

Four Kinds of Hearts

Mark 4:1-20

Pastor John Miller

Mark 4:1 says, “And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat...”—so He is at the Sea of Galilee, and He gets into a boat —“...and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching, ‘Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.’ And He said to them, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”

I wonder if you’ve ever heard the expression, “A way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.” I know if you can make good mashed potatoes, I’ll love you forever. If you can make some really killer enchiladas and you can donate them to Pastor Miller, you’ve won my heart. Someone gave me some really amazing potato salad this week, and I just lived on it breakfast, lunch and dinner for three days. So I know my heart can be won through my stomach.

But in this parable, Jesus said that the way to a man’s heart is not through his stomach but is through his ears. Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Notice in verse 3, He said, “Listen!” or “Harken.” That’s where we get the title of our series, Listen Up. Then in verse 9, He says, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Jesus was the master communicator. Never a man spoke like this man. When they went to arrest Him one time, they came back empty handed. The authorities asked, “Why didn’t you arrest Him?” The guard said, “Never a man spoke like this man.” They were mesmerized by the words that He spoke. The Bible says that when Jesus taught and preached, the crowds heard Him gladly.

I think that one of the reasons why is that Jesus spoke in parables, in parabolic language or in parabolic teaching. It is estimated that one-third of the teachings of Christ recorded in the Gospels is in parabolic form. Jesus taught in parables because parables would be both a window for them to see themselves and parables would be a mirror; they could see through the window and see themselves, see God, see the world; they could look in the mirror and see themselves.

Let’s look at the setting of this parable in verses 1-2. “He began to teach by the sea.” It was the Sea of Galilee, a beautiful, large body of fresh water. It’s a fresh-water lake. It’s known as the Sea of Galilee, but it’s a lake. It was about 13 miles long and about 8 miles wide. “And a great multitude was gathered to Him...”—probably in the thousands—“...so that He got into a boat

and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.”

Now get the mental picture here. Around the Sea of Galilee were these places where the land slopes down to the water. You’ve seen it before where you have this gradual slope coming down to the water’s edge. The multitudes were thronging Him, so He stepped back into this boat, and He kind of pushed out in the water, and the water would act as a natural amphitheater; kind of an acoustic. So He had the group on the beach, the water carrying His voice and a boat for a pulpit. I think that’s pretty cool. So Jesus got in this boat, moved out on the water and the people gathered around.

Recently when we were in Israel, we went to the city of Magdala. There was a little church there, which we went into. They had a huge pulpit on the stage for preaching from that was in the form of a boat. We got a picture there standing in that pulpit with the Sea of Galilee in the background that you could see through the back wall of glass. It was a beautiful setting.

It says in verse 2 that “He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching” or “doctrine.” The question is, what is a parable? A parable is basically an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That’s a simple definition of a parable. The word “parable” in the Greek is the word “parabole.” It literally means “to cast alongside” or “to lay alongside.” So very simply what Jesus is doing by teaching in parables is telling an earthly story, and He lays alongside it spiritual truth or spiritual meaning. He lays alongside an earthly story to convey a heavenly meaning. In Matthew 13 we have what are called the Kingdom Parables. It is amazing teaching that Jesus gave.

But as I said, the parables are like mirrors in which we can see a reflection of ourselves. They are like windows through which we can see life, and we can see God and we see others.

Now when you interpret parables, you need to interpret them in their context. Secondly, you need to see that the parables have mainly one theme or lesson. And you need to be careful that you don’t read into every aspect of the parable that you want to be there, but that you let Scripture interpret Scripture.

In our text today, the parable is commonly called The Sower and The Seed. But Jesus’ teaching in the parable was not about the sower, it wasn’t about the seed but it was about the soil. Those are the three elements about this parable: the sower, the seed and the soil, but the focus is not on the sower, not on the seed but it is on the soil. We will come back to those in just a moment.

I want you to note the parable, verses 3-9. There are four soils represented. The first soil is the soil on the wayside path. “And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it.”

You have to get the mental picture: they wore big, flowing robes, and they would reach down and gather up their robe in front of them. With their left hand they would hold their robe up and form it into a basket. They would fill the robe with seed, walk through the field and with their

right hand scatter the seed. You've seen the picture before. They hold their robe in the form of a basket full of seed, and they're throwing the seed out as they walk through the field.

It could be that as Jesus was teaching He was saying, "Behold! Look!" We would say, "Check it out! A sower is sowing seed."

Literally, as this guy is sowing seed, these things are happening: As he throws the seed, some of it falls outside the field onto the walking path. Wherever people would walk, the ground would become very hard, compacted and impenetrable. So the seed would remain on the surface of the ground, and the birds flying over would swoop down and scoop up the seed and fly away. Maybe you have put seed in your yard, and the birds have come to steal it away.

I don't know why I have had a lot of big, black crows on my roof lately. You can hear them in the upstairs bedroom. You can hear them running around up there. I think, I hope they're not having a crow party or building a house or something like that. Early this morning I had to go out back and shoo them away. God bless those black crows that woke me up early. (I just thought I'd share that with you.)

But it was a very common scene: the seed lands on the beaten path, it doesn't penetrate, so the birds of the air come and they steal away the seed.

The second soil is the stony soil, verses 5-6. "Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away." So the second seed landed on shallow soil. When it says "stony soil," He's talking about a thin layer of soil that has rock underneath it. The rocks weren't on top; they were under a thin layer of soil. The seed goes into the ground, it warms and germinates quickly and it springs up, but when the sun beats down on it, lacking depth, it withers away and dies.

The third soil is the thorny soil, verse 7. "And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop." That's a common picture: the thorns grow up, choke out the wheat, so it bore no fruit.

Then there is the good soil or good ground in verse 8. "But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

So Jesus tells about the different soils in the parable: first the wayside soil; the seed sown on the stony, shallow soil; the thorny soil; and then the good soil. Jesus speaks out the parable.

In verses 10-13, the disciples came to Jesus and wanted to know what the parable meant. And you want to know what it means. But first Jesus indicated to them why He spoke in parables and the effect that it would have. Verse 10 says, "But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable." No doubt when Jesus was teaching, they were nodding their heads in approval. "Yeah, that's awesome. Oh yeah, the thorny ground." Then

when it was over, they said, “I don’t have a clue what He’s talking about.” Kind of like me in high school in a math class. “Yeah....Please don’t test me on this, because I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

So they came to Him. Verse 11, “And He said to them, ‘To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside...’—that is, “outside the kingdom of God” or “people who weren’t believing”—“...all things come in parables.” Now Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6: “...so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them.’ And He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?’” In other words, this is kind of a key to the other parables.

This section has troubled people—and rightfully so. It almost seems—and I underline the word “seems”—that Jesus is teaching in parables to keep people from knowing the truth or keep them from salvation. We know that could not be possible. The Bible says that God’s will is that everyone would be saved. “God is not willing that any should perish but that all would come to repentance.” That’s the heart of God. God wants everyone to believe, so He’s not intentionally, not purposely trying to cloud or cover the truth of God.

I believe that parables only reveal. They do conceal, but only in a way to reveal the condition of a person’s heart. Someone put it this way: “Truth received brings more light. Truth refused brings the night.” In other words, it only manifested where their hearts were; those who were outside the kingdom who didn’t believe and who had hardened hearts wouldn’t want to ask what the parable meant. They wouldn’t want to know the truth. They would just turn away. They would just mock Him and ridicule Him and turn away. But those who want to know, are hungry and have a heart that is open and sensitive, would come to Him and ask, “What does it mean?” He would give them the deeper truth.

Many years ago in West Virginia, there was a coal mine collapse, and seven miners were trapped for three-and-a-half days. When rescuers finally reached the trapped miners, one of the miners asked, “Why didn’t you turn a light on? Why didn’t you bring a light?” The other six men turned to him and realized that he was blind. He was blinded in the collapse and explosion. For these three days, they didn’t know he was blind because they were in utter darkness. When the rescuers did bring light in, they realized that he was blind. The light didn’t blind him; the light only manifested his condition that he was blind.

That’s what the Gospel does. The Gospel doesn’t blind you; but it reveals that your heart is blinded by sin. You become hardened as you reject Jesus Christ. “Truth received brings more light. Truth refused brings the night.” So the parables were given to conceal and to reveal.

Next Jesus gives us the explanation of the parable, and that’s what we want to focus on in verses 14-20. As I said, there are three important elements or symbols of this parable: the seed, the sower and the soil. Notice the seed in verse 14. It says, “The sower sows the Word.” The seed is “the Word.” In Luke 8:11, it says, “The seed is the Word of God.” So as you bring

in the other accounts of this parable in Luke and Matthew, it is very clear that the seed is “the Word of God.” In Mark, it says, “The sower soweth the Word.”

The seed is the Word of God. It has life, it is living and it is powerful. You can’t manufacture seed. It’s not only wonderful, it’s not only powerful but it’s also natural. In Hebrews 4:12, the writer says, “For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.” The Bible is likened unto seed, and the Bible is likened unto a sword. The Bible is likened unto a hammer, and the Bible is likened unto a mirror that we look at and see ourselves. So the seed that is sown is the Gospel, the Word of God. It is the wonderful truth that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead.

Then we notice that there is a sower, verse 14. “The sower sows the Word.” The seed is the Word of God. Who is the sower? What does the sower symbolize? Matthew 13:37 explains it very clearly. “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.” “The Son of Man” is a title for Jesus, the Messiah, from the book of Daniel. It is a Messianic term. So the sower is Jesus Himself. He came preaching and sharing the Word of God. Then the disciples went everywhere preaching the Gospel. All the apostles preached the Gospel. And you and I are also sowers of seed. We go everywhere sowing seed, sharing the Word of God.

I remember a long time ago I was at In-N-Out. I like to hang out there. I was on the patio having lunch by myself. I savor those moments with just me, the Lord and my food, and it was a beautiful day. Several businessmen sat down at the table next to me. One of them held his cup up, and on the bottom it said John 3:16. He said, “I wonder what that is.” I thought, This is too good to be true! I said, “I can tell you what it means.” They’re kind of looking at me like, “Wow! Who’s this dude?” I shared the Scripture with him: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” I made sure I projected my voice so that everyone in the patio heard my voice. The businessmen are like, “Where did this dude come from?” Revival Christian Fellowship.

Then—you know me; I can’t stop there—I went on to explain that God sent Jesus. He was born of a virgin. He lived a sinless life. He died on the Cross. He rose from the dead. If you trust Jesus as your Savior, you can be forgiven of your sins and have eternal life. “It can start right now.”

They said, “Okay. I just want to eat my lunch right now.”

But in a place just like that you can be sowing the seed—at In-N-Out—at lunch time. You can walk around with your cup and ask, “Do you know what John 3:16 says?” You can use it as a witnessing tool. At home, at work—wherever you go you can sow the seed of the Word of God. What an important thing that is—sharing the Gospel.

But the focus of this parable is the different soils, verses 15-20. There are four different kinds of soil representing the hearts of people and how they hear and respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let’s look at them individually.

First there is the hard, unresponsive heart of man in verse 15. “And these are the ones by the wayside...”—that’s the first category—“...where the Word is sown”—representing the Word of God. “When they hear, Satan comes immediately...”—So these birds that stole the seed away convey the idea that Satan comes to steal away the Word of God, that their hearts do not receive it—“...and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts.” These are the people I call the hard, unresponsive hearts.

Notice the reference to Satan. Jesus believed in and taught that there really is a devil. We know him as Satan or the devil. He is the archenemy of God and God’s people, and he does everything he can—believe me—to keep people from hearing the Word of God. Satan’s number one job is to keep people from hearing the Gospel, to attack God’s Word, to prevent God’s Word from going forth. So if a person has a hard heart, Satan comes to steal away the seed, so they should not believe.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul says, “...whose minds the god of this age...”—or “aión” in the Greek —“...has blinded...lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ...should shine on them.”

By the way, all these heart types represented by these soils come to church. They are in church on Sunday. There is a hard heart on Sunday. There are people who come and hear, but they don’t hear. The minute the seed of the Gospel is sown, Satan comes and steals it. Their hearts become hardened. They have atrophied their heart and cannot believe. It’s sad. So Satan is active in stealing away the seed that was sown.

I believe that the person is responsible for their own heart attitude. Don’t misinterpret this and say, “Well, the devil made me do it. I’m not responsible, so God can’t judge me.” No. You are responsible for your own heart and its receptivity to the Gospel. The problem, though, is not the seed, nor the sower; the problem is the soil—the hard heart of man.

What are some of the reasons that people’s hearts become hardened to the Gospel? Sometimes it’s the hardships of life. Have you ever met someone who said, “Oh, I can’t believe in God; my baby died” or “My wife miscarried” or “I had cancer” or “My little brother died” or “My friend died” or maybe “My husband/wife died.” Maybe some horrible tragedy has come into your life. Maybe you lost a child, and you’ve blamed God all these years. God is not to blame. God wants to help you through that situation. But through hard experiences of life, people tend to get calloused. We’ve all met them. They’re bitter and angry and their life has been difficult. They’re mad at God and mad at the world, so their hearts become calloused.

Another reason that people have hardened hearts is because of pride. Pride is a sin. The Bible says that “God knows the proud afar off.” Maybe they are self-righteous; they feel like they are good. They get angry at the idea of a preacher telling them they are a sinner and need salvation; that if they don’t repent and believe in Jesus, they will spend eternity in hell separated from God. That angers them. They harden their heart and rebel against the truth. They are actually in blindness, and when the light comes, it manifests the blindness of their own heart.

The root cause of the hardness of man's heart is sin. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible says, "There is no one righteous; no, not one." Every human being has sinned. You say, "Speak for yourself, preacher boy. Who's this punk telling me I'm a sinner?" Jesus said that if you look lustfully after someone, you have committed adultery already in your heart. You go, "Wow! Busted." Yes; God knows your heart. If you have anger toward someone in your heart, you've already murdered them. Try driving the freeways in California and not kill somebody. The little boy said to his mother, "Mommy, why is it that when Dad drives, all the idiots come out? It seems there aren't any idiots on the highway when you drive; just when Daddy's driving." God actually sees your heart.

Not only are there sins of commission, but there are sins of omission. When you know to do good and you don't do it, the Bible says that it's sin.

We're all born sinners separated from God. We inherited that from Adam. When Adam sinned in the garden, sin came on the whole human race. That's why we're so empty. That's why we're looking for life and purpose; because we're separated from God, the source of life, the God Who created us and wants to have fellowship with us.

So the problem is this hardened heart. And "If you hear His voice, harden not your hearts." If God is speaking to you today, there is hope for you if you'll turn to Him.

The second heart is what I call the shallow, emotional heart, verses 16-17. "These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground..."—Jesus is explaining the parable—"...who, when they hear the Word, immediately receive it with gladness..."—but the problem is in verse 17—"...and they have no root in themselves..."—"no depth"—"...and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the Word's sake, immediately they stumble" or "are offended."

You say, "Well, Pastor John, what's wrong with this in verse 16? It says, 'They hear the Word, immediately receive it with gladness.' That sounds pretty good to me. What's wrong with that response?" It is merely an emotional, shallow, surface response. The problem is not that they responded immediately and emotionally; the problem is that they were shallow and lacked depth. Notice that they didn't have any "root." It's a thin layer of soil over the rock. The seed germinates quickly because it's warm, and it springs up. But when the sun beats down on the plant, it withers and dies because it lacks depth of soil.

This is the "feel-good gospel." There is a "gospel" today that is not the Gospel. There is a "gospel" that eliminates sin, that eliminates repentance, that eliminates faith in Jesus Christ. That is not a gospel. There is a "gospel" that just says that God loves you, God has a wonderful plan for you, God wants to bless you, God wants to make you healthy and wealthy; if you become a Christian, all your problems will sail away. That's a false gospel.

Yes, God will be with you. Yes, God will bless you. Yes, God will help you. But that doesn't mean that you'll have a trouble-free life. If you've been a Christian for some time, you know that

life is difficult, but God is good. "God will never leave us nor forsake us." We have the Lord with us to be our guide, our help and our shield and defender in time of need. What a blessing that is. What would we do without that resource in our life?

But these are people who spring up, and they start to grow in the Lord and seem like Christians. Yet the reality is that there is no genuine conversion. I don't believe that the people in these first three categories are saved; they lack true salvation. There is no repentance. There is no godly sorrow. There is no faith in Christ alone. They come on a feel-good basis, and it doesn't last, verse 17.

A young man once said to Jesus, "I'll follow You, Lord, wherever You go." I imagine the disciples were saying, "Great! We've got another disciple. Come on and follow us." Then Jesus said, "Wait, wait, wait! No. Before you do that, count the cost." And Jesus said to this eager follower, "Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests..."—they also have houses to land on—"...but I, the Son of Man, have nowhere to lay My head. You want to follow Me? I don't have a house. I don't have a home. I'm going to Jerusalem. I'm going to be crucified on a cross."

"Yes, I'll follow You."

Jesus said, "Whoever follows Me needs to die to himself, take up his cross and follow Me." To be a follower of Jesus Christ means to die to self, take up your cross and follow Jesus. Jesus said that we should follow Him in death.

Some people have told me, "Well, I've tried Jesus, and it didn't work." Do you think He's a pair of shoes? How many of you would buy a pair of shoes without trying them on? You stick them on your feet, walk around and say, "Yeah, they feel good." So you buy the shoes. If you put them on your feet and you say, "Ow! These don't feel good," you don't buy them.

Jesus isn't a pair of shoes. You don't "try" Jesus. Jesus is the God of all the universe. He's the God-man Who died for you on the Cross and rose from the dead. He says for you to follow Him. So you make a decision to follow Him, no matter what. You don't "try" Jesus.

There is a third category of heart I call the crowded, preoccupied heart. A lot of people fall into this category. Verses 18-19 say, "Now these are the ones sown among thorns..."—the thorny soil—"...they are the ones who hear the Word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful." This is the crowded, preoccupied heart.

All of these hearts are represented in the church, and they are here right now as I preach this message. This is a mirror and a window for you to see your own heart and see the world.

This third heart is the person who says, "Okay, I'll follow Jesus," but then they have worries that distract them and cares that choke the Word, so they fall away.

Now notice that Jesus described the three kinds of weeds in verse 19. I love it. There are "the

worry weeds”—those who have “the cares of this world.” “Cares” are the anxieties or worries of this world, i.e., “How are we going to pay the mortgage? How are we going to take care of the medical bills? How are we going to be able to retire? What’s going to happen to my kids? What schools should we put them in? What’s going to happen to my marriage?”

Jesus said in Matthew 6 that people worry about what they’re going to eat, what they’re going to drink, what they’re going to wear. Heathens do that, but not God’s people.

You worry and fret and you’re anxious. Worry is like a rocking chair; it doesn’t get you anywhere. I like a good rocking chair, but you don’t go anywhere.

I heard the story of the famous Bishop R. C. Trench, who was a great Greek scholar and Bible scholar. He had this phobia, interestingly—this great man of God—that he would lose the use of his legs. He was constantly worrying and fretting about losing the use of his legs. He was at a big dinner party one night, and he started to yell, “It’s happened! It’s happened! My legs are gone! I can’t feel my legs! I’ve lost the use of my legs!” He was freakin’ out. The lady who was sitting next to him said, “My good bishop, it might comfort you to know that the legs that you are pinching are mine.” It was like, “Oh, excuse me. Excuse me.” We worry about stuff that doesn’t really exist. We’re freaking out.

Some of you people who are in church right now are not hearing anything except my jokes. That’s because you’re worried. And isn’t it funny that sometimes we worry about worrying. “I’m so worried that I worry so much about worrying.” Anxiety on anxiety. So I call these people the worry weeds.

The second group of weeds is the money weeds; in verse 19, “the deceitfulness of riches.” This group exhibits the false glamour of wealth. It’s the idea of the carrot on the end of the stick. “If I only had more money. If I only had more wealth. If I only had a nicer house. If I only had a nicer car. If I had a better job. If I could buy more things, I would be happy.”

Money can’t buy happiness. The great King Solomon had everything you could ever want. He had more wealth than anyone. He said, “It’s all vanity. It’s all emptiness. It’s like chasing after the wind.” He said that he wanted to kill himself because of his emptiness.

We’ve been saddened to hear this week of some prominent figures on television and from the business design world who have taken their lives by committing suicide. Money can’t buy you happiness. Wealth and fame can’t buy you happiness. Only Jesus can satisfy the deep longing of your soul. You were made by God to know Him. Money speaks of a divided heart.

The third group of weeds, in verse 19, is the pleasure weeds—“the desires…”—or “lust”—“…for other things.”

So we have the worry weeds, the money weeds and the pleasure weeds.

The Bible says that “In the last days, men will be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.”

Let me tell you, flat out, that only God can fill the emptiness of your heart. Sex can't do it. Drugs can't do it. Fame and fortune can't do it. Power and prestige can't do it. Popularity can't do it. One relationship after another, humanly speaking, can't do it. Only God can fill that emptiness in your heart. You were made by God. You were made to know God, and only God can fill that void in your life.

The Bible says that "The wicked are like the restless sea." Until we find God, we can't have peace. Only God can bring real satisfaction, lasting joy and fill the emptiness of our hearts.

It's interesting that these three soils correspond to the world, the flesh and the devil. The devil steals the seed, the flesh responds emotionally and the world with its worries destroys and chokes out the seed.

Now notice fourthly and lastly, verse 20, the good ground. (I pray that you have a heart that is receptive to God's Word.) "But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the Word..."—"the Gospel"—"...accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

These are the saved. Only one out of the four are truly saved. The true indication of salvation is fruit; not just an exterior change for a moment, but spiritual fruit. Galatians says that "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness, gentleness, meekness and self-control." So it's God's Spirit producing God's fruit in our lives.

Notice the three things: they hear the Word—they have an open heart ("Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word."); they receive the Word, verse 20—they have a responsive heart; and they bring forth fruit—they have an obedient heart.

Unlike the hard heart, this heart is soft and open and receptive. Unlike the shallow heart, this heart is deep and has deep roots. Unlike the crowded heart, it is clean; they don't have things to distract them or to choke out the Word in their lives.

The Bible says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." My King James Bible says new "creature." Not the best translation—become a new "creature." No; you become a new "creation." You become a new person in Jesus Christ.

How many of you had your life change when you accepted Christ? You see what God can do in a heart? You can be going one direction and God turns you around and sends you in the other direction. You're following your own greed, lust, hatred and anger, and God can change your heart. He can take out that "heart of stone" and give you "a heart of flesh." When His Word gets planted in your heart, it brings forth fruit to the glory of God.

So my closing question to you is: What is the condition of your heart? Again, the Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible says, "There is no one righteous; no, not one." But Jesus died for our sins on the Cross. He was buried and then arose.

Here's the Gospel: that Christ died for our sins, that Christ was buried, that Christ arose. Salvation is by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. There is no other way to be saved other than trusting in Jesus Christ. You don't get to heaven by being good. You don't get to heaven by being baptized. You don't get to heaven by going to church. You don't get to heaven even by believing in God or by reading the Bible. You get to heaven because you've trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior.

God is reaching out His hand right now. All you have to do is, number one, recognize that you are a sinner and can't save yourself. Number two, repent of your sins; you turn from your sin. Number three, you must receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and as your Lord.

Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door of your heart and knock. If you hear My voice and open the door...." That door to your heart has only one knob; it's on the inside. You must open the door of your heart. He said, "If you hear My voice and open the door, I will come in and have fellowship with you." He'll forgive your sins. He'll give you the hope of heaven. Then you can know that when you die you'll go to heaven, and you can have heaven come down to your soul right now.

I don't know how you live in this wicked, dark world without knowing God, without the peace that only Jesus Christ can give.

If you are here and haven't trusted Jesus as your Savior, I want to give you that opportunity. As the Gospel has been preached and the seed has been sown, I pray that God will break up your hard heart and soften it so that you will come to Christ. I pray that if your heart is shallow, you will think about turning from your sin and trusting Christ. If your heart is crowded today, that you will put aside your worries and your fears and you'll reach out and receive Jesus Christ. God can change your life for all eternity.

Maybe you come to church, but you've never trusted Jesus. Maybe you come to church, but your heart has become hardened. But today is the day. The Bible says, "Today is the day of salvation. If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts."