



“Learn Something Every Day”

Biblical Text: Luke 8:4-8, 11-15

*Dr. Michael F. Gardner, Senior Pastor
Old Mission United Methodist Church*

It’s been a good week in Kansas City. Cool weather. Hip, hip! Kids are back in School (*on Facebook and in real life.*) And a win for the Chiefs over the Seahawks!* Go big red! Not so much fun at Fenway Park in Boston this weekend, but hey - the Royals are back in town on Monday - and they’re still #1!*

And it’s been a great week at Old Mission. * “Back to School Sunday” was a big hit last Sunday. Don’t miss it next year! So was the kickoff for our Youth Ministries with High School and Middle School students and families. The Enger family welcomed a new little boy to Old Mission - * Austin Brandon - congratulations to Katie and Jeff and big sisters! And, thanks to Pastor Sue, our * Children’s Sunday School area looks amazing! Thanks Sue! **And** fourteen Third-Graders receive their Bible this morning!

And - the start of school is a great time to look at the eighth chapter of Luke’s Gospel. In fact, I cannot imagine a better time for one of my favorite parables of Jesus.

As you turn in your Bibles or the bulletin to the text, just a brief word about the parables. They were Jesus’ most common way to teach, especially in Luke’s Gospel. He drew his listeners in by using lessons from things that were familiar to them.

* My father used to do that, when he would get home from work. He’d sit down, and we’d gather around, eager for attention. He’d pick up an apple and start peeling it, and sort of whisper, *“Well, I guess you learn something every day.”* And that was it. He’d just slowly keep peeling, until one of us would say, *“What daddy? What did you learn?”* Then, little by little, he’d tell us what he had to say. By the time the apple was peeled and cut, he had our attention, and it was the best apple you ever tasted.

Jesus was like that. He wouldn’t begin with the point he was making - he would begin with a setting, and then the story would unfold. * *“There once was a father who had two sons....”* (Luke 15) * *“Two men built a house, one on rock, and one on sand...”* (Matthew 7) * *“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among thieves...”* (Luke 10) * *“Consider the mustard seed. When it is sown, it is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, but it becomes one of the greatest bushes, so in it the bird can find shelter and food. So it is with the Kingdom of God.”* (Luke 13)

And our text from Luke 8, is the * “Parable of the Sower and the Seed.” Everyone listening to Jesus was familiar with the context - as are people in every culture today.*

Jesus may have even gestured toward a field nearby, or the rocky path they had followed to find him. It doesn't become clear until the parable unfolds, after he draws us in, that the story isn't about sowers or seed at all. It's about the soil in which truth either takes root and grows, or withers and dies.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's look at how Jesus tells the story.

**⁵ "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. *⁶ Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. ⁷ Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. *⁸ Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"¹*

And the explanation, a few verses later, (*which may or may not be original to the sayings of Jesus,*) makes it clear that it is the soil in which the truth finds a home, our lives, that is the point. **¹¹ "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God..."²*

We can let the truth, the teaching, the Word of Jesus, get ignored as we follow other temptations - *verse 12*. We can receive the truth, and then forget it in the first time of testing or trouble - *verse 13*. We can even hold on to the truth for a time, but allow it to be choked out by our pursuit of wealth or career or pleasure - *verse 14*. Or, and this is Jesus' point and his invitation, we can receive the truth, learn from it, hold on to it and use it, make it a part of our lives, and bear fruit. Listen to *verse 15*:

**¹⁵ "But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance."³*

The teaching, the Word, the seed is important. But every farmer knows that seed needs soil in which to grow. * It is just that way in our lives. This truth can be reinforced and nurtured everywhere in our lives, if we cultivate it. And it will grow, if we do. We can learn something more every day. (*Which is my point today.*)

As I planned these messages for our "Back to School" season, I was looking for some rock solid promises of God that we could make a part of each day. I got the idea from Jesus' parable about the wise man who built his house on rock.

And I thought back to when Ann and I visited the **"Rock Church"* in Helsinki, Finland a few years ago, which is on your bulletin cover today. It is literally built on, and into solid rock. Fascinating! Here are a couple of more pictures. *

I wondered what our lives would be like if they were built on that solid a foundation.

¹ Luke 8:5-8. New Revised Standard Version Bible, Copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National

² Ibid. Luke 8:11. New Revised Standard Version Bible.

³ Ibid. Luke 8:15. New Revised Standard Version Bible.

So I found four basic Biblical principles that I think work, whether you are in pre-school or have graduated from formal education. Here they are:

- * **Trust in God, it will be OK!** We don't always know how. But it will!
- * **Learn Something Every Day** – we can - whatever age we may be!
- * **God Likes it When We Share** – a ME/MINE attitude doesn't work (*from PreK on!*)
- * **Work Hard and Play Fair.** We can make that our daily game plan.

*You can learn something every day! And so can I. Whatever age we are! We can read, study the Scriptures, listen to the wisdom of others, and keep an open mind! Lord, help us, especially in this election season, to keep an open mind!

I had a conversation with my youngest son when he was in college and complaining about his boring classes. *"They have something you need. Get all they have to offer."* He said, *"You mean a grade and a diploma."* *"Yes – but it's more than that."*

"You can learn something from everyone." *"Some of them don't know what they are talking about."* *"OK then. Learn from that."* *"What?"* *"That it's important to know what you are talking about. You can learn something from every one."*

You can learn something every day. I read a piece of advice from a retiring CEO of a major company, which goes this way: * *"I think you can learn something every day if you're paying attention. So I just try to pay attention."* It's good advice.

And I love this wisdom from Marsh Chapel at Boston University: * *"Yours is a spirit of inquiry. We are a learning community."* That's my hope for Old Mission.

But, most of all, this advice and spiritual wisdom from Saint Augustine:

* *"Our pilgrimage on earth is a school in which God is the only teacher."*⁴

Back to our text, from Luke 8:15. Jesus' main point was not about the seed, the truth, the Word of God, the teachings we receive, or the wisdom that comes our way, as important as all that may be. His point was that it does us no good unless we plant it in good soil, make it part of our lives, and learn something, every day.

He said for those who do: ***"When they hear the Word, they hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and they bear fruit, with patience and endurance."***

May that be said of us! Learn Something Every Day! Amen.

⁴ Saint Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 A.D. Excerpt from Sermon 16A, 1.