

Secrets of the Kingdom

Passage: Luke 8:1-21 | From the series: Luke

Preacher: Scott Grant ▾

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Would you like to know what is really going on in our world?

You won't find out from Truth Social or Bluesky. You won't find out from Pod Save America or the Daily Wire. You won't find out from Fox News or CNN. You won't find out from the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal. You won't find out from any of these sources, no matter how accurate the reporting.

And if you happen to find out what's going on in our world, would you like to know what to do about it?

Jesus tells two parables in Luke 8:1-21. In his first, the parable of the sower, he tells us what's going on in our world. In the second, the parable of the lamp, he tells us what to do about it. In the parables, Jesus whispers to us the secrets of the kingdom of God.

In Luke 7:36:50, Simon the Pharisee “saw,” but he didn't really see—not in the most important sense, anyway. With his parables, Jesus helps us see—that is, if we really want to see.

Before recording the parables, Luke lets us know about some followers of Jesus that we haven't been introduced to yet.

Also some women

Luke 8:1-3:

Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

Luke lets us know that in addition to the twelve male disciples, several women also followed him. Luke introduces them here not least because they will make appearances at a crucial point later in the gospel (Luke 23:55, 24:10).

Now, for the parable of the sower.

The first three chapters

Luke 8:4-7:

And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it."

Jesus tells the crowd a parable about a farmer who sows seeds. Right away he has their attention. Not only would they be familiar with sowing seeds, their lives also depended on doing so. Whether seeds produced a harvest may determine whether they eat.

In each of the first three chapters, Jesus raises hopes only to crush them. The seeds, though sown, produce no crops. The farmer fails with three types of ground.

Whether you're a farmer or not, even two thousand years after Jesus told the parable, you can probably resonate with it, because you know about failure. You know what it's like to try and fail, and you probably know what it is like to try and fail repeatedly. Unlike the farmers of Jesus' day, your survival may not be at stake, but multiple failures, especially vocational and relational failures, can suck the hope right out of your life.

You need to keep reading.

The final chapter

Luke 8:8:

"And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

How about that? The farmer, who failed three times with substandard soil, realizes a bumper crop with good soil. If you feel as if you've tried and failed repeatedly, know this: the final chapter hasn't been written. For the sake of our faith, God has a penchant for coming through at the last minute. And, of course, the final chapter of the story of the world hasn't been written.

Jesus concludes the parable with the words, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Two prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, employed similar wording to accuse their contemporaries of being spiritually blind and deaf (Jeremiah 5:21, Ezekiel 12:2). Jesus, in contrast, is hoping that at least some in the crowd will be more receptive as he preaches, however enigmatically.

Why does Jesus teach in parables?

The effect of the parables

Luke 8:9-10:

And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'"

The parables both reveal and conceal the nature of the kingdom of God. To those who are following Jesus, the parables can be revealing. To those who have rejected him or to those who are indifferent to him, the parables remain a mystery.

Jesus reveals to his disciples "the secrets of the kingdom of God," which include explanations concerning the meaning of the parables. The secrets, however, remain so profound that one could never completely penetrate them. To others, the secrets are embedded in parables they can't understand. With the parables at this point in the gospel of Luke, Jesus teaches cryptically, intriguing those who are receptive to his message but confounding those who are opposed to it or indifferent to it, in the manner of the prophet Isaiah, whom he quotes.

The secrets are ours

Today, as in the first century, Jesus both intrigues and confounds with his parables.

If you are a disciple of Jesus, he says, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God." Really? Yes. Does that mean you instantly understand the parables and assimilate them into your life? Probably not. It means you want to understand the meaning of the parables, and wanting to understand prepares you to understand.

If you want to understand the parables, what should you do? As a disciple of Jesus, keep following him and keep learning from him. He will reveal to you the relevance of parables in his time according to your need for them. Do the parables of Jesus intrigue you? If so, keep following Jesus.

The Spirit has preserved for us in the Scriptures these world-shaking stories of the kingdom of God. If you embrace the parables of Jesus, even if your understanding of them is incomplete, then to you—yes, to you—has been given the secrets of the kingdom of God. What a gift!

I will never forget teaching the parables of Jesus to a new church of mostly teenagers in Silistra, Bulgaria, in 1992, and listening to the thirty-six-year-old pastor of the church, a man named Constantine, share his insights. This was before the internet, and he had no commentaries. I asked him where he got these insights. He said, "I get on my knees every morning, open my Bible, and say, 'Lord, teach me.'" Constantine was hungry, and he had a young flock to feed. He had ears to hear, and to him it had been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God.

Now unwrap a gift: Jesus' interpretation of the parable.

Vindication of vision

Luke 8:11-15:

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

The seed in the parable represents the word. The sower, therefore, represents Jesus, or anyone who preaches “the word,” for Jesus commissioned his disciples to preach (Luke 9:6).

What then is the word? The word is the good news of the kingdom of God (Luke 3:18, 4:43, 5:1, 7:22, 8:1). The “word” in Isaiah 55:10-11, a passage that Jesus echoes in the telling of the parable, ultimately concerned the arrival of the kingdom. When Jesus evocatively equates his preaching with the word in Isaiah, he’s saying that the long-awaited kingdom of God is here. God is breaking in with his upside-down, inside-out rule in the person of Jesus the Messiah.

The kingdom is not coming as expected, however. It is coming neither visibly nor suddenly. It is not coming with swords wielding but with seeds casting. Neither is the kingdom being universally embraced in Israel. Those in the know, such as scribes and Pharisees, are resisting and even opposing the incoming kingdom. The different kinds of ground in the parable represent different kinds of receptivity Jesus’ message about the kingdom finds among those who hear it.

The parable functions to vindicate Jesus’ unorthodox vision of the kingdom and explain the unexpectedly mixed response within Israel to the arrival of the kingdom.

Don’t be surprised

In the parable, the condition of the ground—the condition of the hearts of those who hear the word—makes all the difference. Three kinds of unreceptive hearts allow various influences to prevent Jesus’ preaching about the kingdom to produce spiritually fruitful lives.

The devil rules a rival kingdom in opposition to God and plucks the word away. The difficulties of life prevent the word from taking root. Cares and riches and the pleasures are overvalued and choke the word. In three “sowings,” the word of the kingdom fails.

In a fourth sowing, however, the word succeeds—and succeeds remarkably: “a hundredfold.” The people of the fourth sowing, unlike those who succumbed to other influences, “hold it [the word] fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience”: they receive it and respond to it.

Jesus’ explanation encourages his followers to believe in his unorthodox vision of the kingdom even though it is encountering both resistance and opposition. Don’t be surprised by this, the parable says, and know for sure that the word will be effective—remarkably so—with some.

Believe it

The parable of the sower awakens our dreams for a better world while at the same time redefining them. Although we might want for the instant realization of our dreams, the parable teaches us to wait for God to create what we could not dream.

The seeds of God’s new world have been sown in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Most in our world—including, perhaps, many people we love—have rejected the gospel. If we would expect a more universal response if in fact the kingdom of God has broken into this world, the parable of the sower redefines our expectations.

Jesus’ description of resistance to the gospel resonates with our observations. We observe that the gospel seems to be immediately plucked away from some who hear it. We observe that some seemingly embrace the gospel but fall away when hard times come. We observe that some capitulate to cares, riches, and the pleasures and forsake the gospel. The parable instructs us to prepare ourselves for negative responses.

Although we observe that the gospel fails to penetrate the hearts of many in our world, we also observe that some hold the word fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with patience into their latter years. Because of these men and women, we know that the problem is not with the seeds but with the soil.

The presence of a remnant of men and women who embrace the gospel—particularly those whose passion for Christ burns into their latter years—serves to encourage us that the gospel will be vindicated.

This is one of the reasons I’m so thankful that Jesus’ family in our church includes a strong contingent of spiritual grandparents, and you in this church can be thankful for the same. They have heard the word and accepted it. Their capacity for embracing truth has expanded with the years. Many of them are the prayer warriors of the church. They have held fast to the word in an honest and good heart and have borne fruit—a hundredfold—with patience.

Their resilient and ever-increasing faith, often in the face of loss, failing health, and death, encourages us to believe that the gospel has a glorious future. Because of them, we know we’re not just whistling in the dark. How blessed we are to have such men and women in our midst.

The kingdom is present in the person of Jesus and his message and is penetrating hearts of some like seeds cast on good soil. The seeds grow underground, in the inner regions of the hearts of men, women, and children, in places you can't see.

Revivals, which pop up at various times and places, are always temporary, but they can birth individuals and churches and fellowships that hold fast to the word and bear fruit with patience in seasons of consolation and desolation, seasons of expansion and contraction.

The kingdom of God is coming

What's really going on in our world? No matter what you may have heard or seen, the kingdom of God has come. No matter what you may have heard or seen, the kingdom of God is coming. No matter what you may have heard or seen, the kingdom of God will come. Seeds have been sown. Seeds are being sown. Seeds will be sown. Evil will be vanquished, and the kingdom of God will be established. Believe it! The parable of the sower, along with other biblical texts—indeed, along with the entire biblical story—has turned me into a much more hopeful person.

In C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, a senior devil, Screwtape, warns a junior devil, Wormwood, about God, their enemy: "Be not deceived, Wormwood, our cause is never more in jeopardy than when a human, no longer desiring but still intending to do our Enemy's will, looks round upon a universe in which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys."¹

When opposition presses in, when your faith lags, when depression overwhelms you, when you're tempted to look for hope elsewhere, remember the story of the failing but faithful farmer who realized a bumper crop.

What's going on in our world? The kingdom of God is coming. What do we do about it?

¹C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour and Co., MCMXC).

The parable of the lamp

Luke 8:16-17:

"No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light."

The parable of the lamp begins with the ridiculous scenario of covering a lamp with a jar or placing it under a bed. The proper place for a lamp, quite obviously, is a lamp stand. But why would Jesus

even suggest such a scenario in the first place? He explains himself: “For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.”

Jesus himself has seemingly hidden the lamp, the nature of the kingdom of God, especially in parables. Yes, Jesus is saying, this is a strange way to bring in the kingdom of God—strange, but necessary. Powerful forces are arrayed against him, not least Satan himself. To keep his opponents off balance, he at times teaches cryptically in public settings.

However, a time is coming for the lamp to be put on the lamp stand, so to speak. When it is, all hell will break loose. Jesus will be arrested and crucified. For now, he’s buying time.

Jesus, the Servant of the Lord anticipated by the prophet Isaiah, embodies God’s purpose for Israel to be the light of the word (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6). Isaiah, in fact, expected the Servant to come in a hidden way. In Isaiah 49:2-3, the Servant of the Lord speaks about how God has hidden him and spoken to him:

*He made my mouth like a sharp sword;
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow;
in his quiver he hid me away.
And he said to me, “You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”*

The parable of the lamp explains to those who might wish for a more straightforward approach that Jesus’ current methodology is a necessary but temporary concession to the times. He didn’t come into the world to hide from the world. No, he came into the world as the light of the world. He would come out in the open soon enough—and pay a price for it. And eventually, when his disciples preached the good news of the kingdom, they too would pay a price.

So?

Take care how you hear

Luke 8:18:

“Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.”

Jesus teaches about perception: hearing and seeing. He has challenged anyone with ears to “hear” (Luke 8:9). He said his reason for teaching in parables concerned what people “see” and don’t see (Luke 8:10).

The parable of the sower concerned hearing the word about the arrival of the kingdom of God. The parable of the lamp involved what is seen and what isn't seen. Now, Jesus literally says, "See how you hear." What have they been hearing? Two parables of Jesus.

He speaks of the one who "has" and the one who "has not." Jesus is challenging anyone who "has" ears to hear. You benefit from the words of Jesus to the degree that you pay attention to them. In fact, the benefit you derive will exceed the attention you give. You will reap more than what you sow.

What is the benefit? If someone exercises the ears he "has" by listening to the words of Jesus so that what he "has" increases, then that which increases is hearing capacity. Jesus told his followers that the secrets of the kingdom of God had been "given" to them. For someone who gives attention to the words of Jesus, "more will be given"—more insight into the kingdom of God. That insight, then, opens you up to even more insight. It's like compound interest.

If we listen to Jesus now, we'll be better prepared to face whatever lies ahead of us. The truth we learn in the bright light of the day will guide us in the dark shadows of the night.

What will you want to know, what will you want in your soul, when the going gets tough: the opinion of man or the word of God? What do you anticipate wanting to know in your final days? If you envision wanting to know what God says to you, then immerse yourself in his word today.

In his waning years, Billy Graham, the great evangelist, said that if he had his life to live over again, he would spend more time immersed in Scripture: "The biggest regret is that I didn't study more and read more. I regret it, because now I feel at times I am empty of what I would like to have been. I have friends that have memorized great portions of the Bible. They can quote [so much], and that would mean a lot to me now."²

Attention to the words of Jesus results in addition, but inattention results in subtraction. Like those who "hear the word" in the parable of the sower and initially profit from it, you will lose whatever benefit you derived from exposure to the teaching of Jesus. The insight you gained into the kingdom will be taken from you, for if you don't give attention to the words of Jesus, you're demonstrating that you don't value such insight.

In that the parables are not straightforward, they require special attention to understand and apply them. When Jesus challenges those with "ears to hear" in the context of his parabolic teaching, he's telling hearers that the meaning of the parables lies beneath the surface.

In that they concern the long-awaited arrival of the kingdom of God, they feature the stories of Israel—but with new twists that show Jesus to be the fulfillment of those stories. Stories about a sower and a lamp, for example, would ring chimes for Jews who knew their Scriptures (Isaiah 55:6-13, Exodus 25:31-40, Isaiah 49:6, Zechariah 4).

Jesus is deliberately enigmatic. He wants to confound some and instruct others. To be instructed, you must give special attention to the parables, and it will help to do so with an ear to how the story of Israel is reaching its climax in Jesus the Messiah.

²Jon Meacham, "Pilgrim's Progress" (Newsweek, Aug. 14, 2006), 42-43.

Increasing capacity for insight

Our capacity for insight into secrets of the kingdom of God expands as we fix our hearts and minds on the words of Jesus. His vision of the kingdom is no less revolutionary in our day than it was in his. He tells us to deny ourselves, to take up our crosses, to lose our lives that we might save them (Luke 9:23-27). Insight into the secrets of these words will take more than a lifetime to assimilate.

Jesus gives us what we desperately need: heaven's perspective. He doesn't give it to those who don't want it, however. Nor does he give it to those who don't want it badly enough to seek him out for it. Nor does he give it all at once to anyone. The kingdom of God is too vast and brilliant for total penetration into its secrets, at least until it is consummated. Jesus grants heaven's perspective incrementally to those who know they need it and therefore seek it out in his words.

When I led our Leadership Institute, every fall, new students begin taking their first course at our church. Long about October, little bombs started going off in their minds and rattled some of their preconceptions about the Scriptures. Then I enjoyed watching them tear into the Scriptures as the Lord took them deeper into the secrets of the kingdom.

Be forewarned: exposure to the teaching of Jesus doesn't necessarily mean you will profit from it. If you don't value it, if you don't absorb it, if you don't put it to use, in the end it will profit you nothing. Listening to sermons—especially sermons that don't take you deeper into the secrets of the kingdom—doesn't necessarily mean you're giving attention to the words of Jesus. You can listen to a doctrinally sound sermon and do nothing with it. You can also listen to a heretical sermon and blissfully accept it.

Moreover, studying the Scriptures—even the gospels—doesn't necessarily mean you're giving attention to the words of Jesus. You can know the Scriptures cover to cover without knowing Jesus. You can also hide from Jesus in the Scriptures, giving him your intellect but not your emotions.

If you don't go deeper into the words of Jesus, you will also lose whatever benefit you derived from exposure to them. For all of us, the glow of a fresh encounter with the Scriptures fades. Unless we continually dive deeper into the secrets of the kingdom, we will lose whatever passion for Christ we once had. The ability to comprehend the secrets of the kingdom of God is like a muscle: if you use it, your comprehension will increase; if you don't, you will atrophy.

If you want to go deeper into the secrets of the kingdom of God, try digging into the parables of Jesus, which unsettle conventional notions of spirituality. Remember that they concern how the kingdom of God is arriving in the person of Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews rebuked his readers for preferring “milk” to “solid food” for their spiritual sustenance. He wanted them to move on from “elementary teaching” and “go on to maturity” (Hebrews 5:11-6:12). Giving our minds and hearts to the words of Jesus and to the rest of the Scriptures takes work, and the reward is seldom immediate. But aren’t the most worthwhile endeavors the ones that take the most work?

I can honestly say that today I find the words of Jesus infinitely more compelling than when I first heard them more than fifty years ago—in part, I think, because the failure of easy answers drove me deeper into the Scriptures.

Leonardo da Vinci, the painter of such masterpieces as the Mona Lisa and the Last Supper, is reported to have said at the end of his life, “It’s too bad I’m about to die. I’m just learning how to paint.” Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Luke 21:33). No matter how spiritually mature we are, no matter how steeped in the Scriptures we are, no matter how many masterpieces we’ve painted, no matter how many dragons we’ve slain, we’re just learning to penetrate the secrets of the kingdom of God.

What’s going on in our world? The kingdom of God is coming. What should we do about it? We should listen carefully to the words of Jesus. That’s not all.

New family

Luke 8:19-21:

Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.” But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”

Jesus’ family members can’t get to him because of the crowd. Loyalty to family was considered sacrosanct in the Israel of Jesus’ day. Loyalty to family, in fact, was considered an outworking of loyalty to Israel. To be disloyal to one’s family, then, was to invite accusations concerning disloyalty not only to Israel but also to the God of Israel.

Jesus, however, identifies those who “hear the word of God and do it” as his family members regardless of whether they are related to him by blood. Jesus has already spoken favorably of “everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them” (Luke 6:47). Doing the word of God, in this context, means responding to Jesus and his message concerning the kingdom of God.

Jesus has already redefined Israel by calling twelve disciples and evoking the formation of Israel, which constituted twelve tribes (Luke 6:12-13). Now, he redefines family. Those who follow Jesus not only constitute Israel, they also constitute his family. Jesus radically restructures both Israel and the families within Israel. Loyalty to Jesus replaces loyalty to nation and family.

And who is doing the work in this narrative? As scholar John T. Carroll observes, “While the apostles have a mission-in-waiting, these women already engage in ministry on their own. They not only follow Jesus but also provide the resources to sustain an itinerant ministry that has no household base to assure economic viability.”³ [John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 182.] Indeed, these women are part of the family of Jesus, and they followed him all the way to the grave.

Jacob Neusner, a Jewish scholar, agrees that Jesus was redefining both Israel and the family in Israel. In his fascinating book, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus*, Neusner envisions himself in dialogue with Jesus and decides that he would have chosen against following Jesus, not least because of his redefinition of nation and family: “This ‘Israel’ is then something other than, different from, that Israel of home and family that I know. And my argument consists in only one ‘but’: ‘But, sir, the Israel of home and family is where I am.’”⁴

Let no one who names the name of Jesus put loyalty to any cause or any leader or any nation above loyalty to Jesus. And let no one who names the name of Jesus conflate any cause or any leader or any nation with loyalty to Jesus.

³John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 182.

⁴Jacob Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus* (New York: Image Books, 1994), 57.

Hear and do

Some of us who choose to follow Jesus must deal with the opposition of family members who adhere to other worldviews. Some family members may conclude that we’ve lost our senses. It will frustrate them if they can’t reach us with what to them is sensible advice. They may be concerned that allegiance to Jesus will reflect poorly on the family or cost us the opportunity for a so-called successful life. They may be right, for allegiance to Jesus will cost us. It will cost us our lives, for Jesus isn’t asking for part of us; he’s asking for all of us.

Some family members, recognizing our choice to follow Jesus, will advise us not to get “carried away” or take it “too far.” But the truth is, we don’t know where faith in Jesus will carry us or how far he’ll ask us to go. It’s frustrating for parents to rear their children with a certain outcome in mind and then watch that outcome being threatened by forces beyond their control. Jesus, quite simply, is beyond anyone’s control.

To stay in control or regain control, families often resort to emotional manipulation. In the face of such tactics, Jesus says to us, “Hear the word of God and do it.” Following Jesus involves honoring your father and mother but not necessarily obeying them once reaching adulthood.

My parents tolerated my faith in Christ, but I pushed them over the edge when I decided to leave journalism to pursue theological and ministerial training. My father, though, eventually came around, and I believe my mother would have also, had she lived.

The family we come from and the way we were reared can greatly influence the way we perceive the world, ourselves, and God. Analyzing the influence of one’s family of origin can help us understand why we think and act the way we do. However, many today fall into the trap of believing that such analysis will liberate them. They think, “If I could just figure myself out, I’d be free.”

Knowing why you think and act in a certain way doesn’t necessarily enable you to think and act differently. Self-analysis is helpful only insofar as it helps us to hear the word of God and do it. On the other hand, self-analysis that leads only to more self-analysis is a trap.

In following Jesus, we become part of his family. What does it mean to be part of Jesus’ family? In this context, it means hearing and doing the word of God. If we do the word—if we, say, take up our crosses and follow him—we will pay a price. If we purpose to do the word of God, we will face opposition on multiple fronts. In the face of such opposition, Jesus gives us a new family to help us hear the word and do the word.

One of our former elders, Basil Fthenakis, who went to be with the Lord in 2018, encountered friction in his family of origin because of his efforts to hear and do the word of God. He shared these reflections:

Experiencing Jesus in a new way can create an earthquake in our families, with aftershocks for years to follow, and make permanent changes to the family landscape. It is hard to know how the changes will affect our families. I don’t know how my family frictions will resolve, and what consequences they will have in the next generation. All I can say is that we need to gain support from our spiritual family and live faithfully in the tension of our earthly family, particularly when they do not see life through the same lenses we are wearing. Take courage, God promises that in the end, we will see his hand at work in every step.⁵

Yes: “And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” Yes: “For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.”

What was Basil doing with his words? As a member of the family of God, as an elder in this church, he was encouraging us to hear the word and do it.

⁵Basil Fthenakis shared these reflections during a worship service at Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, Calif., on July 20, 2008.

Sow some seeds

What's really going on in our world? The kingdom of God is coming. What should we do about it? Listen to Jesus and do what he tells us.

In his song "For a Dancer," Jackson Browne sings, "Into a dancer you have grown / From a seed somebody else has thrown / Go on ahead and throw some seeds of your own."

Yes, go on ahead, throw some seeds of your own: Do the word of God.

Do the word: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you"; "Be merciful"; "Judge not, condemn not," "forgive," and "give" (Luke 6:27, 36-39).

Do a bit of that, and you'll be throwing some world-shaking seeds.