



Luke 8:16–18

16 ‘No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. 17 For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. 18 Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will

be taken from them.’

Reflection

Over the last couple of days we've been enjoying Jesus' Parable of the Sower. Like most of Jesus' parables it teaches us about the kingdom of God – the rule and reign of Jesus Christ that is both a present and future reality. A present reality in that Satan, sin and death have been defeated and Christ is right now ruling and reigning at the right hand of God in heaven. But an even greater future reality which will only be fully realised when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead and to usher in the new heavens and new earth, where God and his people will live together forever in a perfect world, recreated and renewed.

The Parable of the Sower shows us how the kingdom of God advances in our world as the word of God (the Gospel) goes out and receives different responses. God's word is like seed falling on hardened hearts, like hardened pathways in a field, God's word failing to penetrate and quickly being stolen away by Satan's manoeuvrings in our culture. God's word is like seed falling on shallow hearts, rocky and treacherous ground. With no root fledgling faith is soon forgotten at the first sign of trouble or difficulty. God's word is like seed falling on compromised and conflicted hearts, falling amongst thornbushes, amongst competing plants. Life's worries, riches and pleasures all competing with the Christian message and ultimately drowning it out. And finally, God's word is like seed fall-

ing on the good soil of receptive hearts, good and noble hearts prepared by the Holy Spirit. The seed germinates, new life breaks forth, the sun shines and photosynthesis takes place, a tender shoot breaks through the soil, then a mature plant, and finally a harvest yielding a hundred-fold that which was sown in the first place. The kingdom of God advances, the Gospel goes out like a farmer sowing seed. Progress is slow at first, with no discernible effect, and not without disappointment; but beneath the surface God's word is at work, tiny miracles of new life burst forth all over the place, and in the end an abundant harvest. So too the kingdom of God.

And it is from this image of an abundant harvest, of good and noble hearts hearing the word, retaining it and through perse-

verance bearing great fruit for the kingdom of God, that Jesus then moves to the imagery in today's passage of a lamp on a stand. The fruit of the Christian life – our good works in the name of Jesus – are like light in our world that leads people to him. These people whom our lives touch become, along with our good works, the one-hundred-fold harvest. Let's read our passage and discuss this further,

16 'No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. 17 For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. 18 Therefore consider carefully how

you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them.'

The imagery of light and darkness abounds in Scripture. And Jesus, the light of the world (John 1:4–9; 8:12), uses it very frequently. And so, very naturally, Jesus moves from the abundant harvest of the Christian life, to the nature of this fruit of the Christian life. In Matthew 5:16 Jesus brings these two concepts together,

let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

The abundant harvest, the fruit of the Christian life, our good cast light into the

darkness of our world.

let your light shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds
and glorify your Father in heaven.

The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God have been given to us. (Luke 8:10). The God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6). The light of the Holy Spirit has now illumined our hearts and minds, bringing us from death to life, bringing new clarity and understanding, deep joy and the desire to make Jesus known and see God glorified in our world. And so the good soil, those hearts genuinely receptive to the Gospel, those through whom

God will bring about a hundred-fold harvest, set our light in full view of the world. Because,

16 'No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed.

God did not fill you with the Holy Spirit's fire, with the light of the knowledge of his glory; he didn't bring you into living relationship with the light of the world so that you might hide under a bed! He's performed this miracle in your life, verse 16,

so that those who come ... can see the light

C. S. Lewis was a light to his generation who continues to shine brightly through his writings even today, expressed it this

way, he said,

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.

16 'No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. 17 For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.

Jesus then concludes both his explanation of the Parable of the Sower and this picture of a lamp on a stand with these words,

18 Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them.'

'Therefore consider carefully how you listen to the word of God.' Those with hard hearts, shallow hearts, conflicted and compromising hearts, and those who think themselves Christians but live their lives hiding under their beds all hear the word of God and, as their actions ultimately demonstrate, reject it. 'Consider carefully how you listen to the word of God' says Jesus. Your salvation, your fruitfulness and the spread of the Gospel in our world depend on how you listen to the word of God.

Think

Consider then this morning how carefully you are listening to the word of God. God's word is the most precious thing we can possess. It is to you? By it we come to know and resemble Jesus Christ. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in him. Listen to C. S. Lewis again,

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.

Is God's word the light of your life, and a lamp for your feet? Listen to David in Psalm 19,

7 The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the Lord are trust-
worthy,
making wise the simple.

8 The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the Lord are ra-
diant,
giving light to the eyes.

9 The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring for ever.

The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

10 They are more precious than
gold,

than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.

11 By them your servant is warned;

in keeping them there is great reward.

‘Consider carefully how you listen to the word of God’ says Jesus. By keeping it there is great reward. Your salvation, your fruitfulness and the spread of the Gospel in our world depend on how you listen to the word of God.

Pray

Psalm 119 is a great place to turn to prayer today. Why not read it, and as you do, turn what you read into your prayer to God. If you don't have time, here's a portion you might to like to pray with me now.

33 Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees,

that I may follow it to the end.

34 Give me understanding, so that I
may keep your law

and obey it with all my heart.

35 Direct me in the path of your
commands,

for there I find delight.

36 Turn my heart towards your stat-
utes

and not towards selfish gain.

37 Turn my eyes away from worth-
less things;

preserve my life according to your
word.