THE PROBLEM AND POWER OF PAIN
WEEK 1 • DAILY BRIEFING 4 • FRUIT THAT COSTS SOMETHING

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Revelation 21:4

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

This week follows Sunday's sermon, "The Threat of Pain," from Jesus' parable of the soils in Luke 8. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I pray for a mind that focuses on and a heart that longs for the salvation of others more than my own accumulation or experience. I want to bear fruit far beyond anything I could explain by my own power. Help me embrace a perseverance mindset and avoid the distraction of the pleasures and cares of this life that weigh me down and pull me off mission. God, give me a heart to seek the lost and a mind to seek Your Kingdom first, whatever it costs me. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

On Sunday we walked through Jesus' parable of the soils in Luke 8, and this week we have taken the soils one at a time. Today is the fourth soil, the good soil. Jesus says the seed that fell there "grew and yielded a hundredfold" (Luke 8:8), which means a harvest of a hundred times what was planted. That is far beyond what a farmer in Jesus' day would normally expect. When Jesus explains it, He says these are the people who hold onto the Word and "bear fruit with patience." In the Bible, "fruit" is the visible result of a life connected to God. Sometimes it means personal growth, like the "fruit of the Spirit" Paul lists in Galatians 5:22–23, and it also often means making disciples and leading other people to Christ (John 15:16). Here is today's idea in one sentence: the good soil bears fruit through endurance, and the cost God asks of most of us is small compared to what others have paid to reach people far from Christ with the Gospel.

The word translated "patience" in Luke 8:15 is the Greek word *hypomonē*, and it does not mean waiting calmly in a long line. It is built from two words meaning "under" and "remain," and it describes someone who stays under a heavy load instead of getting out from under it. The Bible uses the same word when it tells Christians to "run with endurance the race that is set before us," and it uses the verb form of that word to describe Jesus, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:1–2). The good soil is not the soil that avoided heat and pressure. It is the soil that stayed under the load and kept producing.

So we need to talk about this. The good soil does what the last two soils did not. The rocky ground withered when hardship came, and the thorny ground got choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life. By contrast, the good soil endures hardship and accepts sacrifice without withering, and it refuses to let pleasure crowd out the Word. Put those two together, and you get the hundredfold crop.

First, some perspective. All around the world, Christians risk prison to worship together or tell others about Jesus Christ. Some have lost their lives for their faith, and some travel for hours just to teach a small group of believers. Then there is the Apostle Paul. He wrote 2 Corinthians to a church in a Greek city where false teachers were bragging about their own credentials. Paul refused to compete on their terms. Instead, he said he was "speaking as a fool" (2 Corinthians 11:21) and listed what following Jesus had cost him, which we will read below. Compared to all of that, most of what modern Christians label "suffering," or even "sacrifice," is hard to accept as either one. If you have never been exposed to the stories of what other Christians are

enduring for their faith and sacrificing for the sake of the mission, you can read them at persecution.com, the website of The Voice of the Martyrs.

Second, here is the caution. Yesterday we saw how the cares and pleasures of life choke out faith, and that danger is especially real for us. We have more money, technology, freedom, and education than most Christians in history ever had. Those things can be distractions from ministry, or they can be amplifiers for it. Imagine a church that has the endurance and sacrificial mindset of Christians who have gone through so much, and then puts all of those resources to work for the mission. That church bears a hundredfold crop like Jesus talked about in Luke 8:8.

Here is what that may look like in a modern American life. You schedule your calendar with ministry, disciple-making, and evangelism ahead of recreation and opulent vacations. You give generously to the work of your church instead of upgrading the camper or the boat. You have a neighbor over for dinner and ask about their life, you invite a coworker to church even when it feels awkward, and you meet with a younger Christian once a week to study the Bible together. It also looks like integrity. When you sign up to serve on host team, in kids' ministry, or in the production team, you follow through and show up, even when something more fun comes along a couple days before. The psalmist describes the person "who swears to his own hurt and does not change" (Psalm 15:4). In our context, bearing fruit is a team effort, too. Paul said, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6). Every person who gives, serves, and shows up is part of that harvest.

READ & MEDITATE

Luke 8:15

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.

2 Corinthians 11:24–27

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. [25]Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; [26]on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; [27]in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

As you read, compare the good soil Jesus describes with the missionary life Paul describes.

REFLECT

Reminder: honest introspection and Scripture-informed self-assessment are far more beneficial than self-delusion and wishful thinking.

Jesus describes the good soil with two actions, and the first one is about what you do with the Word once you hear it.

1. Fill in the blank from Luke 8:15: "hold it _____ in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with _____."*

Where in your life right now are you tempted to get out from under the load instead of staying under it?

Paul did not write this list to impress anyone. He wrote it to show the cost of the mission.

2. Which item on Paul's list in 2 Corinthians 11:24–27 would most likely have ended your involvement in ministry?

What does a list like this tell you about how much Paul valued the souls of the people he was trying to reach?

Most of us will never be stoned or shipwrecked, but we still pay a price for the mission.

3. What is the most you have given up in the last year so that someone else could hear about Jesus or grow in their faith?

Money, technology, freedom, and education can either distract you from the mission or amplify it.

4. Pick one of those four. Is it working as a distraction *from* ministry or as an amplifier *for* ministry in your life right now, and what would it look like to flip it?

A commitment to serve is a promise to the team that is counting on you.

5. Have you ever backed out of a serving commitment you made for something more fun? What did that communicate to the people counting on you?

Does backing out of a commitment you made look like endurance that fulfills Jesus' command to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31)?

What is one recreation plan or purchase that needs to move behind ministry, disciple-making, or evangelism on your calendar or in your budget?

Do some honest introspective self-assessment before moving on.

**These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.*

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite Revelation 21:4 from memory.