

*That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. 5Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. 6But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. 7Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9Let anyone with ears listen!" 18"Hear then the parable of the sower. 19When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. 20As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. 22As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. 23But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

Four men.

They saw a woman in distress and rushed to help - young men, in the prime of life men doing the right thing.

Maybe they never even thought about it but just saw the need and responded. But suddenly they were in the power of the churning chaos. They lost their lives.

But she survived, rescued by another.

Who can understand it?

But we will try.

One will say, "It was meant to be."

Another will say, "This proves that there is no God, for those who do good should be guarded in all their ways."

Another will say, "Life is random, but no matter what happens God is with those who believe."

Still another will say, "Jesus loves every one. All will live at last."

But when all the talk is over, a woman will need to learn how to live remembering that day when four lost their lives and she survived. And parents will try to learn to live without sons they love.

And if that woman and those parents walk close with Jesus I believe that they will have a far greater chance of loving and laughing and living once more, than if they do not.

But how can a person get this faith in Jesus? In Romans we read, "Faith comes through what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ."

So it is simple, hear the word of Christ: Jesus died for you, God raised Jesus from the dead for you, Believe in him and you will not perish but have eternal life. Even if you should be swept away by the undertow, even if others should die trying to save you, even if the one you love most in this world is swept away in a senseless accident, believe in Jesus and you will live.

Yet why is it that in the same family, in the same church, in the same pew, even in the same person, I think, that there is faith and unbelief?

Jesus told the parable of the sower that I read earlier. When he explained the parable he said the sower sows the word of the kingdom. That word falls in all sorts of soil. Like seed falling on a hardened path, devoured by a hungry bird, the word comes to some and is instantly snatched away by the evil one. Like seed sown on rocky ground others hear and receive the word with joy but there is no depth in them, and the sun comes out and faith withers as soon as faith is tested by troubles or sorrows. Still others are soil where there are thorns. The seed begins to grow and then is choked by all the cares and busyness of life and the lure of wealth. And still after so much seed has been lost some seed falls in good soil and there is a great harvest of faith and love and service.

So now we know why in the same family, in the same church, in the same pew there is faith and there is unbelief. We are different soils - some will believe, some will not.

But at the end of this parable Jesus said, "Let anyone with ears listen."

Listen.

Jesus was speaking to a crowd, not to just his own. He did not say, “Tear out the thorns, chase away the evil one, discipline your heart against the lure of wealth.”

He said, “Listen.”

To everyone who has ears he said, “Listen.”

Check it out, do you have ears? Listen. Listen to God’s word. Listen to the story of Jesus. Listen.

Faith comes through what is heard and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. Listen.

I suspect that when you are caught in the undertow the more you struggle against it, the more power it will have over you. In times of sorrow, in times of fear, in anxiety, when faith is weak, I want to do something to get into control once more. But Jesus says, “Listen.”

“Listen to my voice,” he says, “listen to the word of my love. Be still, and listen.”