus. Matthew records that the crowd is so great in numbers that Jesus has to get into a boat, set off a little from the shore so he can address the crowd and not have them pressed into him.

**Matthew 13:1-2~**<sup>1</sup> That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.<sup>2</sup> And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach.

I tell you, if I was the pastor of this “little” congregation and I see this mass amount of people flocking into the Church, I would be delighted ... ecstatic even. I would be feeling great, thinking that I must have done something right. I would be thinking that I am blessed by God and that I am in His will. There might even be a little smugness.

But this is not so with Jesus. He is not impressed by crowds. He is not mesmerized by numbers. You see, we are. We equate success and being in God’s will with numbers. There are pastors

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<sup>1</sup> **Genesis 2:18~**<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

<sup>2</sup> **1 Timothy 6:17~**<sup>17</sup> As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

that move from one church to the next, constantly looking for a bigger audience. And there are some churches that kick pastors out because they do not see the church growing in size. And this memorization with numbers and size sometimes causes some churches to start wavering in the gospel message just to bring in the crowds. I was talking to someone this week who told me that a church kicked out a seasoned old pastor for a younger pastor because they did not see the church growing in size. They wanted to attract a more younger crowd.

But this is not so with Jesus. Every time the crowd gets so large, Jesus would say some hard truth to separate the real believers from the casual followers ... like in John 6 when a huge crowd follows Jesus and wants to make him king (John 6:15). Jesus would look at them and say, "Well, you have to eat my flesh and drink my blood" (John 6:54, 56). Wait, What?! Well, people start to leave Jesus in droves. His disciples who have once believed in him now depart from him. So much so that Jesus turns to his twelve disciples and asks them, "Do you want to go away as well?" (John 6:67).

You see, Jesus is not looking for large followers. He is looking for fruitful followers. That is one of our mottos here at Forgiven Life: We are not looking for a large Church; we are looking for a loving Church. We are looking for fruits.

And how do we grow fruits? There are three ingredients, if you will, for fruit bearing. All three must be in play.

1. First, we need a Messenger, the Sower.

**Luke 8:4-5**~ <sup>4</sup>And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, <sup>5</sup>"A sower went out to sow his seed ...

We need a messenger. There has to be someone who will sow the seed. If there is no one who will sow the seed, there will not be any fruit.

Someone has to do the work. Someone has to be a sower. Paul acknowledges this when he writes in Romans 10:13-15:

**Romans 10:13-15**~ <sup>13</sup>For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." <sup>14</sup>How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup>And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

The Sower in this parable is Jesus. However, by way of application, it is everyone. It is you and it is me. It is the Church. We are here to sow seed. A problem that we have is that we have so little messengers ... very little laborers who would do the work of sowing.

To make it worst, as early as the second century, the Church moved away from the exhortation and teaching that all must labor in the work. All is to do the work of the

ministry. The Church drifted to the belief that only the professional could do the work of ministry. We go out and just hire someone ... pay them ... and let them do the work. The thought is still present in our time.

But that is just not the way the Kingdom of God works. All of us are to joyfully do the work of the ministry. We all need to be messengers. We all need to be laborers. The Church needs you and me. Those who do not know Jesus need you and me.

How do we get more Messengers to join us in our work? How do we get laborers to work the field and sow the seed? The answer can be found in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 9.

**Matthew 9:36-38**~<sup>36</sup> When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup> therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

As Jesus walks along, doing his Father’s will, sowing the seed to all those he comes across, he sees many hurting people, and yet, there are so few “healers” who would help bind their spiritual wounds.

There are three things we can do to get more “healers”, more laborers, to work the field. Notice the first thing we need.

a. One: we have to have Compassion.

This is what Jesus has.

**Matthew 9:36**~<sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them ...

Compassion is one of Forgiven Life’s core values. Without compassion, we will not be moved to act. We must have compassion.

How can you and I have compassion? Well, look around. Look at the people around us. Just open our eyes and look. The Bible says that Jesus “saw” the crowds and he had “compassion” for them.

What did he see?

**Matthew 9:36**~<sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

- People are harassed ... they are picked on by religious leaders. They are bullied.
- People are helpless ... they do not have the tools to help themselves.

- And people have no one to shepherd them ... that is, no one to lead them and provide balm to sooth their insect bitten itchy head.

One reason why we do not have compassion on people is because we do not open our eyes and see. We are too busy looking at ourselves and our needs instead of others and their needs. We spend so much time working and working that we do not have time for others. But let's not forget why we work and why God gives us the ability to work?

**Ephesians 4:28~**<sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

The reason why God gives us a job is so that we can take care of others and share in their needs. My goal is to out give people, that is to give more than to take. Why? Because that is what God does. He out gives people. You cannot out give God. And I realize in my Christian journey that the more I give to others, the more God gives to me so that I can continue to give to others. There is honor in working hard and there is joy in giving.

**Acts 20:35~**<sup>35</sup> In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

If you and I are lacking joy in our life, maybe it is time that we ante up our giving.

Oh, also please notice this very important point in Matthew 9: the "laborers" are like the "shepherds." Do you see that in Matthew 9 verses 36 and 37?

**Matthew 9:36-38~**<sup>36</sup> When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.  
<sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 

We are all to shepherd one another. We are all to pastor one another. The work of pastoring and feeding the flock belongs to all of us.

The Pastor is not a glorified position. In fact, "pastor" is not even a title in the Bible. Pastoring is a gift according to Ephesians 4:8, 11.<sup>3</sup> It is what we do, not who we are. You know, this is just one of my pet peeves. And if you would just indulge and humor me for a moment, allow me to get on my little diatribe about the role of a pastor. I will make it quick.

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<sup>3</sup> **Ephesians 4:8,11~**<sup>8</sup> Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men" ... <sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers.

A pastor is just an Elder Brother. In fact, the Bible calls that pastoral position and an “Elder” in 1 Peter 5:1

**1 Peter 5:1-2**~<sup>1</sup> So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, ~~as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:~~ <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight,

A pastor is an elder, not only in terms of age (although that is what the word “elder” means ... a “grey hair” man), but also elder in terms of our Christian faith and walk. And what is the job of an “elder brother”?

- to love his siblings
- to care for them
- to nurture them
- to instruct them
- to guide them to be better servant of the King

He is to model what a mature Christian looks like so that others have an example of what they should do. He is not a dictator, telling people what to do and exercise dominion over them.<sup>4</sup> No. He guides and comforts and persuade.

So we all need to shepherd each other. We need messengers and sowers. And one way to raise up laborers is to have compassion.

b. Two: we have to Pray.

**Matthew 9:37-38**~<sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup> therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Not just pray but pray earnestly. We cannot pray for someone and not have compassion for them. It does not work like that. I was reading a person’s thoughts online this past week. He wrote how he prayed for someone who had hurt him at least three times a day. But yet it brings him comfort thinking that God would judge this person one day. I do not know how that works. You cannot pray for someone and not have compassion for him or her. In fact, it is compassion that draws us to pray earnestly for people.

But I also find this passage interesting. The Lord is known as the “Lord of Harvest”. The harvest belongs to Him for it is “His harvest”. And yet, we need to pray to Him to send laborers to His field. What I am trying to say is that even though it is God’s harvest, there is a sense that he cannot send anyone unless there is prayer. We need to pray.

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<sup>4</sup> **2 Corinthians 1:24**~<sup>24</sup> Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

Brothers and Sisters, here at Forgiven Life, we come together every single Sunday to pray before the Worship Service. We start praying exactly on time. We do not sit around talking and we do not pray individually. No, we start on time and we pray together. If you ever want to know what you can do and how you can contribute to Forgiven Life, start right here by joining us in prayer. It is one of the essential things we can do here at Forgiven Life.

To raise up laborers and messengers, we must pray.

c. Three: we have to Go.

Right after Jesus gives this exhortation to pray earnestly to the Lord of Harvest to send laborers into His harvest, the next verse says that Jesus gathers twelve disciples to be with him so that they can be laborers with him.

**Matthew 10:1~** <sup>1</sup> And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority ...

The parallel passage in Mark says that the twelve “laborers” are to be with Jesus and will laborer with him.

**Mark 3:14~** <sup>14</sup> And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach

So those are the three things that we can do to raise up more laborers and messengers to sow the seed.

2. Second, we need a Message.

The second ingredient that we need in order to bear fruit is the message. First, we need a messenger (the sower). Second, the messenger needs a message. In this parable, it is known as the seed. The seed is the word of God.

**Luke 8:11~** <sup>11</sup> Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

Matthew calls it the word of the Kingdom.

**Matthew 13:13~** <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom ...

Mark just calls the seed the word.

**Mark 4:14~** <sup>14</sup> The sower sows the word.

The word of God is another essential ingredient to bearing fruit. Life is found in the seed. All the fruits and nutrition are found in the seed. The seed just needs a good place to dig in so that it can grow.

In this parable, the seed is the Word of God. It is the Word that brings life to bear fruit. It is through the word that cleanses us.

**John 15:3~<sup>3</sup>** Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

It is through the word that sanctifies us and separates us for God's purpose.

**John 17:17~<sup>17</sup>** Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

You and I should be student of the Word. We need to meditate on the Word. Without spending time in the Bible, we will not bear fruit.

You all know that I am a "tent maker" like the Apostle Paul. I do not charge for my service to the ministry. Freely I have received, freely I give. Don't get me wrong. If there comes a day when I have enough support where I can quick my secular job, I would do it. But in the meantime, I work a secular job. I actually work five secular jobs so I can support myself and not be a burden to the ministry. But do you know what is another reason I have a secular job? So I can relate to people. I work five jobs, and yet, I still make time to study my Bible. If anyone tells me that they are too busy with work and cannot do it, I would encourage them and say, I am doing it even with my five jobs. Sure, I stay up really late to get everything done, but studying the Word is not something I can or should cut off.

The word is important because the fruit is in the seed. We cannot bear fruit if we do not have the seed.

### 3. Third, we need the right Heart.

To bear fruit, we need a messenger, or a sower. We need a message, or the seed. But we need one more ingredient. We need the right heart, or the soil. We will look at the four types of soil next week.

## III. Conclusion

So in summary, the three ingredient for a fruitful life is:

### 1. First, we need a Messenger.

We need someone to laborer for the Kingdom and sow the seed.

### 2. Second, we need a Message.

We need to read and study the Bible so that it may cleanse and sanctify us to bear fruit.

3. Third, we need a right Heart.

We need to have the right character.

#### IV. The Blessing

**Presider:** May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. May the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be unto you.

**Congregation:** And also to you.

#### V. The Forgiven Life Living

There are three (3) ingredients or things that are needed to bear fruit. Let us take a look at each one and apply them to our life.

1. We need a messenger

- a. How comfortable do you feel to share the gospel and the Word with friends, co-workers, family and/or those you do not know? \_\_\_\_\_

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- b. What are the barriers that stop you from sharing the gospel? \_\_\_\_\_

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- c. Do you know of any missionaries you can support? \_\_\_\_\_

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- d. Is there someone around you this week that you can help, support or pray for? \_\_\_\_\_

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e. How often do you pray? \_\_\_\_\_

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f. Here are some challenges for you to apply this week:

1) Challenge 1: Can you commit to praying to God daily? Praying a few sentences suffices for this challenge. (Write your thoughts and prayer here) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) Challenge 2: Can you commit to praying for someone in your life this week? \_\_\_\_\_

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3) Challenge 3: Can you commit to praying for Forgiven Life Church daily this week, that we can grow together in unity as a church, and that we can grow as members in Christ who can bear fruit of justice, righteousness and love? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. We need a message

a. What does it mean to study the Word? \_\_\_\_\_

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b. The seed is the word of God and the word of the kingdom. What does the kingdom of God represent? \_\_\_\_\_

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c. Do you consider the Word of God as living and active in your life as you read the bible? \_\_\_\_\_

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**12** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. - Hebrews 4:12

3. We need the right heart

(More on this next week).