Parable of the Sower – Final
Prayer:
Intro:

Hearing is so basic, so common to life, so normal for most of us that it’s easy to take for granted. I came across a group of people this last week who do not take it for granted. I want you to see them for yourselves:

**Illustration: Cochlear Transplant clip –**
When I first saw this video clip, I was overwhelmed by how precious hearing really is. What a wonderful gift from God. Being able to listen carefully is such a key part of our human relationships. The Bible teaches that hearing well is essential for something far more important than human relationships, and that is our relationship with God himself.

Romans 10:17 “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

**Tim Keller:** “Listening, listening well, listening deep and listening with understanding is the primary skill of the kingdom of heaven.”

The text we’re looking at this morning shows us just how important it is to listen well to the word of God. Despite this, some are spiritually deaf and fail to grasp it’s meaning.

*In our text, Jesus illustrates this by describing the four main ways people listen to the word of God... And let me stress that everyone w/in the sound of my voice this morning falls into one or more of these 4 categories. So, as we look at this passage together, ask yourself the following question: Which kind of listener am I? The answer to this question is of absolute importance. In fact our very lives, futures and eternal destiny’s are hanging in the balance as if by a single thread! (The way in which you hear God’s word.) The four ways described are the following:*

1. (Path) The Hard heart
2. (Rocky Soil) - The Shallow heart
3. (Thorny Soil) - The Distracted heart
4. (Good Soil) - The Good heart

**Setting:**
Jesus had just left the house he was in when his mother and brothers were looking for him and he sat beside the sea – a huge crowd gathered around him so that he got into a boat.
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Up until this point Jesus has been teaching in a straightforward manner but is shifting to teaching in parables.
Parable – a story taken from this life that conveys spiritual truth. (next week – more details)

The region of Galilee was primarily agrarian and was littered with fields. So, in and around each field you had the potential to encounter different soil types: Path, Rocky, Thorny and Good. And in Jesus’ parable, the farmer (sower) is scattering seed all over the place and it lands on all four of these soil types. And each of these soils represent a different kind of hearing, a different way of listening to God’s word.

I. The Path – (The Hard heart)
Who is this person? Anyone who hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it. (look with me at (vs. 4, 18-19)
This person hears the word but does not understand it. To be clear, it’s not a matter of intelligence, they simply refuse to obey it.
Antagonistic / Indifferent (Pharisees) – (The people of Galilee)
Illustration: Missions trip (89) / Ex: I have a Christian friend who was the middle man between the company and the customer. (honoring the warrantee)....
– while we don’t see many antagonistic people in church, there are plenty of indifferent people in church. Jesus describes them in this parable as hard hearted.
How do you know if you are hard hearted? You are not antagonistic, but at the same time you are unmoved by the word of God and indifferent about obeying it. Truth is, you would rather be somewhere else. The seed has never penetrated your heart. It can not penetrate beyond the hard exterior.
And it’s not as if you can let it sit there until you are ready at a later time, the bible actually says that it is devoured immediately.

Mark 4:15 “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.”

It’s snatched away by the evil one and it no longer carries any ability to influence you. It not only fails to influence you, but the act of hearing and doing nothing actually serves to harden your heart even further. (Ex: Me, as a young person. Church all my life....)
harden your heart even further. (Ex: Me, as a young person. Church all my life....)

If you are here this morning and you are not letting the word of God penetrate your heart and change you, the Bible says that you are deceiving yourself.

*James 1:22-23*  "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." You are deceived, the word is immediately snatched away and your heart is being hardened further. This is a very dangerous place to be!

**Beware of listening with a hard heart! Next -**

II. The Rocky Soil – (The Shallow heart)

Who is this person? (vs. 5-6; 20-21)

The region of Galilee is under laid with a layer of limestone and in some places there is only a thin layer of soil covering the limestone and as the farmer was scattering seed, the seed that fell on this soil would germinate quickly. The soil is so shallow the plants have nowhere to send their roots and so they grow rapidly (at first) and seem to be doing exceptionally well. Then the hotter part of the season comes and the plant dies. What’s wrong with this person?

They fail to count the cost of being a disciple. They misunderstood the message and thought they were signing up for a better life. Rather than coming to Jesus in complete surrender, these people want a God who will show up like a genie to bail them out of tight spots. They want a sugar daddy not a king. (Matt 8:19-20)

These people become bitter toward God when difficulties arise and they bail out.

Illustration: Westside neighbor – “I tried that for 10 years and it didn’t work!” Elder brother in the Prodigal son. “She did her part and she expected something in return. When God failed to deliver, she became embittered and through the towel in.”

Like fair weather fans. When their team is winning they are on board in full support of the coaches and players, but when they loose, all interest is lost. (Seahawks – you’ll discover a faithful Seahawks fans when they loose 8 games in a row and the fan is still wearing a jersey.)

When times are really good it can be hard to discern whether you have a shallow heart. Constantine – 4th century. First, he decreed tolerance for Christianity in the empire, later, it became fashionable to be a Christian and there were at times certain economic benefits– so it became hard to discern whether someone was in it for themselves or the glory of God. But in our current climate, it’s a lot easier.
benefits—so it became hard to discern whether someone was in it for themselves or the glory of God. But in our current climate, it’s a lot easier.

The net result of a shallow heart is when troubles come, he immediately falls away—Again, a very dangerous place to be!

**Beware of listening to the word of God with a hard heart, beware of listening to the word of God with a shallow heart. Next—beware of listening to the word of God with a distracted heart.**

III. The Thorny Soil – (The Distracted heart)  
(Look with me at vs. 7, 22)

“Distracted listeners are cousins of superficial (or shallow) listeners. Both take an interest in the word as long as nothing more pressing enters their sphere.

Hardship & persecution thwart the shallow listeners
Success & wealth thwart the distracted listeners

How are they distracted?
1) the cares of the world:  
2) The deceitfulness of riches

Those listening to Jesus that day had a couple simple concerns:

**The cares of the world:**
Some were anxious about how little they had: (Matt 6:25-34)

The deceitfulness of riches:
Others were caught up in how much they had: (Matt 6:19-24)

For both groups money was far too important to them. If they didn’t have enough they were anxious, if they had a lot they were anxious. The reality here is that whether you have a lot or a little, it has the potential to choke out your spiritual growth.

Heb 13:5 “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

1 Tim 6:10 “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

I read my bible in the morning and dreamed about investments the rest of the day....

This is not a good place to be:
What are you anxious about this morning? The cares of the world encompass many things. Your relationships, your marriage or lack, your children, your work, your health... you name it. How do you know if it is choking you? When it controls you. What are you anxious about or excited about?
marriage or lack, your children, your work, your health... you name it. How do you know if it is choking you? When it controls you. What are you anxious about or excited about? What did you go to bed thinking about last night? What did you wake up thinking about this morning? Is there anything distracting you right now? Is it controlling you? If so it will choke out your spiritual growth. “seek first, he will take care of you.”

Spurgeon: “If you are a real Christian and you are on the boat of salvation headed to heaven then you can’t fall off the boat, but you can fall on the boat, break all your bones and spend the whole trip in the infirmary.” Miserable – Jesus has so much more for us...

Beware of listening to the word of God with a hard heart, beware of listening to the word of God with a shallow heart. Next – beware of listening to the word of God with a distracted heart.

III. The Good hearted listeners – (The Good Soil)

(look with me at vs. 8, 23)

It’s not just, “if you are described by the first three soils you’ll die, so you better listen well. While there are grave consequences for having a hard heart, a shallow heart and a distracted heart, Jesus ultimately points to what we stand to gain by having a good heart! Just like the Sower’s seed, God’s word is intended to have an affect on our lives. How much of an effect? Consider the harvest... (vs. 23)

This is a spectacular harvest, and it would have meant a lot to his audience. They lived off the land and didn’t have a lot left over, (at times they were anxious about what they would eat the next day!) And here’s Jesus talking about Bearing Fruit – 100 fold, 60 fold, & 30 fold.

(8 fold would be a good harvest: 100 = 800)

Exponential Results:

100 = 10,000 (Fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control)

If you are a Christian here this morning I have three points of application for you:

1) Enjoy – God intends for you to be wildly productive. Enjoy the harvest (the fruit is wonderful) and use it to bless others! (illustration- Cochlear doctors)

2) Repent of those things that are keeping you from being more fruitful, those distractions that are choking you to death. This is not the same as confessing them. You can confess things to God
being more fruitful, those distractions that are choking you to death. This is not the same as confessing them. You can confess things to God and to an accountability group while clinging tightly to the very sin you are confessing. To repent is to actually change your mind about the sin and turn away from it.

3) **Prepare** - As Russell Wilson likes to say “separation is in the preparation”: *those who are successful are successful because they prepare... how do we prepare?*

**Pray:** Pray for ears to hear! (king David - Ps 119 “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.”) self-sufficient people don’t pray, but hungry and needy beggars do. Matt 5 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled.”

**Guard your time:**
- Saturday nights: make sure you go to bed at a reasonable time and get up at a reasonable time.
- Sunday mornings: Get up early enough to spend some time in the word and prayer. Arrive on time to church and listen carefully.

**Follow – up:** Take notes and look through them at a later time. We are called to listen & obey the word. You can’t obey what you can’t remember! Go to home group and discuss application of the word.

**If you are here this morning and you are not a Christian** Is all hope lost? The answer is no! There is hope for you. Jesus came to save sinners. He came to give us a new heart and move us to follow his decrees (Ezek 36:25-27 “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness’s, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

Do you want him to give you a new heart? Receive the seed. Listen, really listen to the parable of the sower. You can’t change your soil (you’re not the Gardner), nor do you need to. It’s the Gardner’s job to tend the soil. All you need to do is receive the seed. What is the seed again? It’s the message of the kingdom. It’s this:

“My kingdom doesn’t come in like a boulder and smash everything in its path, no, my kingdom comes gently like a seed and at first it looks vulnerable, week and completely
“My kingdom doesn’t come in like a boulder and smash everything in its path, no, my kingdom comes gently like a seed and at first it looks vulnerable, week and completely underwhelming. Because the kingdom of God starts as simply a crazy message. As weak, strange and upside down as possible. Do you know what the message is, that the king of kings came from heaven and he triumphed by being tortured and killed. And his followers know now the way up is down. That the way to really be rich is to give away your money. The way to really have power is to become a humble servant to other people. The way to really grow and be transformed into the likeness of Christ in wisdom and love is to go through a lot of suffering and pain and learn dependence. What a stupid message. That’s going to change my life? The World? - yes, Jesus says. Because the kingdom of God comes by hearing a truth. The weakest little thing like a seed that enters in and doesn’t seem to make any difference at first at all.”