

SHINING THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE**Sunday September 4, 2022 - 5:30 p.m.****Pastor Chris Micks, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, On****SHINING THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE**

Tonight I want to look at Mark 4:21-25 but before we get to those verses, I want to back up a few verses for a moment to look at the parable of the sower as that is where Jesus explains to his disciples the purpose of parables. Let me read to you verses 11 and 12 of this 4th chapter of Mark.

Mark 4:11-12 – “And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, [12] so that “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.””

It sounds almost as if Jesus was saying that he taught in parables to obscure his meaning, to kind of shut some people out while bringing others into a privileged group or an in-crowd who understood the lingo. I remember when we were kids, there was nothing we loved more than to work out little codes to write to each other so that no one else could understand our messages, especially in class. I remember we loved invisible ink and you would write a note to someone and it would look like a blank page but if you help it up in the light, you could read the secret message.

Is that what Jesus was doing, is that what he meant when he said he taught in parables like this? No, it's not. Jesus was not trying to be secretive, if he were trying to be secretive, he would surely not have gone about ministry the way that he did. He would have gathered people in back rooms, he would have had secret handshakes, they would have closed the doors to lock people out, but he didn't do that at all.

When you read the Gospel of Mark or any of the gospels, you see he had a very public ministry. He preached to crowds in the thousands of people. They were attracted to him by the things that he did and the things that he said. They came to him from all points of the compass because he worked spectacular healings and deliverances that were signs to get their attention. They were clearly supernatural things and they did garner a lot of attention. The people loved to hear Jesus speak.

You remember that they said this man speaks with an authority that we have never heard before. So clearly Jesus was not trying to be a secret but he was, in a sense a mystery, a mystery waiting to be investigated and understood by those who would come after him, his disciples, his followers. He was inviting people to open their hearts to receive and to understand him and what he had to say, and for them to then pursue the truth that he brought.

But to anyone who didn't open their hearts, to anyone who would not receive his words, well the things that he said just seemed to be an interesting storytelling they did not grasp. They never could grasp the full meaning behind them. So what do we have here?

Once again, Mark is showing us from Jesus' own words that there is a dividing line. A line of demarcation between, on the one hand those who have ears to hear and are pressing in to know the truth of Jesus. On the other hand, those who don't receive the truth and so they have no real understanding. So Jesus then, is to some a riddle and at the same time he is to others, a shining lamp. Which brings us to our reading this evening. Let's read this together, starting at Mark 4:21.

Mark 4:21-25 – “He also said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed? Isn't it to be put on a lampstand? [22] For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light. [23] If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen.” [24] And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear. By the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and more will be added to you. [25] For whoever has, more will be given to him, and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”

So this is called the Parable of the Lamp and when you read it, I think it seems quite straight forward but I also think that a lot of people still don't really grasp its meaning and what Jesus was saying here.

The first point that I want to draw out of these verses is that:

1) THE LIGHT IS FOR SHINING

Mark 4:21 - "He also said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed? Isn't it to be put on a lampstand?"

Where is a lamp positioned that is vitally important? We take great care about the positioning of light. Some people nowadays when they are building or renovating a home, they will bring in even a lighting specialist to give them advice on where to put the lights because it's as true today as it was in the humble Jewish homes of 2000 years ago, that lamps need to be placed where they will be most effective, where they will cast the most light, where they will not be blocked in any way, where they won't cast shadows. You have to put lamps in the right places.

Jesus, in this parable, uses an extreme analogy. He said you would never have a lamp brought into a house and then place it underneath a basket. What would be the point of bringing in a lamp only to obscure it like that? It would be of no benefit. On the contrary, what do you do? Well these days, we mount our light sources on the ceiling or on racks or tripods. We get them in just the right places. In Jesus' day, they did exactly the same thing. They would place household lamps on lampstands. We're talking about these little clay lampstands not much bigger than your hand that they filled with oil, put a wick inside and the amount of light that they would give was extraordinary. They would place them up on a lampstand for this same reason, to position them to be most effective so that the light would fill the room.

Lights are for shining, that's Jesus' point here. Look at verse 22:

Mark 4:22 - "For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light."

How many of you have ever heard these words of Jesus before and the preacher was using them to challenge you that one day we will all stand before God and every one of our sins will be put on display. **"For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light."**

All of our sins are going to be put on display, every secret thought, every wrong motivation will be shown for what it really was. Imagine everything you have done, thought and every word will be on display just like these screens behind me. Every good word and action and every evil, wrong, gossipy thing you've said and done. Ouch.

Well, people have preached that from this verse. The idea of final judgment and that we must all give an account before God is a very real one and it's something that we should take very seriously and live in the light of that day when we have to give an account to God.

But that's not actually what Jesus was talking about here in Mark chapter 4 verse 22. We've got to always be very careful to read these things in their proper context. What was Jesus talking about? Well, he was talking about himself, wasn't he?

Mark 4:22 - "For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light."

The gospel truth that Jesus brought when he arrived, there were so many that did not receive him because he did not conform to their preconceived idea of God's promised Saviour, the Messiah so they couldn't accept him or they wouldn't

accept him. People today continue to reject Jesus for all kinds of reasons or they don't think of him much at all which amounts to the same thing as rejecting him.

So they don't come into the knowledge of God's truth, not having an open heart to receive the things of God's kingdom. It just seems nonsense to them, strange ideas that don't have much bearing on their lives today because they haven't pressed in to know Jesus. But Jesus was saying that one day everything that people have dismissed and not pursued, everything that remained hidden to them because they were not interested, it will suddenly be the most interesting, the most important thing in the world to them.

They will realize it was the truth all along, they will see it in brilliant, vivid colour and now it will all be too plain to them but it will be too late. That's his message here. One day, there'll be a day of Revelation. The bible says in Philippians chapter 2, verses 10 and 11 that on that day **"...every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth [11] and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."**

Every human being who has ever lived will get on their knees and bow before Jesus. Every tongue that ever cursed him will confess the truth that he is Lord of all and it will all bring glory to God. That's what the Bible says.

The dawning of his great light began 2,000 years ago, rejected as it was, the light did dawn in that little town of Bethlehem and it burst out brilliantly as he began to minister there on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It should have been the greatest moment for all the people of the world who had sat so long in darkness waiting.

But how many of you know that when a light is turned on in a dark room, it is often a very uncomfortable experience for those who've been sitting there in the dark. People wince because their pupils are dilated and they become accustomed to the dark. You walk into the room and flick the light on and you will see them recoil because of the brightness and so it was that Jesus was not welcomed by all. Everyone was blinking in a sense, trying to grasp what had happened, who had come among them and some went scurrying back to find their comfortable darkness. But the light is for shining, and he had come. The world could never be the same.

So that's the first thing, the light is for shining.

2) WE CAN ONLY SHINE THE LIGHT TO THE DEGREE THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED IT

Mark 4:23-24 – "If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen." [24] And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear. By the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and more will be added to you."

So first of all, Jesus gives a challenge and the challenge is "Listen! Listen to the words that I'm saying, listen to the truth that I'm bringing. Be a hearer." That's the first thing challenging the people, "Hear what I'm saying." But then the caution, and the caution is this: Be mindful. Not what you hear, that doesn't really capture what Jesus is saying. Not be careful what you hear, that's not what he's saying. Jesus had already established the truth that he's referring to when he talks here about what they're hearing. He's referring to the truth that he, himself brought and taught and the truth that he embodied. He is the Truth.

Jesus isn't saying line up all the different teaching and philosophies in the world and be careful which ones you choose to listen to, that's not what he's saying. He's saying, be careful how you hear what I am telling you, what I've said, the truth that I brought. Be careful how you listen to and receive that! Be mindful how you hear Jesus.

Now according to the Bible and Jesus himself stated this a number of times, the act of hearing God's word is not complete until there has been a response. Let me repeat that. The act of hearing God's word is not complete until there has been a response. Jesus said this a number of times. He said "if you love me, keep my commandments." That's how we know you're

walking in the truth, you keep his commandments. There must be a response. Jesus spoke about his own family and he said this, “this is who as my true family are those who hear me and do the things that I say.”

So hearing God’s word requires that you act on it. Years later, James, the half-brother of Jesus wrote those very familiar and powerful words that capture what Jesus was saying. It’s in James 1:22, he says **“But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”**

Jesus was saying the same thing, be real doers of his words, not just hearers alone, it requires something else, you’ve got to act on it. The Jewish people that Jesus was preaching to were very familiar with the idea of hearing God’s word. In the Jewish home, in the Jewish education process, in the synagogue worship, the reading aloud publicly of the scripture was absolutely central. They would read the scriptures constantly and they grew up hearing God’s word over and over again.

But Jesus first, and later on James, confronted them with the fact that you can hear the word but if you don’t then do what it says you are just deceiving yourself. “Oh we know the truth when we hear it, we only believe the bible, we will not be led astray by false doctrine.” But think about this, the truth assented to by the intellect but not incorporated into the heart and the will, not put into practice in our lives is of no effect and in fact it only serves to condemn us because when we know the truth and we fail to keep it, we’re in sin.

I grew up my whole life in church and I thank God for Sunday School or as we call it here, Christian Education. By the time I was a teenager, you could start any bible story and I could finish it for you. I had been taught to memorize scripture and I’m glad for that. That knowledge of the scripture is a guide and a light to me to this very day. And I will always be grateful for the legacy that I was given but until I put into practice, living what I have learned, it profits me nothing.

There will be lost people in hell for all of eternity who were familiar with the scriptures, who knew much of the Bible. You know the devil himself can quote the bible. **“But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”**

Here’s the principle, hearing God’s truth is not complete until you have incorporated it into your daily life. In other words, you haven’t really heard it until you’re living it. That’s what Jesus says. In fact James says that if we only hear the word of God and we don’t act on it, we’re actually in deception. Let me read James 1:22 again. **““But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”**

Imagine that, you’ve just heard the glorious truth that Jesus came down from heaven into the world to bring us to salvation, you’ve just listened to the word of God and you have come into deception. The worst kind of deception, self-deception. You’re in a worse condition now perhaps than you were before you heard the truth. How could that be? You see, we get into thinking that we’re okay because we’ve heard the truth, because we’ve been to church. We’ve heard the preacher, we’ve memorized a creed or catechism or something like that.

But please listen to me, knowing Jesus Christ in a vital relationship that is transforming us is not at all the same thing as merely knowing about Jesus. It’s not the same as knowing creeds or formulas. We need to have Christ implanted in our hearts by the word of God springing up as we obey him and put his words into practice. That was Jesus’ message, take heed HOW you hear me. That’s what he’s saying and notice the next thing Jesus said in verse 24.

Mark 4:24 – “And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear. By the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and more will be added to you.”

Don’t miss that! Jesus actually pivots here to bring in another focus. So far it’s all been about the light of Jesus. He’s the lamp that hasn’t come into the world just to be obscured, put under a basket or under a bed. He’s the one ultimately that must be revealed completely before every eye in the universe. His truth will one day be undeniable.

But now Jesus pivots to talk about us, his hearers, measuring out something and in context, what is the something? It's the truth that we've received from Jesus. With the same measure you use to meet out that truth, it will be measured to you and to you who hear, more will be given.

So here's the point. As we hear the truth of Jesus and pursue him for understanding and put his words into practice in our lives so we've really heard him and we're living it and we begin serving up that truth to others and measuring it out, we begin reflecting the light of Jesus into the darkness around us and the more that we give out, the more we will continue to receive. And that brings us to our final thought.

3) THE MORE WE SHINE, THE BRIGHTER WE WILL BECOME

Mark 4:25 – “For whoever has, more will be given to him, and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”

Now that doesn't sound fair, you may say! If somebody already has a lot, God's going to give them even more? If they don't have much, even what they have will be taken away? Well it may not sound fair but it's the way all of life is. You use it or you lose it. If you don't use what you have, you end up losing it, right? It's true on all kinds of levels. If you bind your arm so you can't move it for as little as a couple of weeks, when you remove the binding you find that you have temporarily lost the use of your arm. You have to work on it for a while to be able to use it again. You lost it because of falling out of use.

If you don't use your brain to think things through, you lose the ability to do any in-depth thinking. Just ask someone who hasn't been in school for years and years and then later in life they decide to sign up for a college course. They go back and realize “I haven't studied for so long” and it feels like they can't use their brain anymore and they have to retrain themselves.

If you don't seize an opportunity that is given to you, you won't have that opportunity, you will lose it. And what is true in the natural world is eminently true in the spiritual realm. Jesus says it here: **“and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”**

But did you see the promise in there or did you miss it? The promise is **“For whoever has, more will be given to him.”** This is an open invitation. If you will receive the truth of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you will prize all that you learn of him and if you will shine him out to others and keep on pursuing Christ, you will find, in the words of that wonderful old hymn by Annie Flint, that his love has no limits. His grace has no measure, his power no boundary known unto man, for out of his infinite riches in Jesus, he giveth and giveth and giveth again.

Just when I thought that I had my heart so full of all I could ever take of the Lord, he gave again. I had more of him, and the more I seek him, the more I receive. The more I share him with others, the more he speaks to me. Keep on seeking him and you will keep on receiving. That is Jesus' words right here.

Jesus is the light of the world. He's come and he has illuminated the lives of so many people. Right across this world today, there are millions upon millions of people whose life has been transformed because they have found Jesus Christ. So let your light shine to those around you this coming week and don't let anything obscure it!