The Servant And Shining
Mark 4:21-25

Introduction

In chapter 4 Jesus teaches in parables and emphasizes four responsibilities of believers in Jesus and citizens of the Kingdom; sowing (vv.1-20; 30-34); shining (vv.21-25); reaping (vv.26-29) and trusting (vv.35-41).

The condition of one’s heart determines its receptivity to truth.
Those who receive truth act upon it and receive more.
Those who reject truth will lose what little they have.
We must respond to truth.

We are Christians. We are made new by God in Christ to shine in dark places. If we are unable to shine we are hard pressed to justify our existence. In the parable of the sower we were taught that the fruitful heart brings forth fruit. Now Jesus teaches-- the believer shares the truth (vv. 21-23) and marks the truth (vv.24-25).

The Law Of Radiance (vv. 21-23)

(v.21) NKJV “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?

The word translated “lamp” is lychnos which means an oil burning lamp. The lamps were made of fired clay and were small enough to be hidden in the palm of your hand! The clay lamp would be filled with olive oil and a wick made from rolled cloth would be placed in the oil.

“In order to give light, the lamp had to “use itself up”; and the oil had to be replenished. If the lamp was not lit, or if it was covered up, it did no good. The Apostles were like that lamp: they were called to shed God’s light and reveal His truth. But they could not “give out” without first “taking in”

“The more we hear the Word of God, the better we are able to share it with others. The moment we think we know it all, what we think we know will be taken from us. .” (TBEC Vol. 1 Warren Wiersbe p.123).

The word translated basket is modion and literally means a “peck measure” or one fourth of a bushel.

In Sunday school little children are often taught to sing the song;
This little light of mine; I’m gonna let it shine. One of the stanzas says “hide it under a bushel no! The basket or bushel was the meal tub or the grain bowl found in every home.
That little lamp represents the truths which the Lord Jesus imparted to His disciples.
Truth belongs in the place where it will do the most good. The oil lamp placed under the bushel basket or grain basket extinguishes the light. The oil lamp placed under a bed at best does no good and worst might set the bed on fire! The lamp would be used for the wrong purpose!

The purpose of a lamp is not to catch the house on fire! And the purpose of God’s love and God’s truth and the gospel of Christ is not to destroy families or communities!

We are given God’s light; we are given Jesus; we are given the truth; we are given God’s Word and that truth was meant to be shared! The Lord wants others to know the truth and see the truth and embrace the truth of the Gospel. We are not to hide the truth, cover the truth, or misuse the truth.

The truths were not to be hidden under a bushel or a bed; but left out in the open for all men to see.

Truth left out in the open is difficult to ignore.

The source of light is set in the most conspicuous place. We are to share the light. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 9:22; “To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some”.

Jesus spoke in parables. Remember the parable concealed the truth from some; and revealed the truth to others!

The point of the parable in part was to remind the disciples of Jesus that these hidden truths were to be given full explanation to willing hearts wherever they might be found (see verse 22).

(v.22) NKJV “For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.

The word hidden is the familiar Greek word cryptos which has been borrowed and used in many languages including our own (cryptic). The verb is crypto which means to hide or conceal. Crypto zoology is the study of unknown species; we encrypt messages in order to secure the safety and security of the message.

“should come to light” (phaneroo in the passive, which means to become visible).

Jesus is in effect saying that things are hidden or kept secret so that at the proper place and the proper time they may be brought out into the open.

Truth may be concealed for the moment; even if the believer keeps his or her friendship and fellowship and relationship with Christ concealed; the day is coming when that friendship and
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fellowship and relationship will be revealed. If the believer refuses to shine and neglects the Gospel; the Gospel remains true! Swete gives this explanation; “If the Gospel was for the moment treated as a secret, it was so only because this temporary secrecy was essential to its successful proclamation after the Ascension (p.78)”.

The passage implies a few things. It may mean that light and truth cannot be hid or extinguished or used for the wrong purpose forever. Both light and truth will penetrate the darkness and pierce the lies and be made manifest! Nor has any secret thing taken place that will remain secret--but will be dragged into the hot spotlight of God’s eternal perspective!

All bushels in every home will be lifted. All beds will be consumed.

Some Bible teachers have seen in the basket or the bushel a reference to business or commerce or economy! A grain bowl or a cereal bowl is a type or a picture or a symbol of the source of food. Some have seen in the bed a picture of comfort, ease, or even laziness.

The basket and the bed may be ordinary images in a rather straight forward parable. Or it may represent enemies to evangelism. In the end there are enemies to evangelism.

Ron Humphrey, in his book entitled, Hearts on Fire, noted a most sobering statistic: "The average member of the church of Christ has heard 4,000 sermons, sung 20,000 songs, participated in 8,000 public prayers and converted zero sinners" (p. 5).

How can so many Christians be so unmoved by what they hear and sing? Billy Graham said,

“We are the Bibles the world is reading;
We are the creeds the world is needing;
We are the sermons the world is heeding.”

What are the enemies to evangelism?

The list is long. We might include apathy, indifference, unbelief, depression, disappointment, the weed patch in the parable of the sower, the seed and the soil, ignorance.

William Booth heard Rudyard Kipling say how much he disliked and despised those who played the tambourine. William Booth replied; “Young man, if I thought I could win one more soul for Christ by standing on my head and beating a tambourine with my feet, I would learn how do to it”.

William Bramwell said, “How is it that the soul being of such value, and God so great, eternity so near and yet we are so little moved?”
I read in a biography about D.L. Moody how he was walking down a certain street in Chicago and spoke to a complete stranger. “Sir, are you a Christian?” The man replied, “You mind your own business”. Moody replied, “This is my business.”.

Jesus told his disciples to go into the world; and Moody believed Jesus. The verse reminds us that a day of manifestation; a day of making all things known is coming. What will that day reveal?

Why did we allow business or self-indulgence to take priority over the proclamation of the gospel? Why did we allow personal problems to get in the way of testimony for the Savior?

(v.23) If anyone has ears to hear; let him hear.”

The expression is a warning! We are to use our ears well based on their God given design. The words of Jesus are the source of life!

Wiersbe:

“The word “hear” is used 13 times in this chapter and refers to the receiving of God’s truth into the inner person, just the way soil receives the seed. We must be careful how we hear (Luke 8:18) and what we hear (v.24); for this determines what we have to share with others. We do not receive the Word so we can enjoy it by ourselves. We receive that we might share, just as a lamp gives itself to provide light for the house” (See Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines On The New Testament, p.113).

We are responsible for what we hear. Every time we hear the truth of God’s Word or learn principles of truth from God’s Word; we are responsible to obey it and share it with others.

The statement bears repeating: When we hear the Word of God we are responsible to obey it’s commands; incorporate its principles; heed its warnings; and share those commands, promises, principles, and warnings.

Does that surprise you? Your commitment, your energy, your effort, your willingness to embrace the truth of God’s word and live out that truth will determine whether or not God is willing to entrust you with more truth!

**Jesus teaches that the reception of divine truth puts the listener under obligation to do something about it.**

William McDonald writes; “If I hear some command from the Word of God but fail to obey it, I will not be able to pass it on to others. What gives power and scope to teaching is when people see the truth in the preacher’s life.”
The Law Of Recompense (vv.24-25)

(v.24) NKJV “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.

The verse begins with a precept and ends with a proverb. The precept; “Warning: Be careful how you hear.” The proverb; “Warning: the proportion you give to hearing will result in what you get from hearing”.

Jesus gives us instructions in listening. The art of listening is a difficult discipline. We are to listen with discrimination and discernment; we are to shun false doctrine (see 1 John 4:1). We are to test the spirits. We are to hear in an attentive manner (Matt.13:23). We are to hear for ourselves; with a view towards personal application (1 Sam.3:9). We are to hear in such a way that we remember what we hear so that truth becomes a part of our life! We are to hear in such a way that we are willing to hear the whole counsel of God rather than simply those Scriptures that give us immediate relief or comfort.

The proverb is also known as the law of recompense;

Arndt and Gingrich; “The measure you give will be the measure you get” (p.514).

And Swete offers this application; “Here the sense is: ‘your attention to the teaching will be the measure of the profit you will receive from it’ (p.79). Whatever we measure out or give out comes back to us with compound interest! “And to you who hear, more will be given”.

Do you find the Bible boring? Do you think the Word uninteresting? Do you find fault with most of what you hear? Will you learn truth from faithful Bible teachers? Those who hunger find food. Those who bring faith find assistance. Those who come with hearts filled with joy will find more joy!

But you will not find hope or blessing or forgiveness or joy by listening to lies.

(v.25) NKJV For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even heat he has will be taken away from him.”

The precept and proverb (v.24) are followed by a promise (v.25). You will be given a greater desire to hear; more understanding of what you hear; more certainty concerning what you hear; more personal possession of what you hear; more delight in the glorious
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gospel which you hear; more confidence in the person and work of Jesus; more delight in the gospel; more practical instruction.

D.L. Moody put it this way; “God giveth more to those who value what they have!”

Fresh truth brings more truth when we allow that truth to become real in our lives!  
Again the flip-side; failure to respond to the truth results not only in a forfeiture of future truth; but the loss of previous truth!

Jesus seems to be saying if we fail to listen and then fail to share the light we run the risk of losing it. Just like a candle--starved of oxygen will lose its flame; so the Christian starved of light will not shine! If we refuse to “continue in His word” we cannot be His disciples (John 8:31). If we are not His disciples in truth or deed we cannot be His disciples (John 8:31). If we do not know the truth we cannot be truly free (John 8:31). If we reject, abuse, misuse what God has already given us; He is free to take away what we already have.

Does God expect us to seek the truth and know the truth?
The Lord does not think laziness or selfishness or self-indulgence or uselessness or worldliness or ignorance constitutes a good reason to neglect and ignore His truth.

What does God expect from us? We are given several commands in the Scripture;  
Adam was told to look around and observe and subdue the world (Gen. 1:28).  
Paul told Timothy to get up and go hear a man who knows and teaches the truth (2 Tim.1:13)  
In John’s Gospel we are told to sit and study the truth (the Bible John 17:17).  
In John’s Gospel and Paul’s writing we are told to learn and know Christ, Who is the truth (John 14:6; Eph. 4:20)(adopted from The Preacher’s Outline and Sermon Bible; Mark p.82).

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of a good report; if there be any virtue, and of there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil.4:8).

Conclusion

We are to let our lives shine!
We are to love truth and acquire truth and let truth become real in our lives.
When we love the truth and are willing to live the truth we are given more truth.
When we resist the truth or fail to act on the truth we suffer the loss of that truth.
What is your job? To listen well and to listen with wisdom. To listen to all that God has to say in Christ through the Bible. Hear—but hear well. God’s teaching and Christ’s instructions deserve close attention. Hear Often--don’t waste the day. Listen everyday to Jesus. Attend a mid-week Bible study. Join a small group. Make Bible study and prayer priorities. Hear -- better. Your growth is linked to listening. As D.L. Moody used to say; you will find heavenly joy when you hear with faith!

The Newsboys;

Shine
Make 'em wonder what you've got
Make 'em wish that they were not
On the Outside looking bored
Shine
Let it shine before all men
Let 'em see good works and then
Let 'em glorify the Lord

Charles Wesley

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;
A never dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

David Watson made this observation; “If you were an outstandingly gifted evangelist with an international reputation, and if, under God, you win 1,000 persons for Christ every night of every year, how long would it take you to win the whole world for Christ? The answer, ignoring the population explosion, over 10,000 years. But if you are a true disciple of Christ, and if you are able under God to win one person to Christ each year; and if you could then train that person to win one other person for Christ each year, how long would it take to win the whole world for Christ? The answer, just 32 years!