

Light for You

Mark 4:21-25

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Introduction

Today I will be reading and preaching from Mark 4:21-25.

- We spent two weeks on the previous passage (Mark 4:1-20 on the parable of the sower) because there was so much to consider.
- Last week, we focused on the parable itself.
 - It teaches us that many people who hear the word of God—even many who join the church and say that they believe—
 - do not really believe it in a way that brings them salvation.
 - Some of them never even understand the word due to hardness of heart.
 - Some receive it with joy, but have no root, not discerning the value of gospel, so that they turn away when opposition comes.
 - Some drift into a profession, but do not ever really receive the gospel because their interest is elsewhere.
 - In the end, it is only those who truly believe that have eternal life and bring forth the fruits of it in their lives—some more than others.
- The time before, we looked at what Jesus said about His reasons for using parables.
 - He said that He was using them a kind of judgment against the multitudes that gathered to Him.
 - Jesus knew that many of them had been coming to Him only because they wanted to be healed or to see miracles or to be able to benefit from His power in gaining victory over the Romans.
 - Since these people had no interest in the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus had been preaching and that John had preached before He came,
 - He would teach in parables—telling stories like the sower—that they would take as nice stories without bothering to understand what they meant.
 - Since they had no interest in the kingdom or in being reconciled to God, they would be left in ignorance.
- We saw that really this was an illustration of how it is with many in the church when it comes to the history of Jesus' life.
 - Many of them know the story of His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and they may even believe it to be factual,
 - but for them it is just history—it is not the account of His saving work for sinners that they love and receive that they might be forgiven of their sins by Him and reconciled to God.
 - Nevertheless, in verse 11 & 12 Jesus assured those who had come to Him for eternal life that: **“To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and *their* sins be forgiven them.’ ”**

The parable in verses 21-25 that we are looking at today is somewhat connected with this.

- Jesus makes it clear that He has not come for the purpose of hiding the truth, but rather of making it known...
 - The light is not here to be hidden, but to be revealed to all.
 - He promises that anyone who truly listens to receive truth for life will be given even more than they asked for—
 - It is a great encouragement for you if you want to live for God.

Listen as I read this passage to you from God’s holy word.

- I will begin in Mark 4:21 and read through verse 25.
- Here is the word of the living God for you:

Mark 4:21-25: Also He said to them, “Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? ²² For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” ²⁴ Then He said to them, “Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. ²⁵ For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”

May the Lord add His blessing so that all of us might benefit from His word as we now endeavour not only to understand it, but to receive it so that it changes us.

Let’s begin with what Jesus says in verse 21-22 about the light, in short that:

I. The light did not come to be hidden.

A. Jesus tells us in this parable that a lamp is brought in to be seen.

1. He expresses the obvious here in v. 21: **Also He said to them, “Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand?”**
 - They had little terra-cotta lamps—a small vessel that had a bowl you could put a couple of ounces of oil in and a spout that you could put a wick in and light to burn the oil for illumination.
2. Obviously, nobody would light a lamp and then stick it under a measuring basket or under a bed (perhaps the couches the wealthy people reclined on for eating)...
 - The point is clear... you don’t put a lighted lamp where it cannot be seen but on a lampstand so it can fill the room with light.
 - That is its purpose—to illumine.

B. But to what does the lamp refer in Jesus’ parable?

1. This time, we are not told as we were in the parable of the sower,
 - But I think it is pretty clear that Jesus is talking about Himself as the lamp.
 - Some struggle because in Matthew 5, Jesus speaks of a light not being hidden and He tells us that He is talking about His disciples who are to be the light of the world.
 - But there is no reason to think that Jesus is using this figure in the same way here as He was there...He uses the same illustration for different purposes
 - We know that He says of Himself, “I am the light of the world.”
 - In fact, He often refers to Himself as the light.

2. Let me tell you why I think it refers to Jesus.
 - a. The main reason is because of the context.
 - In the parable of the sower, Jesus was talking about the mystery of the kingdom being revealed to some and hidden from others (v.11 & 12)...
 - He is not talking about us hiding our light, but the problem of hiding from the light.
 - And in the context of our text for today in verses 21-25...
 - Jesus is not speaking about our need to be light, but our need to see the light that has come.
 - For example, look at verse 22.
 - It is talking not about us bringing forth what was hidden, but about what is hidden being brought into view (presumably by God) so all can see.
 - b. Besides the context, the grammar of the verse somewhat contributes to the lamp standing for Jesus.
 - 1) It is interesting... not all translations bring this out as well as they should... but the lamp is actually the subject of the sentence here...
 - The NIV really distorts this when it says, “Do you bring in a lamp...?”
 - That makes “you” the subject, but a literal translation is:
 - “Does the lamp come (present middle voice) in order that it may be put under a basket or under a bed?”
 - It is a lamp that is not brought, but a lamp that comes and has purpose within itself. That points to Jesus.
 - 2) Also, the definite article is used, so is not just any lamp (*a* lamp), but *the* lamp... in other words, a particular lamp... that is, Jesus.
- With these things in view, I believe, as many do, that Jesus is speaking here of Himself as the lamp.
- C. What we have here is Jesus’ testimony that He has come to be revealed.
1. He is somewhat hidden now but that will not always be so.
 - In verse 21 He tells us that He did not come to be hidden.
 - And in verse 22, He tells us that though He is somewhat hidden, He will not always be so.
 - v. 22: **“For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.”**
 2. Let me point out here that the light itself is not only the thing that is seen, but that it also comes to illuminate everything else...
 - a. Jesus shows us the Father—in John 14:9 He says, **“He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”**
 - b. He shows us ourselves and our sin... **Joh 3:19: And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.**
 - c. He shows us the kingdom and He shows us the way to the Father...as He said in John 8:12: **“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”**

- d. He also tells us that at the last day, He will be the one who will expose every secret thing about us (Rom 2:16).
 - So again, He is somewhat hidden now, but verse 22 tells us that there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed.
3. There are two reasons that Jesus was somewhat hidden at the time He spoke these words.
- a. The first reason was because of the poor perception of those who saw Him.
 - In the opening of his gospel, John tells us that when Christ came, the light shined in the darkness but the darkness did not comprehend it.
 - His glory was revealed to us, but we did not see it or perceive it.
 - Here was the Son of God, yes, clothed in our flesh, but going about casting out demons by His own authority, cleansing lepers, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead...
 - And preaching the gospel.
 - And the very church to which He came was so dreadfully blind that they did not esteem Him—He was in the world and the world was made by Him, but the world knew Him not.
 - That is extreme blindness and that is one of the reasons He was (and still is) somewhat hidden, and for some, totally hidden.
 - b. The second reason was because it was the Father's plan that He be hidden until the appointed time.
 - 1) Our heavenly Father is like an earthly father who likes to surprise His children.
 - He did not tell the people of old exactly what He was going to do in sending Christ.
 - He gave them a lot of clues, but He did not spell it out.
 - It was such a marvellous thing that we would not believe it even if we had been told.
 - 2) He waited until the fullness of time and then He sent Christ forth to be born of a woman. He was brought forth to be seen!
 - Here is the light of the world who enlightens every person.
 - Here is the one in whom all the fullness of divinity is found.
 - Here is the one in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge... the mystery of the kingdom, of salvation, of the Father's glory, of the forgiveness of sins, of the calling of the nations, of the resurrection, of the hope of glory...
 - It was all in Christ revealed.
 - 3) But our Father's plan was to give us clues and gradually unfold this precious treasure to us throughout redemptive history...
 - Revealing to Adam a son born who would crush the serpent.
 - Revealing to Abraham a son born who would bless the nations, and a ram on the mount to be a sacrifice provided by God Himself.
 - Revealing to Moses the blood of the covenant by which we are sanctified, and the tabernacle where reconciliation is revealed.

- Revealing to David, the King who would reign on His throne forever.
 - Revealing through Isaiah, the servant who was bruised for our iniquities and to Ezekiel the one who would be our shepherd.
- 4) But still He was not yet revealed until He came and dwelt among us...
- And even then it is a gradual unfolding until marvel of all marvels, He Himself went to the cross to die in our place!
 - He Himself went to pay the full penalty for our sins.
 - It was something that we could never have fathomed that God would do until it was actually done.
 - And once it was done, we knew our Father and His goodness and grace as we had never known Him before.
 - We saw His glory and we saw His kingdom and we saw in Jesus that we were accepted by His righteousness and that we would share His inheritance in glory.
 - We now knew God to be more righteous and more just and more gracious than we had ever dreamed—all revealed in Christ the lamp.
- 5) But even now, there is still more to come when at the last day He comes in glory and we see Him in all His fullness.
- Just as you who grasp the cross are gripped by the reality that God the Son payed for your sins...
 - So at the last day, you will see for the first time how great those sins are—all of them—before His glorious presence.
 - You will see why the Son had to die for you.
 - You will see just how great the Father’s grace and mercy are to save a wretch like you.
 - And just as you were never the same after you saw the cross, so you will never be the same after you see His glory in that day!
 - Oh what a glorious day of rejoicing it will be... forever!

TRANS> Do you see what a grand promise this parable of the light contains?

- Christ is the lamp.
- All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Him.
- He has not come to be hidden from us but to be revealed.
 - **v. 22: “For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.”**
 - Thanks be to God!

II. Make sure, therefore, that you receive the revelation of the lamp!

- **That is what Jesus tells you to do.**

A. In verse 23, He says. **“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”**

1. This is a call to perceive what is revealed by the lamp.
 - The “ears” called for here refer to the ability to take in information.
 - And the “hearing” called for here is the processing of that information.

- In other words, a person who cannot hear (who is physically deaf) could actually obey this call if they can perceive the call, say, by reading.
 - Language is one of the greatest gifts that God gave us.
 - He gave it to us not only (or even primarily) so we could communicate with each other on a much deeper level than we could have ever done without it,
 - but even more importantly so that we could understand and know Him who is described to us rather than seen, and who reveals His will to us by covenant.
 - The point is that you are to truly take in the revelation that Jesus, the lamp gives—not just the sound of the words, but you are to receive light in your soul.
 - The problem is that there are many who have ears to hear (ability to take in revelation), but who don't really hear—they don't really perceive what the Spirit of God is saying.
 - They hear the words, but they don't process the information.
 - Sort of like boys are—boys of all ages from 2 to 102.
 - You say something to them, they have ears that take in the sound—but you realise that you didn't get through at all.
 - The information did not sink in.
2. By addressing the ears, we are reminded that the way the lamp of Christ conveys information is primarily by verbal communication... by words.
- It may seem strange for a lamp to reveal truth by words, by that is the way He does it—He went everywhere preaching the gospel,
 - And then He sent out His church after He was gone to do the same.
 - And His apostles gave us a New Testament that was full of words to be read and preached along with an Old Testament that was also full of words about Him.
 - Indeed, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.
 - That is how the lamp reveals truth to us.
 - As I mentioned last week, even if you had seen Jesus come and die on the cross and rise again, you would not be saved by that.
 - You are saved when you believe what God has promised about that—that He has accepted Christ's sacrifice for our sins and whoever believes in Him will be completely forgiven and reconciled.
 - The reason so many among the multitudes who followed Jesus about and who saw His miracles did not benefit was because even though they had ears to hear, they did not hear.
 - When He told them to repent and believe the gospel of the kingdom that He had come to establish in the world, they did not take it in.
 - They saw His miracles and believed that He was great, but they did not hear His words—they heard them physically, but they did not take them in... like a boy.
3. It is a tragedy to be a person with ears who is capable of receiving the word of Christ, to hear the word, and not believe.

- It is not only a tragedy, but a great wickedness, because it speaks of a person who does not care about reconciliation with the living God.
 - You are God’s enemy and you don’t care.
 - It should be your greatest concern.
 - The words are there that tell you how God graciously saves sinners through Christ, but the matter is not important enough for you to bother about taking it in.
 - It doesn’t capture your interest—because you are wicked and rebellious and don’t care about God.
 - Here are words of grace about Christ to bring you to God, to turn your life right side up, to bless you and make you happy forever, to deliver you from hell...
 - but you are not interested enough to pay those words much attention.
- The next thing Jesus says is also about hearing—it is so important.
- B. In verse 24, Jesus says, “**Take heed what you hear.**”
- We might expect Him to say, “Take heed *how* you hear,” but He does not. He says, “Take heed *what* you hear.”
 - This conveys two important things...
 1. First, be sure that you are receiving light from the right source.
 - a. Jesus is the light.
 - He reveals the truth about us, the truth about God, the truth about the way of salvation.
 - We are to do what God told us to do at the transfiguration: “**Hear Him.**”
 - If we start to question His word, adjust His commandments, doubt His promises, then we will soon go astray.
 - Another thing...
 - b. Beware that you do not hear Satan who appears as an angel of light, instead of hearing Christ.
 - Satan does not lead us astray by making an appearance as a dark lord who wants to lead us into lies and destruction.
 - He appeals to us as one who wants to help us be nice people and to lead us in a way that is good... as he first appeared to Eve.
 - He was very happy with the typical ‘nice family’ in the 1950s who was hard working, courteous and respectful, generous, and lived in happy families with prosperity; but who did not want to divide over religious truth—just to go to church and get along without worrying about doctrine.
 - We are seeing a repeat of this in what is now the conservative church.
 - Make sure the truth is coming from the right source—from God’s word.
 - c. And then there is also the problem of listening to the wrong source because you want it to be wrong.
 - There is a dark and sinful nature in us—in fact, the Bible says our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked.
 - And you know as well as I do that evil has a certain attraction for us.
 - Sometimes we want to lap up darkness because we like it.

- We tantalise ourselves with reading about immorality or we listen to music that feeds rebellion in our souls.
 - We get a rush out of breaking away from God—it makes us feel strong and free in a very wicked way.
- You need to be careful what you hear—what you take in as truth—
- Ask yourself the question, “What is my soul actually feeding on? Just what am I hearing—not hearing with my ears, but actually taking into my life?”
 - Is the source you are actually feeding on the lamp, or something else?
2. Second, be sure that you are hearing **what** the lamp actually says.
- a. Two people can listen to the same sermon—a faithful sermon—and come away with totally different understandings of what was said.
- Not just different application to their lives, but one can come away with something that is false and wrong.
 - You can come to the word looking for what you want to hear instead of wanting to hear what God says.
 - And when you do that, what you hear will not be the truth.
- b. And of course you must not read or listen to God’s word with filters on.
- Maybe you don’t want to hear about sin—not really—so you don’t truly apply the word to the depths of you—to see, for example, that murder and adultery come out of your heart, not from outside.
 - You go about supposing that there are things you would never do, not recognising that anyone who has sinned against God is capable of the worst kind of atrocities.
 - When people do certain things like a mass shooting or molesting children, our society likes to say they are sick, but we ought rather to see that we are capable of the same because there is sin in us too.
 - Or maybe there are certain commandments we don’t want to hear, so we don’t take them in...
 - or perhaps we don’t want to hear about God’s wrath and judgment so we take a Psalm to sing and edit out the parts that we don’t like.
 - I spoke to someone just a couple of weeks ago who told me that is what they do when they read the Bible—just take the parts they like.
 - No, that is not the way to read the Bible. Be careful what you hear. You need to hear the whole counsel of God.
 - If you are selective in what you hear, you are not really getting the truth that you need most.

TRANS> So be sure that you are actually receiving the truth of Christ.

- He is the lamp that has come into the world. Hear Him.
 - In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Hear Him!
- Oh, but you need encouragement, don’t you?
 - Well here is some encouragement:

III. Jesus gives us a super encouraging promise of success

- A. He promises you that whatever effort you put into receiving the light will be rewarded.
- v. 24 says: **Then He said to them, “Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.”**
1. This is a sure promise.
 - a. Nobody has ever expended effort to truly receive into their lives the light of Christ and not got what they were looking for.
 - This is a promise you can absolutely count on... whatever effort you put in will never go unrewarded. You will never waste your time.
 - In fact, you will always actually get more than you put into it.
 - b. It is like a fellow going to dig for gold and being told,
 - “If you dig in these hills, you always get gold in proportion to how much you dig.
 - “Your digging will never be greater than what you take in, but in fact it will be the other way around.”
 - You are guaranteed of success—if you seek, you will always find.
 - c. A lot of Christians turn hyper-Calvinist at this point.
 - They say, “That sounds legalistic! That sounds like works salvation. I am not trusting my digging, I am trusting in God to give me His treasure.”
 - People say that because they don’t want what they receive to be tied so closely to how much they pursue.
 - They want to suppose that even if they don’t pursue, they will still be blessed.
 - But that misses the point.
 - The point of Calvinism is not that God does not reward those who diligently seek Him.
 - Real Calvinism has no dispute with that!
 - The point is that we are all such desperate sinners that we won’t seek Him unless He changes us...
 - but that has absolutely no effect on the promise that whatever measure you use in hearing Him will be measured back to you.
 - d. That should make you glad!
 - It is not telling you that it is all up to you.
 - It is telling you that whatever effort you put into knowing the Lord will always be rewarded.
 - You will never waste your time.
 2. It doesn’t mean that you will be the smartest person around—that you will understand the nuances of the Biblical languages and all that...
 - Or that you will be able to talk about the finer points of theology and win arguments,
 - But it means that you will come to know Christ, you will come to appreciate the riches of His grace in His kindness toward us.

- You will come to delight in His beauty and His ways and you will grow in your life with Him—living more and more like Him—and truly knowing and loving the Father like Him.
3. Now some of you might say, “I have had times when I have set myself to truly seek the Lord and nothing much came of it.”
- And I am going say back to you, “No indeed, you have not.”
 - You may have been seeking relief or something like that from God.
 - But if you were not heard, you were not asking for the right thing.
 - If you are really seeking to hear from God—if you are truly seeking to know Him as He is, and coming to His word to hear truly hear Him,
 - that is when you will always be rewarded.
 - The lamp did not come to be hidden but to be revealed.
- B. But note well, there is also a warning here.
1. Mark 4:25 sets up a great contrast between those who seek and those who do not.
- It says: **“For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”**
 - In other words, if you are exposed to God’s word—perhaps you are even surrounded by it—
 - but you don’t have enough interest to pay attention to it... if you expend no effort to receive it... you will go into greater and greater darkness.
 - The things of Christ will become more and more murky to you.
 - His beauty and His grace will become fuzzy things.
 - His commandments will become unappealing and burdensome to you instead of that which sets you free and gives you joy.
 - Worst of all, the very gospel itself will have no life changing attraction to you.
2. But why should that be the case with any of you!
- The promise is there for every one of us.
 - The offer is free—come and feed and you will never hunger.
 - Jesus has living water and if anyone drinks of it, he will never thirst again.
 - The more you eat and the more you drink, the more treasure you will find.
 - Why would you continue to stand next to the fountain and die of thirst?

Conclusion: Hear the gracious call of the LORD, the lamp who did not come to be hidden, but revealed:

- **Isaiah 55:1-3: “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. ³ Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David.”**