

Luke 8:5-15

Sermon: **The four Seeds #2**

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written by: Danijel Dragaš



INTRODUCTION

1. In the previous message, I shared my perspective on why Jesus began to speak to His people in parables — I said it was an act of mercy rather than an act of judgment. I also spoke about those who, like the disciples, have questions. Personally, I believe that authentic children of God, through the process of faith, will develop an ever-deepening hunger to know Him; they will become less and less drawn to the wisdom and values of this world and everything it offers. If that is not the direction in which your faith or mine is growing, then we should honestly ask ourselves: *“Whom do I truly belong to — myself or God?”*

1.1 Maybe I can help us with that question. We are now entering a passage in which Jesus speaks both to His disciples and to the people in parables.

1.2 In this parable we find four kinds of seed. Each seed represents the wisdom of God — the Good News — sown into a certain type of ground (the path, the rock, the thorns, and the soil). Each type of ground reflects the condition of a person’s heart who, throughout their life, has been confronted with God’s wisdom — in this case, with the teachings of Jesus known as the Gospel.

JESUS’ PARABLES ARE INTELLECTUALLY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

2. All right, now I’ll try — using Jesus’ own explanation of the parable — to give a more detailed picture of what the human heart looks like in each of the four examples. To do this, I’ll use examples from the lives of people mentioned in the New Testament.

2.1 But before I begin, I want to point something out: I am once again pleasantly surprised by how simple — yet profound — Jesus’ message of the Gospel is. His parables are deeply intertwined with the everyday life of an Israelite, a Greek, a Roman, or anyone else who lived during His time.

2.2 In other words, Jesus' parables are intellectually accessible to everyone — there was no need to be academically trained to understand His message. Why do I emphasize this? Because throughout the history of Christianity, churches have often emphasized intellectual superiority within their ranks: *"If we use sophisticated, philosophical, and complex words that the average person cannot easily grasp, it must mean one thing — we are more devout than others, and we are the authority the common people must obey."*

2.3 Sadly, with that mindset, the Church has often made the Gospel — the Good News — inaccessible to ordinary people. But not Jesus. His parables could not have been simpler. Every ear could understand His message, if it truly wanted to.

2.4 While Jesus cared deeply about reaching the human heart so that it might be saved from destruction, many biblical teachers throughout history — unfortunately — cared more about appearing wise before others, merely to feed their own egos: *"I am famous. I am the one everyone must listen to. I hold a PhD,"* or something similar. In other words, within themselves they believed — and many still believe — that they are more righteous than others.

2.5 Isn't that exactly what the Pharisaic movement did? Be that as it may, those of us who have chosen to speak God's Word to others should not complicate things in order to sound impressive or intellectual. We should not cling to titles. Our main motive should be: *"I want every person to understand me — so that he or she may be saved."*

— That was the main motive of our Lord Jesus Christ. —

2.6 With that said, I stand alongside the philosophers, theologians, and other academically trained teachers who have faithfully and diligently translated, interpreted, and connected biblical truths into one coherent picture. Although their language was often complex and hard for ordinary people to fully grasp, they nevertheless did their work with sincere hearts. And alongside them, God always raised up other teachers who could interpret those same truths in a way the common person could understand.

THE FIRST SEED

3. All right, let's look at the first example. (Luke 8:5) **A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the sky ate it up.**

3.1 In His explanation of the parable, Jesus tells His disciples that the seed represents the Word of God.¹ He then continues to explain the first example: *"Those beside the road are the ones who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they will not believe and be saved."*²

3.2 Who are those who most often resemble this first example in the New Testament? Sadly, they were precisely the ones who held religious authority and were responsible for feeding Israel

¹ Luke 8:11

² Luke 8:12

spiritually: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the priests, and the scribes. They were the soil beside the road — they did not understand God's Word; or, more accurately, they did not want to understand it.

— This means that the devil, their father, had pulled from them even the desire to know the truth.³ —

3.3 This tragic reality — which I believe still exists today — goes hand in hand with Jesus' words in Matthew.⁴

What do I mean by that? Simply this: who, throughout history, have been the ones most convinced that they were God's messengers? Priests, pastors, bishops, popes, deacons — the very authorities of religion who, for thousands of years, have fed the souls of people with falsehoods. It is to them — those who are certain they possess a ticket into the kingdom of God — that Jesus will one day say at the gates: *"Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness; I never knew you."*

THE SECOND SEED

4. All right, let's move to the second example. **(Luke 8:6) Other seed fell on rocky soil, and when it came up, it withered away because it had no moisture.**

4.1 In His explanation of this example, Jesus says: "Those on the rock are the ones who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root — they believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away."⁵

4.2 Here we see that the seed actually sprouted — meaning that this person heard the Good News and received it into their heart, but later in life rejected it and gave up.

4.3 This strongly reminds me of the disciples who abandoned Jesus during His teaching in John 6. Up to that point, Jesus had gathered many followers — their number was growing day by day. These were people who had been healed of diseases and freed from evil spirits; they had witnessed miracles with their own eyes — the healing of paralytics, lepers, and more. Before their eyes, Jesus had fed five thousand people. Hundreds, even thousands, were healed as He walked among them before sitting down to teach them the Sermon on the Mount.

4.4 Yet these same disciples later chose to leave Him. Why? Because Jesus told them that anyone who decided to follow Him must, throughout life — which would surely bring trials — make a firm decision about whom they would serve.

4.5 In other words, Jesus was saying something like this: *"My dear disciples, if you do not endure through trials — and by trials I mean when you are persecuted, when you are rejected, when you are mocked, when your own family turns away from you, when your religion casts you out, when your*

³ John 8:44

⁴ Matthew 7:22-23

⁵ Luke 8:13

culture threatens to imprison or even kill you — if you do not remain steadfast in faith toward Me and the promise that awaits you, then you are not chosen for the kingdom of My Father.”⁶

— We see that after hearing this, many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him.⁷ —

4.6 Let’s bring this closer to our own lives. In our time and in the places we live, following Jesus costs us nothing. In fact, we freely build churches in His name, freely sing songs of praise to Him, wear shirts printed with His name, organize mega-concerts in His honor, and listen every Sunday to sermons preached in His name — all alongside our families.

4.7 But how many of us would remain faithful to Jesus if our faith truly cost us something — as it did in the days of the apostles?

How many of us would still believe if someone in our family died from a terminal illness — even after faithfully attending church and praying to Jesus?

How many of us would be willing to reject the immorality of this world publicly — knowing it could cost us our comfort, reputation, or even our relationships?

How many of us would renounce a false gospel promoted by our own church — even if it meant losing our membership?

How many of us would be ready to suffer long-term for the sake of truth?

4.8 Jesus teaches us that it is through our trials that our faith is strengthened. He teaches us that the life of a believer mirrors His own — and His life was filled with loss, persecution, sorrow, and pain. In the end, He gave His very life so that we might inherit eternal life.

4.9 Are we willing to live a life like that of Jesus? Are we ready to suffer, knowing that this may be the role God has assigned to us in this world?

Each of us must answer these questions personally as we walk through life and faith.

In the end, we will either be like the disciples who turned back and said, *“This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”⁸*

Or we will be like the apostles who answered, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”⁹*

THE THIRD SEED

5. All right, let’s move slowly to the third example. **(Luke 8:7) Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it.**

5.1 In His explanation of this third example, Jesus says: *“And the seed that fell among the thorns represents those who have heard, and as they go on their way, they are choked with worries, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”¹⁰*

⁶ John 6:37-40

⁷ John 6:59-60

⁸ John 6:60

⁹ John 6:68

¹⁰ Luke 8:14

5.2 As in the second example, the seed sprouted, but over time the thorns grew up and choked it.

5.3 The image of this seed perfectly fits the life of Judas Iscariot. Unlike the disciples who abandoned Jesus in John 6, Judas stayed with Him and the other eleven almost until the very end. Deep within himself, Judas believed that Jesus would fulfill the promises that had been prophesied to Israel for centuries. Because of those promises, Judas was even ready to risk his life for Jesus — the future king of Israel. But at the same time, the thorns were growing in him. Judas cherished the idea that one day he would be famous, powerful, and rich — that one day he would be a political leader sitting at the right hand of the Messiah.

5.4 What's interesting is that none of the eleven noticed the thorns growing in Judas; none of them realized he was sitting between two chairs. But how could they? We can conclude that the apostles, at this point — when Jesus was speaking in parables — were still immature in faith, though they were on the journey toward maturity.

5.5 Judas, too, was among those immature in faith, yet, like the others, he was growing — the seed was sprouting alongside the thorns. For that reason, I believe the other apostles could not recognize his double-mindedness. Only later, after Judas betrayed Jesus, when they themselves had matured in faith, did they write in their accounts: *"Now he said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; and since he kept the money box, he used to steal from what was put into it."*¹¹

5.6 Judas had skillfully hidden the thorns growing inside him; I believe he even deceived himself in that delusion. But when the time came — when Jesus revealed to His disciples His future plans, telling them He would go to the cross, that the Messiah must first die and rise again before the Father would establish His kingdom on earth through Him — in Judas' eyes, Jesus became just another madman among the many before Him. Because the thorns had grown alongside the seed, the thorns prevailed in the end — money became more important. In other words, Judas revealed his true values and colors, which had been the priority in his heart from the very beginning.

5.7 Now for the application: this is a frightening truth we must pay attention to — like Judas, we too can deceive ourselves and others into believing we are disciples of Jesus. We actually have evidence to convince ourselves: like Judas, we spend time with Jesus through the Scriptures, we stand up for Him when He is challenged, we fellowship with others who claim to be His followers, and we perform outward deeds that resemble those of a saint — and all of this gives us confidence that we belong to Him.

5.8 Yet, I believe, we must always — always — admit to ourselves that there is a possibility we might be Judas. And when we do that, we will continually examine our values, which is good for us, because when we do so, we strip off the old self and put on the new one. In other words, we grow toward maturity in faith.

5.9 Furthermore — I personally know a few people who loved talking with me about God, or perhaps loved — I'm not sure which tense fits better anymore. They loved going to church, listening to

¹¹ John 12:6

sermons, they loved the implications of the Gospel, recognizing that it had brought them a better life here and now. But as time went on, problems began piling up — in their families, their work, their health — and I slowly began to hear a change in their tone: *“The promises I was given through the Gospel aren’t coming true.”*

5.10 Sadly, the thorns began to show. In idols — sports, entertainment, buying new cars, building careers, constant socializing in church circles — they tried to find comfort and meaning for their existence. Unfortunately, because of that, the seed began to dry up, Jesus faded, and in the end, the thorns will win. I see this happening in a few people I know. I hope they will prove me wrong.

5.11 My dear friends, we cannot hide from God. We may deceive the world, and we may even deceive ourselves with the lie: *“I am a sincere and authentic follower of Jesus Christ.”* But time and the circumstances of life — which God Himself allows — will ultimately reveal whom we truly worship.

THE FOURTH SEED

6. Let’s move to the last example, the fourth in order. **(Luke 8:8)** *Other seed fell on good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.*

6.1 In His explanation of the fourth example, Jesus says: *“And the seed in the good soil — these are the ones who have heard the word with an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.”*¹²

6.2 Throughout history, people from all backgrounds have made a personal commitment to follow the teachings of Jesus. Some came from religious environments, some from the streets; some were poor, others wealthy; some were politicians, others criminals.

6.3 Unlike Judas, who faithfully followed Jesus almost to the end, Paul was a Pharisee who persecuted Christians at the beginning of the early church, when believers mostly gathered in private homes. No one was more zealous than Paul in his mission to destroy the message of Jesus. But then something extraordinary happened — Paul’s life was transformed, and he became one of the most passionate followers and messengers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

6.4 Because of this, he was persecuted, mocked, beaten, and stoned — by the very movement he had once belonged to from childhood.

6.5 For years afterward, the apostles were hesitant to even meet Paul. And who could blame them? He had been their number-one enemy — and now he claimed to be converted? “Right,” they must have thought.

6.6 All of this shows that there was a period in Paul’s life when he was completely rejected by everyone — nobody wanted anything to do with him.

¹² Luke 8:15

6.7 But did Paul give up on Christ because of that? Did he say, *"You're too costly, Jesus. I've lost everything because of You — my fame, my position, my community. Everyone hates me. I'm done with this, I'm going back to my own"*? No. Paul never said that. In fact, time and again throughout his letters, Paul declared that Christ was everything to him — and he died holding to that conviction.

6.8 With that said, Paul bore mature fruit throughout his life. Despite all the hardship life brought him, he persevered in faith to the very end.

6.9 I once knew a dear woman who is no longer with us. After about fifteen years of suffering from illness, she went home to the Lord. Oh, what love that woman had for Christ! With what passion she shared God's Word with others — especially the Psalms. Until her final breath, her lips spoke only of Christ.

6.10 I thank God for giving me her life as a testimony. Despite her suffering, she would say, like Peter: *"Lord, to whom shall I go? You have the words of eternal life."* She persevered in faith until the end because she knew what awaited her — the reward of a future life, a life without sin, without sorrow, and without pain.

6.11 In closing, I hope I've helped you understand what our lives should look like if we want to be good soil that bears fruit a hundredfold. Everything else is a lie. Don't believe the world, don't believe yourself, don't believe me — believe Jesus Christ and His teaching. Invest your whole life there. Breathe the Gospel with all your heart, every second of your life, persevere to the end — and then, we'll see each other in His kingdom, where we'll testify to one another about the boundless mercy of God that saved us from destruction.