In this sermon we will be looking at the verse saying:

“Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him *more* will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.” Luke 8:18

First of all we need to see the context in which this statement is made. In one of the cases it comes after the parable of the sower. Seeing at first at the meaning of the verse, we can remain perplexed and to almost think that this is an unjust statement as we can think: “How is it possible that something was taken away from the one who didn’t have anything and the one who had already, received more?” What we think that is just, is that it is supposed to be taken away from the one who had already and given to the one who didn’t have. But as we said before, we need to look at the context in which this verse is found. We know that God is extremely just in all of His decisions and judgements. We also need to know that this verse doesn’t speak about material goods, but for something spiritual. This is what the most of the Bible speaks about – about what is spiritual. Because this is what is most important. So we mustn’t think that this is having to do with money or riches and using it mainly in this context, kind of loses its purpose.

Let’s see the whole passage where this verse is found.

“And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it.Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.” When He had said these things He cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Then His disciples asked Him, saying, “What does this parable mean?”

And He said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that ‘Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience.

“No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts *it* under a bed, but sets *it* on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor *anything* hidden that will not be known and come to light. Therefore take heed how you hear. **For whoever has, to him *more* will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him**.” Luke 8:4-18

This is one of the passages where this verse is found. It is found in other five places and in three of them is found after the parable of the sower. All of this makes us to think that is there with a purpose.

 The parable of the sower speaks about a seed which is been sown in different grounds and compares this seed to the word of God and the ground to our heart. There are different grounds as there are different persons, but only one of them is good in a way that the seed can give a good fruit. We all know that no one is naturally good by himself as everyone is a sinner in his nature as Romans 3:23 tells us:

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

This is not a matter of a choice as each one is born in this condition. Then after we obviously choose to live in this way, but because this is in our nature. So, coming back to the parable of the sower, how can exactly our heart become good enough to be able to receive the word of God? The answer is that we can not do it by our selves. We all need an intervention of God in our heart, we need His work and miracle so that this can happen. V. 18 starts with the exhortation of Jesus to us to take heed how we hear and after that comes the part with the one who has and the one who doesn’t.

“Therefore take heed how you hear. **For whoever has, to him *more* will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him**.” Luke 8:18

He is speaking to us about hearing in first place because this is one of the most important parts that we many times neglect. We all are always ready to do something if we have to, so that we can earn somehow our reward. It is not though always in this way. The Bible gives a huge importance to hearing. It says that the faith comes by hearing and “hearing” by the word of God. (Romans 10:17) “Hearing” by itself is like a miracle, it is a condition in which someone is found. We all know that someone can listen, but to “hear” is something different. We need God to open our ears to it. “To hear” is to understand in a deeper way something and to perceive the purpose of it. To listen is easy, we can just stand there and be as there is really something going on, but in truth we can listen with one ear and let it out by the other one.

We need to hear the way in which God wants to guide us. The way in which He wants things to be done, because things can not be done definitely in our way as we are good to spoil and to ruin things. It just comes naturally out of us. We mustn’t do any effort for it. Even with our good intentions, it happens in this way.

We can also include here the verse found in James saying:

“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;” James 1:19

This verse is usually used in the context in which we are speaking to another person, but it can be applied in general even in our relationship with God. Many times we speak and carry on speaking without taking our time to hear what is God saying. We just express how we would like things to be done and we follow our own way when is more important to follow God’s way.

“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.” John 6:45

Here we see Jesus saying that we need to hear from the Father in order to come to Him. We need to “hear” the calling of God. By this we see how important it is. This is what the parable of the sower is for. This is the purpose of it. To hear properly, so that we can have real understanding from God. It speaks about the seed, which is the word, being directed to us, but depending on our soil (heart), we can receive it or not. We all naturally have some kind of issue in our heart, but the fourth kind of soil, which is the one that represents the (good) heart, is the one that can be created in us only and exclusively by God’s intervention.

“Therefore take heed how you hear.”

With this single phrase Jesus told the disciples the secret of how to understand the parable of the sower and how to understand the secrets of the kingdom, as all the things of God’s kingdom might be secret for us if we don’t hear properly. It is not a question of listening only as we said before. The key here is to take heed how we hear. By understanding the parable of the sower we can have the key for the rest of the word of God. This is what Jesus said to His disciples when He saw them not understanding the parable:

“And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?” Mark 4:13

He said this because the parable of the sower speaks about how to receive and understand the word of God. That’s why once we comprehend this, we can understand also the rest of the word of God. Not everything obviously, but what God is willing to reveal us. The parable of the sower speaks as well about the beginning, about accepting the message of Jesus and accepting Him. That’s why without this it is impossible to understand and comprehend the rest.

We need to hear from God in order to understand the meaning of any of His words. To be able to “hear” we need to receive from Him this kind of heart, this kind of hearing. Jesus said something multiple times and one of them was in Luke 8:8, after telling the parable of the sower: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

This means that we need to **have** ears. The one who doesn’t have them, can not hear. It is not a question of being physically deaf, but not to be able to hear spiritually, not to be able to hear and understand the word of God, even if we listen to it. We need to receive this kind of hearing. Here we are coming to what the verse “For whoever has, to him *more* will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.” wants to tell us. Whoever has, is having because has received it from God. In Matthew 13:12 we see the same situation and verse.

“For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”

There in Matthew 13 we find again the parable of the sower and its explanation and we see the same verse of the one who had and the one who didn’t. The verse before that, says: “He answered and said to them, “Because it has been **given to you** to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.” Mathew 13:11

  We need to receive from Him, in order to be able to understand His word, to practice it and in order to be able to walk in His path. None of us can do it by himself, with his own strength. Man in his nature is self-sufficient, meaning that he usually doesn’t want to depend on anyone and does things in his own way, but we need to leave our ego aside and trust in God as none of the things He requires from us are possible without Him. So, we conclude that the one who had received, will receive more in the life to come and from the one who hadn’t received will be taken away what he had. But what will be taken away from him, if he doesn’t have anything? In the last part of the verse we saw in Luke 8:18 says:“even what he seems to have will be taken from him.”

Here is also where one of the issues comes. This is that sometimes people might be thinking of having something and in this way to place an obstacle when God wants to offer them something. How can we receive something from God, especially something spiritual, like “hearing”? By asking. Asking with a real need. But how can we ask for something with a real need if we already think of having it. God obviously will give us what we ask with a real need especially what is spiritual and according to His will, but in His right time. We need to receive this understanding, this kind of hearing from God and in the same time in order to receive, we need to take heed how we hear. All of this is connected. Because someone might be asking from God to receive Him, but God is probably busy telling him in which way to ask or is pointing out where the issue is and what does he needs to ask exactly for. Everything comes from God.

What also this verse could be referring at, is that the very last opportunity will be taken away from that person. Because if not anything else, he received an opportunity to believe.

The other occasion where this verse appears is at the end of the parable of the talents. (Matthew 25:14-30)

“‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.”  Matthew 25:29

It says that it will be taken away from him what he has and that was the opportunity he had. The talent that he had to do something with. The parable narrates a story in which a man went on a travel to a far country. Before his departure he called his servants and gave them talents. To one five, to another two, and to another one, to each according to their abilities. Two of them went and traded with the talents and earned more. The last one instead hid his talent underground and at his return, the master wasn’t happy with it. The talent he had received to me represents the opportunity he had by hearing the gospel. He had received that, but without developing it and looking for more. In this way he didn’t receive further strength and understanding from God. Obviously is God the one who can give us understanding and right desire in which we can be looking with success about whatever comes from Him.

“For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.” Romans 8:36

Many times we conform just to the talent we have received, which represents only the opportunity or we think that we already have something. The person having received the one talent only, thought that just by preserving it, will obtain the favor of his master without understanding the purpose of the talent given to him which was to invest it.

That God may always help us to understand His word in a proper way and to receive this understanding from Him so that we can glorify His name in the way it is supposed to be done.