

## The Parable Of Lamp and Measures

Mark 4:21-25

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*<sup>21</sup> And he said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? <sup>22</sup> For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. <sup>23</sup> If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” <sup>24</sup> And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. <sup>25</sup> For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”*

Imagine waking up at tomorrow noticing that it is still dark. The sun did not come up. There are no lights to turn on because the electricity is out. And imagine living in darkness for the next few days. I am sure you will say, “where is the light?”.

We need light. We are meant for light. But you cannot create light. Just as we are dependent on the sun to give us light, we need God’s light.

Here in this parable, Jesus teaches two parables one about a lamp or light and another about measures. Unlike, the previous passage, which is the parable of the sower or soils, where Mark gives us an explanation, here Mark the Gospel writer does not give us an explanation about these two parables.

Last week we talked about what a parable is. A parable is a story used to illustrate a spiritual truth or lesson. Jesus taught in parables for the general public. But to his disciples, he explained everything. If you skip down to verses 33 and 34, Mark says, “*With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. <sup>34</sup> He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything*”. Evidently the disciples knew the explanation of this parable. It is just not recorded for us.

So, what do we do to explain or unpack this parable? We look for clues and study the Gospels, the New Testament and the whole Bible to find the meaning.

The first parable is the parable of the lamp.

Verse 21 through 23.

*<sup>21</sup> And he said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? <sup>22</sup> For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. <sup>23</sup> If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

In the first century context, a lamp was made out of clay. The oil used was olive oil and the lamp was used to light up rooms at night as they did not have electricity. A basket or a bushel (as some translations say) was a large container to hold grain. So you see the picture – Jesus says do you buy a lamp to put it under a basket or a bed? No. In a modern context do you buy a light bulb to put in under your night stand or under your bed? No. Why? Because the lamp is meant to give light!

Now, who or what is the lamp Jesus refers to?

Here is a clue. The English translation in verse 21 “a lamp *brought in*” hides the original translation. The verb for “brought in” is actually “*comes in*” or “*arrives*”. The word is *erchomai* meaning “*come*”. A literal translation sounds this way “Does a lamp *come in*..” Sounds awkward in English, doesn’t it? No one says “does a lamp come in to be put under a basket or a bed?” But that is very likely our clue about what or who the lamp is.

The lamp or light is Jesus Christ. The lamp could refer to the Gospel or the message of the Kingdom. And Jesus says in verse 22 that this light may be hidden to some but one day it is going to be fully revealed. The Pharisees and the scribes could not see this light.

Paul says this about the gospel in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse three – “*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing*”. Why is Jesus’ light hidden to some? Because their hearts are hardened and the minds blinded. But one day this light will be revealed to all. It won’t be hidden. Jesus very likely refers to his second coming.

In the Gospel of Mark, the word *lamp* is mentioned once and the word *light* is mentioned twice.

In the Gospel of John, you can see so much written about Jesus as Light.

- In him was life, and the life was the *light* of men. John 1:4
- The *light* shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:5
- The true *light*, which gives *light* to everyone, was coming into the world. John 1:9
- And this is the judgment: the *light* has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the *light* and does not come to the *light*, lest his works should be exposed. John 3:19-20
- “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*” John 8:12.

So in the first parable, Jesus teaches using the parable of the lamp. The lamp or light is Jesus Christ. Jesus ends his parable by saying, “*he who has ears, hear*”.

Second parable: The parable of measures:

Verses 24 and 25.

<sup>24</sup> *And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. <sup>25</sup> For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”*

This parable is about fair and accurate measures. This has to do with your hearing. If you hear and receive Jesus as Lord, you will receive a blessing. But look at the last part of verse 24 and 25, more will be added to you. You only gain by receiving Christ. With Jesus you can lose the whole world and it will still be gain for you.

Jesus says in the last part of verse 25 – to the one who does not have whatever he says will be stripped away. This is about stewardship or investment in the kingdom of God. To the one who hears, receives and invests in kingdom work, more will come. But to the one who has no desire to hear, receive and respond, even what he has will be taken from him. Jesus is probably talking about the Pharisees. They were blind and deaf to the Gospel. And if they keep refusing him, even what they think have will be taken away.

Charles Spurgeon, commenting on these two verses said, “*those who have no interest in the Word find it uninteresting*” and “*those who desire to find fault, find faults enough*” but “*those who seek the solid truth learn it from any faithful ministry*”. It is true that some have no desire to hear the Gospel and it will be measured back to you the same way. But those who hear well and receive are given more insight and blessing.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus gives a longer explanation about this parable. This is from Luke 19: 11-27.

A man gives ten minas or coins to ten people. And he tells them to invest them. So the first man invests and makes 10 minas out of the one he had been given. Another man made five minas out of the one. But one man did nothing with what he had. And the owner says, “take this man’s mina” and give it to the man who has ten. Why? He simply did nothing. So this parable is about kingdom investment. The more you hear and perceive the more you will receive.

I have at least *three* implications in light of these two parables: –  
Witness, Conduct and Service.

### **Witness.**

Jesus said he is the “light of the world”. Jesus is the source of light. We know that. But Jesus also taught his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, “*you are the light of the*

*world*". Matthew 5:14

What does Jesus mean?

When Jesus uses the word "light", he means Gospel truth but not limited to. Jesus means your witness, your conduct and your serving and much more. Light is the life of Jesus manifested in you and through you. You are a reflection of the light of Christ.

Remember what was said about John the Baptist ?

*"He (John the Baptist) was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light."* John 1:8

And Jesus commends John the Baptist for being a bright light but *not* the source of light. *"You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. <sup>34</sup> Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. <sup>35</sup> He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. <sup>36</sup> But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John."* John 5:33-36

Jesus did not need John the Baptist to witness about him. John the Baptist was given that privilege to witness. In the same way, you have the privilege too. All his disciples are the light of the world.

You did not have this light before Jesus came in to your life. You did not love light naturally. You loved darkness more than the light. And it was the Christ of light that brought us to God. When the light of Christ shone on you, you were transformed.

Paul writes this way in Ephesians chapter five:

*"for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light"* Ephesians 5:8

Years ago, a man called me and told me about a fearful nightmare he had the previous night. I had shared with him the gospel of Jesus Christ and maybe he thought I would have some insight to interpret what his nightmare was about. So I told him I don't know what his nightmare might mean, but I told him I do know one thing. *"God is light and in him, there is no darkness at all"*. And I told him that Jesus is that light.

I prayed with this man and ask him to pray with me. Which he did. Praise God!

*How are you to be light of world?*

Jesus illustrates for us in Matthew 5: 15-16.

*"A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others."* Notice verse 15 here is the parallel to Mark 4:21?

Ancient towns were built on hills or on the slopes of mountains. And the material used

was limestone. And you could not miss these towns as they were built on an elevation and they reflected light because of the color of the walls.

Notice the phrase Jesus uses in verse 16, “*in the same way*” meaning just as you would not miss a city on a hill or a lamp that is lit, let your light shine.

Jesus means live in such a way that your life as disciple is evident, plain and clear to others.

### **Conduct.**

*“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life”*  
Philippians 2:14-16

Your conduct is to be backed by scriptural convictions. (by holding fast to his word). Peter about the word in 2 Peter 1:19 – “*And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place*”..

Discipleship is a gradual development in godly conduct. The Holy Spirit guides you as walk with dependence on Christ and his Word. We are lights to the extent we resist the darkness and live in the light of Christ.

### **Service**

You are saved *not* by good works but for good works. God has predestined you for good works. Ephesians 2:9-10.

Why does Jesus call you to be a light to others?

Jesus reveals his *intention* for his disciples. Matthew 5:16

*“..so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

The end goal is the glory of God!

Others can easily see if you do good works for self-glory or for the glory of God

But when you live for the glory of God, others can see and give glory to God too.

In conclusion, Jesus says “*If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear*”.

Do you know God the Father *heard* Jesus for his obedience? (Hebrews 5:7).

Because of Jesus’ obedience you have eternal salvation. Jesus calls us to hear well and obey. May God bless you!

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: The Parable Of Lamp and measures. Mark 4:21-25

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What are these two parables about?

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. Do you believe you are called to witness for Christ? Why or why not? What role does your conduct and service (good works) play in witnessing? Go around and share.

3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: What will you do to be a light to others? What keeps you from being a light?