

[Mar 4:21-34 NKJV] 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? 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."

26 And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, 27 "and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. 28 "For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. 29 "But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

30 Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? 31 "[It is] like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; 32 "but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade." 33 And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear [it]. 34 But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.

Jesus has been talking about the Kingdom of God in parables. His last parable talked a lot about truth being **dispensed and received**. We learned about the importance of the **seed**. But we learned that no matter how good the seed is, the **soil** determines whether the seed will grow. And the soil is the heart of a man. We learned that scripture says "it is given to a man to hear". And at the same time the man plays an integral part in the process.

We also learned that Jesus was using parables to keep the truth hidden from those who could not see, and to divulge it to those who could. We need to keep this in mind to see the continuity of what Christ is saying.

It is easy to read these passages and think that Christ is bouncing all over the place. But He really isn't. He is only talking about a few things.

He is talking about truth disbursed.

He is talking about the importance of truth.

He is talking about how truth is **often** received.

He is talking about how it **should be** received.

He is talking about our responsibility in the process.

And He is talking about how this Kingdom of God **really works out**. And it is much different than anyone expects.

We need to keep what He is saying in our text this morning **in that context**. We can then understand it as it was spoken and written.

So Christ has just explained the parable of the soils, and He continues with this:

[Mar 4:21-34 NKJV] 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? 22 "For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.

Now, in context, what has been hidden? Is he talking about people's sins? No.

He has been talking about the Gospel of the Kingdom. He has been talking about his core message. And it has been hidden by parables.

So in that context, what does this mean?

The lamp is the Gospel, these are the truths that Christ is teaching to the disciples but He is no longer outwardly telling to the crowds.

Now, what He is saying to the disciples is that **this truth has a bigger purpose** than to be carefully hidden where it cannot be seen. Christ has a purpose right now for hiding it under the bed. He has to stay alive until the end of His mission. But after that point, there is no reason to keep it hidden any longer. The truth Christ is giving them is **supposed to be** laid out in such a way as to reach as many people as possible. If you put a lamp under a bed, the light affects few and does not give much help. But when you put it on a stand, which is where a lamp is most effective, many gain the full advantage of that light.

Think about this. What did the disciples do with the light that Christ gave them? Well, what are we reading this morning? Was it not those who **heard that light** who are **directly or indirectly responsible for us reading it**? Did they not do exactly what Christ said should be done?

Christ had to hide it from those who did not have ears. We do not. We can join the apostles in proclaiming it openly. I am always nervous when I see ministers who are slow to lay out what the Gospel really is. It is light, and we should do all we can to keep it from being hidden. Some ministers do not want to proclaim the gospel boldly because it is offensive. And it is. The Gospel says we are all sinners and completely incapable of doing a single thing that will please God or win His favor. That is offensive to man's pride. And it is the very first truth that must be understood of the Gospel. But it is absolutely necessary for salvation and is only hidden to the peril of our listeners.

Is there any place where **we** intentionally keep the gospel hidden when we really have opportunities to proclaim it?

Now, my employer is not paying me to do evangelism. So I am ripping him off if I use the hours he is paying me to do one thing, and I do another with it. But if I have an opportunity, I have evenings and breaks that I can carry through with those opportunities. So I guess there are really two questions. The first is, is there anywhere that we are hiding the gospel because we don't want the consequences we will receive if we tell it? And the second is, how high do we prioritize those things that we truly see as opportunities? I realize that **hiding** it is different than **ignoring opportunities**, but it reflects the same lack of Christ mindedness. One is cowardice and lack of loyalty to Christ. The other is laziness or apathy. But neither is a reflection of Christ's love for those He is calling to Himself.

We will only usually accomplish **what we set our minds to accomplish**.

The rest of the text we just looked at means something different than I have normally taken it to mean. **22 "For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.**

Now what was **hidden**? The Gospel of the Kingdom. So it is **that** which will be revealed. What has been **kept secret**? The same thing. But Christ says it **SHOULD** come to light. Basically He is saying that in a point in the future after Christ spoke this, the truth should be proclaimed differently than Christ dealt with it. And how **HAS** it been dealt with? Billions of people have read this account. Billions of people have read the things that were hidden and kept secret.

Think about this. Why were the disciples all killed except for John? One reason. They publically proclaimed the Gospel of Christ clearly and boldly. Had they been telling parables they may have been able to stay alive. But they did not. Their gospel was clearly proclaimed. They took that lamp and they put it on as high a lampstand as they could.

The next thing Christ said was this:

23 "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

I think that is akin to us saying- Get this!!!

Let this sink in and think about the implications. And it looks to me like the disciples did. I don't know of any time that the Disciples or any New Testament minister spoke in parables. The exception might be the Revelation. It was spoken in Apocalyptic language that uses symbols and word pictures. But other than that, the disciples always spoke the truth clearly and plainly for believer and unbeliever alike.

Next Christ says this:

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."

First he was talking about **PROCLAMATION**. Now He is talking about **APPLICATION**.

Have you all found, like I have, that it is far easier to **preach** something than to **live** something? There was a point in my life where I was reading books that filled my mind with very good and very insightful Biblical knowledge. And I decided to stop reading them. I was able to **speak** far more impressively than I could **live**. And my **spiritual literacy** just served to hide my spiritual poverty. I think that is what Christ is talking about here.

I believe He is talking about hearing that leads to doing. When you hear in such a way that it changes **what you do**, you are hearing in the way that God intends you to hear. When you hear in a way that allows you to speak spiritually, but all those who really know you just roll their eyes when you speak, you really aren't hearing. Not in the way Christ was speaking of. You are just taking in information that creates a good appearance to those **who don't know how you live**. But to those who do, it is just a clanging symbol.

We need to take heed what we hear. The way the word "heed" is used in the New Testament is more than just hearing and understanding. It is paying attention to the degree that it makes a difference in our lives. It is paying attention to the degree that it changes our hearts.

So Christ is essentially saying, listen until it changes you. Pay attention until your soul gets it. Listen until you obey.

He goes on to say this:

With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.

Here, I think, we have reached the heart of most of our problems. We only receive from God **more depth in Him** when we truly incorporate that which **He has already given us**.

Are you where you want to be in Christ? Are you as intimate with Him as you would like to be? Do you have His guidance in those areas of your life that you truly need it? Is He using you to minister to others on a regular basis? Is that ministry as fruitful as it should be? Are you as absorbed in the things of Christ as you want to be?

Well, trace it back. How do you listen?

Do you listen to just understand in your head what the scriptures mean? That is better than nothing, but that is not enough.

When Carla and I were dating, we would sometimes meet at my parent's home in Elysburg. It was half way between where both of us lived. And when she wrote to me of the details of her arrival, I paid very close attention. And it is not that I wanted to know the details in case she were to test my love and ask me when her

arrival time was. I wanted to know because I wanted to be there. I wanted to meet her there. I wanted to please her with my presence and to be pleased by hers.

That is the kind of taking heed we are talking about in this text. It is the kind that changes us. It riles us up. It moves us in a Godly direction.

I think that if God were to evaluate us as a church He would say that the church at Ferndale, as a whole, knows more than it is willing to obey. It talks better than it lives. It has more brain than heart.

And so we are only receiving more in proportion to that which we are putting into use. If we were receiving in consideration to that which we know in our heads, it would be hard to find more spiritual people. But that is not the case. He grants us **more of Himself** to those who adjust to that which they have already put into place. And that only makes sense. Christ never said if you love me you will know stuff. He said, if you love me you will obey me. There is the rub.

What do you suppose we would look like tomorrow if we actually started living **like we know to live**? Do we not think God would use us to win more people to Himself? Do we not think God would use us to help each other to overcome the things that are holding us back in fellowship to Him and to each other?

The problem with God is that he won't play our games. Information **we won't use** doesn't impress Him. Being concerned about issues **we will never do anything about** does not move Him. Acting like we care but not doing anything about it does not fool Him.

We will get **more of Him** after we use what we already have of Him. That is what He says.

The biggest problem with us is that we are satisfied in keeping what we know in our heads but we won't let it change our lives. If we really took heed, we should be the richest blest congregation since these brains of ours have been so well fed. Do you not believe me? When is the last time you did something sacrificial or uncomfortable to meet the need of something or someone you are praying for? Do you see what I mean? We know stuff. But we are slow to let it change us.

So we limit ourselves to what we have always been and what we have always known. How do we break out? Do what you know to do. Do the thing you know God wants but you have been afraid to do or unwilling to do.

Believe what you read in scripture and let it grip you. Do away with our "yes, buts" and just say Yes Lord and do it.

That would change our body of believers from being more of what we **have been** to more of what **we should be**. If we will hear, and we will put it into practice, we will get more from our Lord. And that will continue to spiral. That is a spiral **we should** be on.

And we all think, yes that is a good idea. But will we hold it one second after we go out the doors here? Will we let it become like the radical followers of **the first century**. What will we **do** about this? That is everything!

So if we use it by the bowlful, it will be given to us by the bowl full. If we use it by the thimble full, it will be given to us by the thimble full. And if we use it by the truckload full, it will be given to us by the truckload full. There is no virtue in just hearing. But there is **great virtue** in hearing well or, hearing and doing.

Christ goes on to say

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."

This reminds us of the parable of the stewards. All of them invested the money and were rewarded for their efforts. Except one of the stewards knew the master was a hard man so he buried the talents. And that man had his taken away.

The one thing assumed about a hearer is that they will hear and obey. They might not break any records in their passion to obey, but they will obey. And the ones that do it most will receive the most insight and guidance and God's presence with it. The ones who do less will receive less. But the ones who will not obey, they know what God says but they say, no, I will not. Those will have **whatever they do possess** taken away.

Have you heard of people who started out in the church but ended up seduced out of the church and into some other venue? There are a lot of stories about entertainers who started singing in the church, but ended up being bought out by the world. They heard the word with their ears, but they had no heart for it. Until even what they heard was removed from them.

There is nothing more dangerous than knowing what God wants from you but refusing to do it. We can mess around with God, but God will not mess around with us. This is deadly serious. You cannot play a Christian game. You know, it is the game that asks how much can I do before God sends me to hell? Even the thought of that is frightening. Christ deserves everything we have. And we would be very wise to respond to His rich love and grace by surrendering our lives to Him and living fully for Him. Don't play the game of staying on the fringes, wanting salvation but choosing to sin. It is a fool's game.

After all this Christ told another parable.

26 And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, 27 "and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. 28 "For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. 29 "But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

Now Mark is telling us of a parable Christ gave that appears to talk about how the plant grows in the good soil.

First the seed is scattered. The gospel is preached. The good news goes out, not in parables but boldly proclaimed.

Then the preacher finishes his work. He goes on with his work day after day, but not in this field. He sleeps and gets up day after day. Then one day he finds out that the seed grew. He finds out that the gospel took root in a person's life. The sower did nothing different with **this seed** than he did with any other. He has no idea why it took in one person's life and did not take in another person's life. All he knows is that it took root and grew.

Then the man goes out and harvests the ripe crop. This could be talking about the seed being planted from the time of Christ until the end of time, and then the final harvest. But the scope of the parable seems to be more fitting with the history of an individual person. I think it is explaining how the Kingdom of God grows.

There is nothing systematic about it from our perspective. It is all supernatural and amazing and surprising from where we sit. We can't guess its outcome. We don't know why some spring up and others don't. But everyone that is planted by God will grow to maturity and then will be harvested. And that is ultimately how the kingdom of God will be populated.

And all the stages of growth are necessary to prepare the crop for its ultimate fulfillment. That is what God is doing in every believer's life. You may wonder, from time to time, as you go through hard things. But that is what is happening. You are being prepared for your trip to eternity. You are preparing for your harvest.

30 Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? 31 "[It is] like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; 32 "but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade

So the Kingdom of God is like light disbursed and received.

It is like seed received and grown to harvest.

And now it is like a mustard seed that grows.

Notice the parts of this parable. First it appears insignificant. It is smaller than all the seeds on the earth. This is probably a figure of speech. The mustard seed was the smallest of the seeds that middle eastern farmers would have planted. So it would be the smallest of their crops.

At the time when Christ said this, think of just how insignificant Christ's true followers would have been in the whole earth. They were absolutely insignificant.

No one would have ever believed such a small seed could have anything special about it.

But once it took root, look what happens. In the first couple of century it spreads over the whole earth. And over time it has become astronomically huge. No one could have ever guessed such a thing could be true. What Christ started in an insignificant town with a bunch of fisherman has spread throughout the whole world.

But notice who sits in it. The birds of the air. Birds are normally a bad thing. So he is letting his disciples know, right from the start, that this is not going to be all positive. It is not going to be all pure. There is going to be a mixture of good and bad. It is so big that it cannot help but draw some birds from time to time.

Do you see what Christ is preaching? He is showing the disciples that the Kingdom of God is nothing like most people thought it would be.

Most people would have thought that the kingdom of God would grow. But they did not think that would come from insignificance. They thought it would happen from overpowering supernatural force from on high.

They didn't think it would gather birds. They thought it would be purified by the force of God. Of course the Jews thought it would be purified of **everyone but them**. Most of them never seemed to really grasp the idea of their own sin.

The Jews didn't know the kingdom was a matter of perceiving and submitting to light. They would not have perceived spiritual knowledge was a mainstay of the new kingdom. After all, why is **that** needed for if the Messiah is going to overthrow His enemies?

Really, this idea of hearing receptively and responding spiritually to the message of God was nothing most Israelites would have thought had anything to do with the coming Kingdom of the Messiah.

So you can see just how radical His teachings would have been. You can also see why He may have wanted to teach this in parables. And going on we find more about this,

." 33 And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear [it]. 34 But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.

So we see what was going on. The disciples kept getting the inner scoop. They found out what it meant. And they were going to have the job to **make what was whispered to them** be proclaimed from the housetops. The Gospel was going to go forth. And so it has.