**The secrets of the kingdom of God**

Luke 8:1-15

Key Verse 8:10

“**He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, “‘though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.’**

There was a time in my life when I was seeking the secret of how to study school subjects well. When I was in Junior in my high school, suddenly I was not able to study. Until that time I never had a problem of studying. When mid term or final exam came I was able to study hard with full concentration. But suddenly I was not able to do it anymore at the very beginning of Junior in my high school, and I did not know what to do. So I began to search how I could study well. I began to read books and think about a lot. While I was at school all my break time was consumed to think about ‘what is the secret of school study’. After I came home from school I spent the whole time thinking about how to study well. Even while I was sleeping I was in half sleep thinking about it, and I woke up the next day, and went to school. This went on for two years including the senior year of my high school.

Eventually I found the answer. What was the secret of school study? Studying itself! Why did I miss such simple truth? I did not know. Years later, I found the reason. The reason is because I wanted to study without pain and suffering.

After I met God I began to pray. And I found that some people want to know the secret of prayer. I know the answer even though I did not read books about prayer. What is the secret of prayer? Praying itself.

Now in today’s passage Jesus is talking about ‘the secrets of the kingdom of God’. What is the secrets of the kingdom of God? This is a good question. Do you want to say ‘the secrets of the kingdom of God is the kingdom of God itself?” Good try! But that is not the answer. So let us see what the passage says about the answer. My message has two parts.

Part I. A farmer went out to sow his seed (v.1-10)

Part II. Who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. (v.11-15)

**Part I. A farmer went out to sow his seed (v.1-10)**

Look at verses 1-4.

**After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means. 4While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable:**

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another. What was the purpose of doing it? It was to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. People were suffering from the reigning power of sin and death in their lives. But Jesus proclaimed the word of God. As he preached the word of God, it created the kingdom of God in their hearts. His message was a good news because people were suffering so much under the power of darkness.

When Jesus did, he had a company. His company included not only the twelve but also some women **who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases:**

These women supported Jesus’ ministry because they all experienced the kingdom of God through Jesus. When Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God, evil spirits were cast out, and people were healed, and they were freed from their sinful desires and habits. And these women experienced it. Then they devoted themselves to the ministry of Jesus. At that time women were not well educated, and they did not have many good jobs. So they did not have much money. But their devotion to Jesus was so firm that they were supporting Jesus out of their own means. How could they do it? God must have provided their needs as they supported Jesus’ ministry out of their own pockets.

Look at verse 4. At that time a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town. There were so many people. So Jesus could not help them one by one. So what did he do? He delivered his message using parables. He was like a farmer who had to scatter his seed because his field was too large to plant the seed one by one.

Look at verses 5-8.

**5“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. 6Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture.7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. 8Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.”**

**When he said this, he called out, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”**

Jesus’ parable was such a plain story that even elementary school students could understand. But he said at the end of his parable, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

Look at verses 9 and 10.

**9His disciples asked him what this parable meant. 10He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, “‘though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.’**

What Jesus meant by ‘the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God’ is the meaning of the parable. The meaning of the parable would be given to his disciples. But the crowd would not know it because they did not seek. To the crowd, the parable was so plain that they even did not need to ask questions.

Jesus spoke the secrets of the kingdom of God through parables in order to reveal the secrets plainly. But it worked negatively against those who did not have spiritual desire. The crowd thought Jesus’ parable was too easy and plain, and they stopped thinking about it. To them, the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled. ‘Though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.”

**Part II. Who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. (v.11-15)**

Look at verses 11-15.

**11“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. 14The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.**

The meaning of this parable is like spiritual X-ray film which shows how God has been trying to establish his kingdom in the hearts of men from the time of Adam to the end. It is like a snap shot that shows very clearly what God has been doing in order to save men. We know sometimes one snap shot speaks million times better than all other pictures. And Jesus’ parable of sower is one.

Jesus explained the parable. The first thing he said was “The seed is the word of God.” The parable starts with a farmer who sows his seed. So without the farmer sowing the seed the story does not exist.

And Jesus is the farmer who sowed the word of God to the crowd. In our days Jesus is still the farmer. And then who are we? We are hired hand by Jesus. We are asked to sow the word of God. But in reality, Jesus is the one who sows, using us as his bodies. And we are so privileged to be used by Jesus to sow his seed. In the old times when sowing time comes, owners hire workers to sow their seeds in their fields without losing the proper sowing season when their field is so large.

And Jesus’ field is so large because his field is the whole world, all human being. So he has to hire us. Sh. Terry showed the same truth when he delivered the message titled, “Don’t cry”. Jesus could save only one widow at Nain although there were many widows because he was limited by time and space. So Jesus wants to save many other widows who need comfort through his people. It is the same with us.

In order to help us to sow his word God reveals his word to us. **Ezekiel 3:1-4** reveals the same truth so clearly.

**“And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel.” 2So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. 3Then he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. 4He then said to me: “Son of man, go now to the people of Israel and speak my words to them.”**

The first one Jesus talked about was the seed sown along the path. First, the seed sown along the path.

**12Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.**

Jesus revealed the devil’s work for those who are like along the path. He reveals the devil takes away the word from their hearts. So here is Jesus who sows the seed, and there is the devil who takes away the word. Jesus and the devil. One sows and the other takes away.

Can you see why the word of God is so important? The word of God is so important to Jesus that Jesus wanted to sow by traveling about from one town and village to another. But to take away the word of God is so important to the devil that the devil follows Jesus who sows and takes away the word as much as possible.

Why does Jesus sow and why does the devil take away the word? It is because the word of God creates the kingdom of God in men’s hearts. The word of God carries God’s almighty power to destroy the power of sin and death and brings the kingdom of God in men’s hearts. So when men hear the word of God and keep believing the kingdom of God will appear in their hearts. The evil spirits will be cast out, and they will be healed, and peace and joy and righteousness will begin to rule their hearts like river. So Jesus sows the word and the devil takes away it.

When the devil takes away the seed from their hearts they cannot believe and therefore they cannot be saved. So the battle is the battle to secure the word of God in men’s hearts.

Jesus revealed the salvation depends on keeping the word of God in our hearts. The devil is the most diligent in taking away the word from the hearts of men. In the Garden of Eden the devil took away the word from Eve’s heart by planting doubts in her heart.

The second is seed on the rocky ground.

**13Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.**

Rocky ground is very deceptive because they receive the word of God with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the times of testing they fall away. The testing means troubles and persecution because of the word. When we try to live according to the word of God there are troubles and persecutions. These troubles and persecutions means pain and suffering.

For example, when we try to obey Jesus’ command to forgive one another unconditionally trouble comes.

 Jesus forgave us unconditionally. Then he asks us to forgive one another. Usually we do not have problems to accept Jesus’ teaching to forgive one another. We may accept it even with great joy and tears out of great thanks to God who forgave all our sins. But the truth is we have to embrace pain and suffering in order to forgive others.

We should be ready to be hurt again by others in order to forgive others unconditionally because no one is perfect. At that time we may fall away. We may say, “No, I am not ready yet. I need more time.” We cannot forgive others without taking pain and suffering of living together. Jesus forgave us by going through pain and suffering of crucifixion.

The testing is to test whether we want to believe the word of God and obey it or we fall away and live an easy life.

Another example is this. One person told me a story. He had a severe complain against other person. But the word of God says ‘Give thanks in all circumstances.” So every morning he had a fierce spiritual battle to believe the word of God more than his complaining. He did it because God revealed to him that the word of God is true reality. Compared to the word of God the reality he knew was false. Through fierce battles every morning eventually he won a great victory.

So the key point for those on rocky ground is to believe the word of God in time of testing which means the time of trouble and persecution because of the word.

One person told me his story. When he spent his whole time in sinning such as pornography and drugs, his mother left him completely. But God saved him and he devoted his life to God. Then she began to persecute him criticizing him that he did not care her and spend too much time for religion.

Third, the seed that fell among thorns.

**14The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.**

They hear, but they are choked by life worries, riches and pleasures. These are three kinds of thorns. The first one is worries of life. There is no end to our worries. Two people in my life told me that if they do not have worries, they make worries and worry. To worry becomes their habit. The second thorn is ‘riches’. It is deceitfulness of wealth. Riches whispers us that we will live an easy and comfortable and trouble free life if we have a lot of money. So many people want to get lottery and try to make a lot of money. The third thorn is pleasure. Pleasures says that we will be happy if we have it. But these things choke the word of God.

These worries of life, riches, and pleasures grow together with the word of God if we do not cut away.

Jesus said that we need to seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness rather than worries.

Jesus said in **Matthew 6:25-33.**

**25“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?26Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? 28“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?31So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

To seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness is the way for us not to be choked by worries of life.

Fourth, the seed on good soil.

**15But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.**

When I read this verse I was surprised. I thought the good soil with noble and good heart should produce a crop automatically. But I was surprised to see the expression, ‘retain it’ and ‘by persevering’. The meaning of the word ‘retain’ is ‘continue to have (something)’. The meaning of the word ‘persevere’ is ‘continue in a course of action even in the face of difficulty or with little or no prospect of success.”

Both definitions have the word ‘continue’ which is UBF favorite term. So even the men of the noble and good heart should still struggle.

The one who has a good soil still need to retain the word of God and persevere in order to produce a crop.

So when we look at all four soils in today’s passage, there is one thing in common. What is it? They all ‘hear’.

So let’s think about the question. “What is the secrets of the kingdom of God?” The answer is: the word of God first, and then hearing second. The word of God is seed, and the hearing means to believe in heart.

Why is the word of God the secrets of the kingdom of God? It is because the word of God has God’s power.

God created the whole universe by his words. When the power of sin and death entered into the world, the power of God’s word is still the same. In his divine sovereignty God still uses his word which has almighty power of him to destroy the power of sin and death.

“Do you have trouble in your hearts because you are suffering from lustful desires, hatred, jealousy, and anger?” “Do you want to break them?” You cannot destroy their power, but the word of God has power to do it. You just need to hear it from your hearts and retain it and persevere against all the other powers and obstacles. Then you will be surprised to see all other powers will subject to the power of God in his word, and there will be the kingdom of God in your hearts. Praise God!

So when the word of God is proclaimed, the kingdom of God comes with his power. That is why evil spirits are cast out, people are healed, and they are freed from their sinful habits and desires when the word of God is proclaimed. Surely the word of God is the secrets of the kingdom of God.

On our side, the whole thing boils down to ‘hearing’ which means ‘believing’ in our hearts. Those along the path do not have chance to believe. The people on the rocky ground stop believing in the time of testing. The people among thorns can not believe to the end because they are choked. Only the seed on good soil believes to the end with the effort of retaining and persevering.

So what is the secrets of the kingdom of God? The seed, the word of God and to hear which means to believe in our hearts.

One word: The secrets of the kingdom of God is the word of God and believing it to the end.