

Consider Carefully How You Listen

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[0 : 0 0] Well, this morning as we come to the Word of God, we're back in the Gospel of Luke, continuing on with the story of Jesus. Last time, we heard Jesus tell the parable of the sower and the soils.

It was a parable about how people have different responses to the Word of God that Jesus has been speaking. And why?

Well, after telling that parable, Jesus had more to say. He continues on. And so, we're going to listen to what Jesus has to say in Luke chapter 8, verse 16.

Luke chapter 8, verse 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. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.

[1 : 0 7] 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.

Now, these words of Jesus aren't easy to understand. Jesus uses an analogy of lamp and light.

But what does he mean by it? Jesus uses proverbial language. Verse 17 and verse 18 sound like they could be right out of the book of Proverbs.

In order to understand what Jesus means, we have to understand what the elements of this analogy relate to. We have to understand how the proverbial truth applies to what Jesus is talking about.

And as we hear these words of Jesus, for many of us are probably thinking, these things sound really familiar. And that's maybe because Jesus says these same things on more than one occasion.

[2 : 1 7] And he applies each of these three sayings in each of these three verses in different ways on different occasions. If we flip ahead just a few chapters to Luke chapter 11, verse 33, we notice Jesus says the same thing.

He says, No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden or under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand so that those who come in may see the light.

But there in Luke chapter 11, as he continues on, he says this, he says, Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light.

Jesus goes in a totally different direction than he did here in Luke chapter 8. The analogy relates differently to what he says. Or we could look at this thing Jesus says in chapter 8, verse 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 says the same thing later in Luke chapter 12, verse 2. There he says, Be on guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

[3 : 39] There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. He goes on in that chapter, chapter 12, to say, What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

Again, we see Jesus use the same words, the same sort of proverb, but go in a totally different direction with it. Instead of applying it to the light of a lamp and exposing what is hidden, he applies it to the hidden hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

So that's what makes these words of Jesus kind of hard to understand. We wonder, what is he talking about? What does the lamp and the light represent? What does hiding that lamp under the bed represent?

Many of us look to Matthew's gospel for an understanding of these words. Matthew 5, verse 14 and 16. Jesus uses the same language there. He says, You are the light of the world.

A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

[5 : 00] In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

It's a familiar and wonderful and true saying of Jesus. And so many think, this must be what Jesus is talking about when he uses the same language in Luke's gospel about putting a lamp on the lampstand.

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.

For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. 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. Many interpret these words as sort of dovetailing in with what we just read from Matthew's gospel.

[6 : 07] And according to this way of reading it, this passage is about sharing the light of Jesus with others around us, letting them see our faith in public rather than hiding it in private.

Let your lamp shine out brightly and your faith in Jesus be known publicly since all that is hidden now will eventually be known and public anyway.

Verse 18 may mean then that we ought to listen carefully to God's word that we've received and act on it because those who do will be blessed or rewarded while those who do not will lose in the end.

That may well be the right way to understand these words, but there's some things in Luke's gospel here that make me wonder. Here in Luke's gospel, I notice that Jesus doesn't start off by saying, you are the light of the world.

Neither does he follow this lamp analogy up with in the same way, let your light shine before others. The thing he implores us to do, rather, is to consider carefully how we listen.

[7 : 25] And that has to do with what Jesus has just been explaining to his disciples with this parable of the sower and the seed and the soils. It was all about hearing and responding to the word of God.

If this teaching of Jesus here is all about us shining the light and telling others about Jesus, then why does Jesus tell us as the main point to consider carefully how we listen?

Why does he follow this up with a warning that for some, even what they think they have will be taken away? There's another way that Christians have understood these words in Luke.

And it's not what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount about letting our light shine. That's true. That's absolutely true. But maybe Jesus is in a different occasion here using the same Proverbs to make a different point.

If we look back to chapter 8, verses 9 and 10 for a moment, remember Jesus is talking to his disciples. They're asking about the meaning of the parable of the soils.

[8 : 40] What does that mean? And Jesus said to them, Well, the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to others I speak in parables so that though seeing they may not see, though hearing they may not understand.

So the context here is Jesus explaining this parable of the sower to his disciples and why he uses parables. And as we look at that explanation, what is hidden?

What is it that's hidden? Well, it's the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom. We talked about that a couple weeks ago. There are hidden truths about God's purposes, about the kingdom of God.

And these are the things that Jesus is teaching. He's doing it in parable form, but then explaining in private to his disciples what these parables mean. So you can probably imagine the disciples wondering and asking, Why do you teach in parables?

Why not just explain plainly without the parables what God has to say to everyone? Do you want people to see and understand or not?

[9 : 54] Well, it could be that verse 16 is Jesus' answer to that question. 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. Perhaps Jesus is simply saying that the goal here is not to hide the truth from people. He has come as light into the darkness of our world.

And his teaching is intended to illuminate. It's there to give knowledge and understanding. God has not sent his Son into the world as a light only to hide that light from people.

That would be absurd. Just like hiding a lit lamp in a jar or putting it under a bed. Rather, God has sent Jesus as the light to shine brightly on the lamp stand so that all who come in can see the light.

So that the things that are hidden may be disclosed and revealed. The secrets of the kingdom so that they might be made known and brought out into the open.

[11 : 10] And therefore, verse 18, consider carefully how you listen. Personally, I think this way of looking at it makes a little more sense. At least to me, it does. It seems to flow better.

And we notice in the parable before this, the parable of the sower, the word of God was the seed which fell upon the ears and the hearts of the people.

Jesus was the sower. Could this be just a different analogy to say the same thing? Jesus is the lamp that God has given to give the light of his good news to a dark world.

and God's purpose in lighting the lamp, in sending Jesus is not to hide things but to reveal what is hidden. To reveal what we can't see and know without his light of truth.

And therefore, it's critical that we listen to Jesus carefully, that we pay attention to his words and really hear them. It's the difference in the parable of the soils between that bumper crop harvest and getting nothing from what was sown.

[12 : 20] It's the difference in the analogy of the lamp between seeing and understanding what is hidden or continuing to grope about in the darkness blind and ignorant to God's mercy and to his kingdom.

When we come to verse 18, whoever has will be given more. Whoever does not have even what they think they have will be taken from them.

I can't help but see a parallel here to what Jesus shared with us in the parable of the sower and the soils. Remember, each soil type mentioned, the path, the rocky soil, the weedy soil, the good soil.

Each one received the seed. Each kind of hearer had the word of God, the truth of God which comes through Jesus and yet there was that good harvest from only one kind of hearer, the good soil.

Those who hear and retain and by persevering produce a crop. Well, what happens to the others in that parable? Well, this seems to describe it in a nutshell, doesn't it?

[13 : 33] Whoever has will be given more. Whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them. Either the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts as with the seed that fell on the path or the difficulties of following Jesus come and take away what they first believed and they fall away or the worries of life, greed, the distractions of pleasures in this world come and take away what they had.

they choke out the word they heard. These words, I think, are worthy of meditation. Even what they think they have will be taken from them.

That's sobering. Sort of speaks of the mindset of people who don't take Jesus' words seriously. They think, perhaps, that they're okay with God.

I prayed the sinner's prayer when I was a kid. Or I went up to the altar at the call of the pastor. Or I believe in Jesus, just not like the crazy fundamentalist types do.

Where I go to church once in a while, it's like there's a sort of self-deception whereby people who do not have true faith in Jesus often think that they do.

[15 : 03] people who are not seen clearly by the light of Jesus' words think that they are. Even what they think they have will be taken from them.

The Bible tells us that one day when Jesus returns, he will sort out the goats from the true sheep and the tares or the false wheat from the wheat, the true disciples from the imposters.

One thing I think we can all agree on as we look at these words is that that's in verse 18, that imperative, therefore consider carefully how you listen, how you hear.

Jesus said this to his disciples. Imagine yourself there in the room with Jesus as he said all this. imagine Jesus looking you in the eyes and saying therefore consider carefully how you hear.

There is more than one way to hear or to listen to the words of God. Some of those ways are disastrous and they leave us self-deceived and wanting in the end.

[16 : 26] How seriously do you take the words of Jesus? Will you rearrange your life and your priorities if needed to hear Jesus' words and follow them?

I was thinking about that analogy of the lamp and the light and hiding it and just the light that Jesus is and what came to mind was a time this week when I was in my storage room and I accidentally turned the lights went off and all of a sudden it was pitch black in there.

there's no windows at all in there and I got thinking about that. When it's pitch black what do we see?

What do we experience? Nothing. You can't see anything. It's just nothing. We have so much more by the light.

We can see everything. All the stuff that's there. God wants us to live in the light and to enjoy his grace.

[17 : 43] And that's why he has lit a lamp. That's why he has sent his son. Not to hide the truth from us but to reveal the truth to us. But how seriously do we take the words of Jesus?

Would you rearrange your life and your priorities to better hear and follow the words of Jesus? Let's continue on with verse 19.

Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told Jesus your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to see you.

Jesus replied my mother and my brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice. Imagine this for a moment.

You're in the house with Jesus and the house is packed solid with people. Everybody wants to get near Jesus. Everybody wants to see what he's doing or hear what he's saying. And then suddenly this man calls out, Jesus, your mother and your brothers are here.

[19 : 00] They're just outside. Who could be more important than family, right? They should have an automatic VIP seat in the house if they want it, right?

What will Jesus do? Will he dismiss the whole crowd and then spend some time with them? Or will he call for those in the room to make space so that they can come in and sit?

Jesus' response in this moment is surprising. He replies with this, my mother and my brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.

He turns it into a teaching moment and we never find out from Luke whether Jesus' mother and brothers end up getting to see him on this occasion. But there's one piece of context here that might shed some light on this.

If we look at Mark, a parallel account, chapter 3, verse 20, the following, then Jesus entered a house and again a crowd gathered so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat.

[20 : 11] When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him for they said, he is out of his mind. And then just 10 verses after that in Mark, we read this account of Jesus' mother and brothers arriving to talk to Jesus.

And so we kind of get a little sense here of what's going on in the relationship between Jesus and his family around this time. It would seem that Jesus' family, his mother and his brothers, don't understand what's going on here.

Maybe they're even a little embarrassed by all the public attention that's coming to them and coming to Jesus. perhaps some of them are even unsure about some of the things that Jesus has been saying.

Maybe some of his brothers. We kind of notice in the context of Mark, if we just look down the page a little bit, that already Jesus is facing major opposition from the Pharisees and the teachers of the law.

They're even accusing him already at this point of being possessed by the devil. And what's Jesus' mother and brothers doing? well, they're trying to take charge of him, it says.

[21 : 25] At least some of them, probably his brothers, are saying, he's out of his mind. He's not possessed. He's gone insane.

It's not really the kind of support that you hope for from your family when you take a stand for what's right and speak the truth. But I think it might shed some light on what's happening here in Luke chapter 8.

Mark chapter 3. We don't know for sure, but perhaps Jesus' mother and brothers have come again to try and take charge of him, or at least let's sit down and have a discussion as a family here.

We've got to talk some things through. Whatever the case, Jesus turns their arrival into a teaching moment. He declares that his family, those who are kin to him, are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.

And I don't think that we should read any disrespect into those words from Jesus towards his family. I think if anybody was careful to honor his mother and father, it was Jesus.

[22 : 33] It might be that there's some tension here between honoring Jesus' human mother and honoring his heavenly father. But I don't think that Jesus is disowning them, saying you're not my mother and brothers anymore or saying that they don't matter to him.

You're not important to me anymore. But what Jesus is saying is that what's most important, even more important maybe than our family relationships is hearing God's word and putting it into practice.

That's the chief concern of Jesus doing the will of his father. It trumps everything else. And not only is that Jesus' priority to obey the word of God and submit to his father, but right now he's teaching the very words of God to the people.

And that's of the utmost importance, both to God and to the people. And if we just follow this through, there are some people in the crowd, who are there to hear the very word of God so that they can follow it and put it into practice.

And therefore some in the room are now just as important in this moment to Jesus as his own mom and brothers. It's not that he's diminishing the importance of his family, but that he's elevating the importance of hearing the word of God and putting it into practice.

[24 : 05] that's as important as family. Those who hear and put God's word into practice are my family. This really fits with what we've just been hearing from the parable of the sower and the analogy of the lamp.

Both of those things have been about hearing the word of God and how important that is. Jesus says a lot about that, but maybe it's because we have this tendency to underestimate the importance of hearing God's word and of really paying attention to it.

It's like Jesus is saying, there isn't anything more important than hearing and putting into practice the word of God. It's at, it's even above the level of family. It's what characterizes the family of God.

It's also hard not to miss the emphasis of Jesus on putting it into practice. That's something maybe not mentioned as much in the parables before.

Those who hear and put it into practice are the family of Jesus. It suggests to us that if we hear the word of God but don't put it into practice, we fall short of the family of God.

[25 : 25] We cannot claim to be a brother or sister of Christ or a fellow son or daughter of God. In Jesus' parable of the sower, this is probably the difference right here between those three soils where there was no harvest and the good soil where there was a great harvest.

All of the soils had the seed fall on them. All of the people heard the word of God but only one by persevering produced a crop. Those who hear, and truly believe the word of God will put it into practice.

Those who hear and truly believe the word of God will put it into practice. It's not enough just to hear it. That in itself doesn't result in salvation.

It doesn't do anything for us. It's not enough to just come to church every Sunday and hear the word of God, the words of Jesus. We must put Jesus' words into practice.

We must obey them. We must do them. That's the evidence that we truly believe. Now don't misunderstand me.

[26 : 40] I'm not saying we need to do good works in order to be saved. To be saved we just believe in Jesus. No good works required. And true belief in Jesus will lead us to do what he says.

to obey his word. To do good works. Is it your life goal not only to hear the word of God but to do it?

Is that the highest priority in your life? To put God's words into practice? If it's not, what is the highest priority in your life?

I want to urge you this morning to examine yourself and ask yourself that question. I really do think that's the difference between the good soil and the other soils.

Between having and even what you think you have will be taken from you. God's love.

[27 : 48] I don't know what's in everyone's hearts but Jesus does. And we can't, when it comes to Jesus, we can't fake it till we make it. Either we listen to his words and in faith take them as truth and put them into practice or we perish.

Am I really listening to God? Am I really listening to Jesus? Does he have the attention of my heart?

Am I organizing my life according to the commands and the priorities that he has given? This is what it is to be a child of God, to be in the family of God.

This is what it is to be a follower of Jesus. Now God knows that we will not live perfectly in perfect obedience always. But if we really believe in him, if we really fear him and love him, then we will take him seriously.

We'll make every effort to do what he says. His words are light in the darkness. His words reveal the secrets of the kingdom of God.

[29 : 05] That great kingdom that's soon going to sweep over this world and overshadow all human history forever. Therefore, consider carefully how you listen.

Many of you hearing this, I hope and I pray, are thinking, yes, amen. That's my life's goal, to obey the Lord Jesus Christ and do what he says.

And if that's you, that's a good indication. I think that you are that good soil. Soil. Jesus says this, whoever has will be given more.

So I want to encourage you, if that's you, keep on. Don't give up. Let's not grow weary of doing good. For at the proper time, we will reap a harvest.

If we don't give up, we will inherit what has been promised. We will receive that crown of glory. The Lord has promised. His word is true.

[30 : 07] And he will bring it to pass. We can be sure of it. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you that you have spoken to us through your son.

And I pray that each one of us values that so deeply and treasures that so deeply that we respond to it well.

That it's not just a religion thing that we do because that's what we grew up with, but it's a thing that's meaningful and powerful in our lives that we are doing this.

We are living this way because we know you. We believe in you. We believe your words. And it's our greatest honor and joy in life to submit to you and to follow you.

For you are a glorious God. Work that in each one of our hearts, Lord. Don't let us deceive ourselves. We just commit ourselves to you in Jesus' name.

[31 : 20] Amen.