

# A Lamp Under a Jar

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Preacher: Colin Dow

[ 0 : 00 ] The world is full of strange and crazy things though, right? So we're going to look at Luke chapter 8 verses 16 through 18 today, okay? Strange and crazy things like how a minister can support Aberdeen.

Or a story I heard about an English couple who have a pet chicken, right? And they spent tens of thousands of pounds at a vet because the chicken had bad claws.

Would you spend tens of thousands of pounds getting your chicken seen to by a vet? Or about a little girl in the north who self-identifies as a cat and insists that her teacher puts a litter tray out for her as opposed to using the girl's toilets?

Crazy, isn't it? But the world is full of strange and crazy things. Putting the absurd to one side, do you want to know what the craziest thing in the whole world really is?

We listen to the good news of the gospel, which you're going to get all week at your football camp. But don't believe it. We listen to the good news of the gospel, but we don't believe it. Now that's really crazy.

[ 1 : 03 ] God sent his one and only son into the world to take away all our sins, to give us the sure and certain hope of eternal life through faith in him. Now surely this is the greatest of all news.

And yet, you know, we choose not to listen to it. And we choose not to believe it. In an insane world, this is the greatest of all insanities.

That when presented with the gospel, we close our ears and we don't believe it. In Luke chapter 8, verses 16 through 18, that gospel is called the light.

In the previous passage that we looked at as a connexion last week, when Jesus told the parable of the sword and the seed, Jesus describes it as the seed which falls on different kinds of soil.

But now he describes it in Luke 8, 16 through 18, as light. Now light's a big theme in the Bible. In the Old Testament, God often appears in dazzling appearances of light.

[ 2 : 03 ] And Jesus calls himself the light of the world. This is the Christian gospel. The saving light of God that forgives sins, that gives us sure and certain hope, and assures us of eternal life through faith in Christ.

I want to tell you something very quickly before we really get cracking, boys. And that is that I became a Christian at camp when I was your age. Well, almost when I was your age.

Camp was an incredible influence on me in my early Christian life. The question is, what will we do with the light of the gospel? What will we do with that message of eternal light that we hear week by week through the preaching of the word in church and for your week at camp?

Now, in the previous passage, human responses to the gospel are very varied, ranging from immediate dismissal to lifelong acceptance, from hardness to fruitfulness.

The question for us all here this morning is, from the youngest to the oldest, what will we do with the gospel of Christ? The light of God, the message of sin forgiven, hope offered, and eternal life promised.

[ 3 : 16 ] What will we do with it? Well, I want us briefly to explore three themes this morning. First, the light is the gospel, verse 16.

Second, the light will expose us, in verse 17. And third, the light demands a response, in verse 18. The burden of the parable of the sword and the seed, last week, was all about hearing the message, believing it, and putting it into practice in our lives.

So, you've all got your Bibles with you. Please, turn your Bibles to Luke chapter 8, verse 16. Luke chapter 8, verse 16. The light is the gospel.

The light is the gospel. Jesus begins this section with the words, No one, after lighting a lamp, covers it with a jar, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see

the light.

Luke chapter 8, verse 16. No one, after lighting a lamp, covers it with a jar, but puts it on a stand. To go sideways for a moment, these words sound very familiar, and so they should.

[ 4 : 35 ] They form part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5. Matthew uses Jesus' words to point out how important it is to show by our good deeds that we're disciples of Jesus.

But Matthew isn't Luke. And he uses Jesus' words for his own purposes. But Luke wants to use Jesus' words, probably spoken on a different occasion, for his own purpose.

And his purpose is to show not so much that by our good deeds we show that we're disciples of Jesus, but to emphasize how important it is that we hear the gospel correctly and respond to it appropriately.

So, the light in Luke 8, verse 16 is the gospel as preached and practiced by Jesus. The disciples had been with Jesus for some time now, and over the course of that time they'd heard him preaching powerfully about how the kingdom of God has come through faith in him, and how through faith sin is forgiven, hope is offered, and eternal life is secured.

They've heard his powerful words, but they've also seen his powerful works. He has unstopped the ears of the deaf, he has cast out demons, and he has raised the dead to life.

[ 5 : 58 ] His works back up his words. They say the same thing, the king and the kingdom has come. This is the light, the gospel preached and practiced by Jesus.

Perhaps we may even say that Jesus himself is the light. Jesus' presence, his preaching, his practice are the light of the gospel. And at this stage in Jesus' ministry, they're shining so brightly, all can see and know that he is the Christ and his gospel is true.

He is not taking that light and hiding it under the jar or putting it under the bed. Rather, he is placing it on a stand so that the whole world can see that he is the light.

Well, listen carefully. Every time the gospel is preached, every time we hear the good news of the cross and resurrection of our Lord, every time we're told that it's not by works but by faith that a man or woman is saved, the light of the gospel is shining on us.

And the question is, what will we do with that light? That's the question that Jesus has answered in the previous passage when he refers to gospel as seed and explores the different responses people have to that gospel.

[ 7 : 15 ] The question last week was, what will we do with that seed? Will we dismiss it and reject it? Or will we accept it and believe it?

And the question this week is exactly the same, except using a different picture. What will we do with the light of the gospel that we hear preached week by week?

And you're going to hear, boys, every single day at camp. What will we do with the message of the love of God demonstrated in the cross of Jesus? Will we take that light as it shines into our ears and cover it with a jar or hide it under a bed so that it cannot penetrate deeper into our minds and hearts so that, God forbid, we might even believe in Jesus?

In the language of Luke's mentor, the apostle Paul, shall we suppress the truth of God and extinguish it even as a spark is extinguished as it falls into a lake?

Jesus isn't talking here about letting our light shine so that others may see our faith in him. He's talking here about letting the light of the gospel shine in us so that we ourselves believe.

[ 8 : 34 ] Big Circus was in Victoria Park in Glasgow just along the road a couple of weeks ago called Zippos. And one of the acts in that circus is a fire swallower.

He's an entertainer, right? You've all seen this on telly, right? An entertainer, and he lights a big flaming brand and he extinguishes it by sticking it down his throat. Now, every time I see a fire swallower, I immediately reach for a packet of strepsils.

I love the trapeze. Many in this congregation already think I'm a clown, but the fire swallower, someone else can try that one because I'm not volunteering.

But that's the idea here in this passage. The gospel is that flame of light, and the question is, what will we do with it? As it enters into us not by the mouth, as in the case of the circus fire swallower, but into the ear through the preaching of the word, what will we do with it?

If we choose not to respond in faith and trust, do that strange and crazy thing we spoke about in the introduction. It's like we're covering it with a jar or hiding it under a bed.

[ 9 : 48 ] We're like that seed on hard ground which is quickly plucked away. But if we choose not just to listen to what our leaders at camp tell us, the gospel as it's preached, but really heed it and

think about it and act upon it by putting our faith and trust in Jesus, it's like we're taking that light and we're putting it on a lampstand.

Every week from this pulpit, we all hear the call to faith and trust in Jesus, whoever's preaching. But today I want to take a step back and in view of Jesus' teaching here in Luke 8.16, to call upon us at the very least to do this.

Hear the gospel. Think about the gospel. Act the gospel. And if we choose after mature reflection to reject the gospel, that's on our heads.

But if we choose after mature and prayerful reflection upon the gospel to believe and trust in Jesus, that's another matter. You see, my fear is that as soon as the gospel is preached today, we're going to suppress it, forget it, and extinguish it.

Will we be fair to the gospel in this? We'll think about it. And like a light, we'll refuse to immediately extinguish it in our minds and hearts like that fire swallower does with his burning brand.

[11:16] Will we set it upon a stand so that over time we can think about what it really means? Crazy fire swallows are for the circus and the circus alone.

But crazy poor hearers, none of us here are like that, right? Second thing is from verse 17. The light will expose us.

The light will expose us. In this verse, Jesus explores why it might be that some of us choose to suppress the truth of the gospel and hide it under the jar. Why we do not allow ourselves to believe in Jesus as the Christ and his gospel as the way of salvation.

It's because the light exposes the darkness. He says in verse 17, I hope you've all got your Bibles in front of you, nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest or be revealed, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.

Because this is what light does. It exposes the darkness within us and shows us the kind of people we really are on the inside. It reveals the things that are hidden to us.

[12:23] It makes known our deepest, darkest secrets, the things we want no one else to know about us. It brings to light our inner sin. The writer of Hebrews puts it like this in Hebrews 4.

The word of God is living and active. It's sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow. It discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart, and nothing is hidden from his sight, God's sight.

But all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we all must give account. So when this gospel is preached, it's like a sword, and it goes down deep into us, and it reveals the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

This is what the light of the gospel does. It exposes who we really are on the inside. All the hidden things about us, all the things that we don't want others to know, they'll all be revealed by the gospel.

Now, I would never choose to be a fire swallower. I cannot think of a more painful profession. Actually, that's not true. I would never choose to be a dentist either.

[13:40] The fire swallower inflicts pain upon himself. The dentist inflicts pain on others. Whenever it comes time for a dentist appointment, you can usually find me hiding in a cupboard or behind a tree in the garden.

There are few things in life I fear, but the sound of a dentist's drill terrifies me. So we go to the dentist. Now, this is for grown-ups, not for you guys, because your teeth are all perfect.

You go to the dentist, and having been called into his wee room, we lie in the dentist's chair, and we open our mouths, and he swings over that big bright light, and he starts poking about in our mouths. And we just know that when he shines that bright light into our mouths, he's going to see holes in our teeth.

Oh, they call them technical things like dental caries and cavities. Behind his mask, the dentist grins and thinks to himself, Aha!

Now I get a chance to inflict pain on this unfortunate. And afterwards, afterwards, his mouth still bleeding from the torture, I'm going to inflict upon him, and his face contorted, because of the so-called anesthetic injection, I'm going to administer, I'm going to charge him an extortionate amount for the privilege.

[14:54] The bright light of dentists, I wish I could smash every one of them. Then at least I would not have to go through the pain of fillings, extractions, bridges, and other forms of torture.

So let me give you a confession. In general, when I get a sore tooth, I grin and bade it. I take paracetamol, brufin, clothes, and it's only when these things can't control the pain anymore that I get in touch with a dentist to say, can I have an appointment, only to be told the next appointment is 15 years in the future.

Enough poking fun at the dental profession. I love my dentist, really. The point is that because none of us like the painful and costly process of dental hygiene, we suppress the truth about our sore teeth and gums.

Because we think that as long as we pretend everything's okay, we don't have to go to the dentist. In the same way, the reason we suppress the truth of the gospel, the reason we extinguish the light of the gospel as it enters through our ears and hide it under a jar, under the bed, is because it exposes the sinful darkness of our hearts.

Now, I've been a minister here now nearly 20 years. And I've seen plenty of people who were visibly, visibly affected by the gospel. And I thought of myself, as Jesus said, I thought of them, as Jesus said of someone, you're not far from the kingdom of God.

[16:32] But then for some reason, they disappeared off the scene and I never saw them again. What happened in their case is that the gospel was exposing their sinful inner darkness.

That the more they saw the light of Jesus' holiness, the more it exposed what was on their inside and they didn't like it. The only way to get rid of that feeling of inner intrusion was to stop listening to the gospel.

To leave and never hear that gospel again. Then they can get on with living. Because it's a very painful thing to realize that we're not as pure as we thought we were.

But as the gospel is preached and we listen, we learn that we're idolaters and we're loveless and we're sinful and we're selfish and we're unbelieving and we're covetous and we're greedy and unclean before God.

Because that's what happens when the gospel is preached. It exposes the darkness of our hearts even as the bright light of the dentist. Exposes the decay in our mouths.

[17:38] And to get away from the bright light of the gospel, the only thing we can do is to hide it under the jar or under a bed. We simply cannot allow it to shine lest we are completely undone.

And like Peter, are forced to our knees before Jesus. Lord, depart from me, he said. I'm a sinful man. Well, third and finally, in verse 18.

I hope you're all looking at verse 18, Luke 8, 18. The light demands a response. Light always causes a reaction. A doctor will shine a light into the eyes to check the response of the iris.

In the same way, when the light of the gospel shines through the preaching of the word, it prompts a reaction. We'll place it on a stand in our hearts.

It'll get life, it'll get light to every part of our lives. Or we'll suppress it and we'll hide it under a bowl. We'll either heed it and with a little we understand, God will give us a deeper understanding.

[18:49] Or we'll close our ears and with a little we understand, God will act in judgment and take even that little bit away. On the one hand, this is a wonderful truth.

You know, we may not understand much about the gospel. All we may know is that Jesus died to take away our sins, to give us new life. But over time, God will give us more.

He'll give us a deeper understanding of how the gospel works in the whole of life. But on the other hand, verse 18 is really quite scary.

We might understand enough about the gospel to respond in faith, but we choose to walk away instead. And in that case, over time, God will take that understanding we had away so that nothing is left.

We harden our hearts to the gospel and God hardens them even further. And that's why Jesus says, and this is a really good verse for you to take away with your boys today. Beginning of verse 18, take care how you hear.

[19:59] because you're going to hear a lot this week at camp. Take care how you hear. Pay careful attention to how you hear. Remember, it's not just your listening, it's your whole response, how you think about the word that you're listening to, how it makes you feel, how you can obey it.

The preaching of the word is not a game, it's a serious business for eternal life and eternal death is decided upon how we hear. As we close, I want to do so by giving you all and myself some practical hints for how we get the most out of hearing God's word.

In the first instance, let's pray before we hear God's word. Whether it's our own individual reading of the word in the morning or we're getting ready to go to church or we're hearing God's word being preached, let's pray that God would give us listening ears and receptive hearts.

Perhaps we could use the words of Psalm 119, verse 18. Lord, open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of your word.

We prepare for everything else in life. Let's prepare well to hear the word of the gospel. We pray. Second, let's make every effort to listen carefully.

[ 21 : 28 ] It's easy to be distracted, but let's do everything we can to remove possible distractions when we're reading the Bible or listening to preaching. notification.

Notifications on our phones. Thoughts of last week or of next week. Let's do everything we can to listen well. And if that means taking notes, take notes.

I know that I saw, I think I saw a book that you've all been given where you can take notes of all your talks this week. Take notes if you find it difficult to listen. Third, commit what you've heard to memory.

Remember what you've heard. One of the great things about the Navigators, a student group in our congregation, is that they emphasize the memorization of Scripture. As we grow older, it's harder to remember things.

It's amazing how quickly we forget things. Suppose we can't remember an entire sermon. Let's try to remember its main theme and the Scripture passage from which it was taken.

[ 22 : 32 ] So today it's take care how you hear. Fourthly, meditate on what you've heard. Meditating on the Bible is like taking a piece of bread and chewing it until it becomes sweet.

In the Bible, the word meditate means to mumble under one's breath. So, mumble the Word of God under your breath as you're walking around the supermarket or you're in school.

Everyone will think you're mad, but that's okay. think through what God's saying to you. Let's feel the Word with our emotions and think through it with our minds. Let's set the Word of God upon a lampstand so that it gives light to everything in our lives.

And let's think about how we may put that Word into practice in our lives. Is there a promise that we've heard in the preaching which we can believe for ourselves? Is there a command which we need to obey?

Okay? So, pray, listen, think, meditate, because like chewing a bit of bread. And then lastly, let's do.

[ 23 : 39 ] Let's do the Word. Let's not merely be content to know more, but let's strive to do. Let's not be mere listeners to the Word, but doers also.

Let's strive upon the grace of Christ to imitate the love of Christ so that we may become more and more like Jesus in our thoughts, in our words, and our deeds.

So, pray, listen, memorize, meditate, and do the five foundations of good hearing. Again, let me say, how we hear the Word of God is not a game.

It is according to Jesus in this passage, a matter of life and death.

Strange, isn't it? Crazy, isn't it? That we would hear the gospel which declares God's infinite love for us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us and do nothing with it.

[ 24 : 49 ] That's crazy. By grace, then, let's hear and heed the words of Jesus in this passage.

Take care, pay attention to how you hear.

Set the gospel upon us, stand in our hearts so it gives light to every aspect of who and what we are and God will get all the glory for our eager hearing and our willing faith in Him.