**Consider Carefully How You Listen**

**The Word**

Read together Luke 8:4-21

**The Big Idea**

Jesus uses three very different images (seed, light, family) to make one central point: how we listen to his words and message will radically shape the course of our lives.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What struck you most about the parable of the sower? What was most convicting or most eye-opening for you?

2. Read v. 16-18 together. Assuming Jesus is continuing with the same theme, what do you think he means by those words? How do they fit together with the parable of the sower?

3. On Sunday, we were encouraged to consider carefully how we listen to God’s Word. As you look at your life right now, how would you characterize the way you have been listening to God’s Word? For example: Rarely listen, shallow consumeristic listening, distracted and crowded listening, listening as an object of study, listening as a to-do item, faithful listening.

4. What is one concrete step you want to take in the coming weeks in terms of approaching God’s Word faithfully?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Three different metaphors with one central point

 A. Jesus uses the metaphor of seeds (v. 4ff), light (v. 16ff), and family (v. 19ff)

B. In each metaphor, there is a call to consider how we listen (v. 8, v. 18, v. 21)

C. We experience different kinds of listening in human relationships (no listening, distracted listening, listening only to formulate a response, and deep listening). Likewise, we can approach God’s words in those various ways

II. The Parable of Sower

A. The power of God’s kingdom is like the power of a seed

1. It may seem small, unassuming, and underwhelming, but it has tremendous power to bring about transformation over time

2. The kingdom comes like a seed not a bolder. “When the boulder comes to hit the ground, it smashes the ground, but the seed comes in very quietly. The boulder transforms the ground, revolutionizes it externally. The seed revolutionizes it internally. The boulder comes in and does it suddenly and coercively. The seed comes and does it organically, gradually, and gently.”

– Tim Keller

B. The 4 soils represented different responses (= different ways of listening) to the seed

1. Those who hear with a hard heart (v. 12)

For whatever reason the gospel never has a chance to penetrate their hearts and minds and Satan takes the word away

 2. Those who hear with a shallow heart (v. 13)

a. They listen with the question, “what’s in it for me? God is here to bless my life” rather than asking the question, “what is being asked of me? How is God wanting to change and transform me?”

b. In the “time of testing” they fall away

 3. Those who hear with a crowded heart (v. 14)

a. They believe, but the plant never has a chance to mature because so many other things crowd it out and choke it

b. “Life’s worries, riches, and pleasures”: They believe in the gospel, but in their daily lives they look for security, significance, and satisfaction in what the world has to offer

c. When they hear the Word, there are too many “non-negotiables” they aren’t willing to remove, so the Word has little room to work, and they don’t experience real transformation.

d. They may live deeply conflicted lives (always torn between two kingdoms)

e. Or if they aren’t conflicted, they may just be deceiving themselves (consider the parable of the lamp on the stand in v. 16-18).

4. Those who listen with a faithful heart (v. 15)

a. Hospitality: they make room in their hearts and minds for the Word

b. Perseverance: they stick with the Word and lean in even when it’s difficult, offensive, or confusing

c. Practice: they don’t just hear the Word, they seek to do what it says (v. 21)

d. The promise: They will produce a crop. They will experience transformation (= the fruit of the Spirit) and they will live fruitful lives for God.

III. Conclusion: Consider carefully how you listen