

Bible Reading

Mark 4: 21-34

A lamp on a stand

²¹ He said to them, 'Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand?' ²² For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear.' ²⁴ 'Consider carefully what you hear,' he continued. 'With the measure you use, it will be measured to you – and even more. ²⁵ Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.'

The parable of the growing seed

²⁶ He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces corn – first the stalk, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ As soon as the corn is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.'

The parable of the mustard seed

³⁰ Again he said, 'What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.' ³³ With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. ³⁴ He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

Mark 4:21-34

A talk given by Rev David Eastwood on 11 July 2021

I'm sure the England team will be listening really carefully to their manager, Gareth Southgate. To all his advice about how to beat Italy tonight. To all his words.

Today Jesus says to us – listen carefully to him. Consider it carefully. If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear.

And so today we continue with more parables given by Jesus.

Take a lamp, Jesus says. You don't hide it under a bowl or a bed. No, you put it on a stand so that the house is lit up

I don't think Mark is talking here about any lamp. He's talking about **the** lamp.

Some translations say this – does the **lamp come** in order to be put under a bowl or a bed?

Jesus says the lamp comes not to be hidden. What is the lamp? Who is the lamp?

God is referred to as the lamp. Jesus is talking about the light that has come into the world, and the one who is the lamp, is Jesus himself. What Jesus is saying here is that I didn't come to be hidden or concealed

I came here as a lamp that is set upon a lampstand, so that the light that I bring may burst forth and be seen by all who dwell in darkness. I didn't come to be covered by a bowl or hidden under a bed.

In those days people's homes were lit by oil lamps. Oil was poured into a small bowl, in it was a floating wick drenched in oil which was lit, and this tiny lamp would give light to a room. You wouldn't put it under a bed.

What you do is place it so that the lamp lights up the whole room.

God is being hidden in our world and in His Church. His light has been made dim. Hidden from view.

The world will do everything to hide the light, to cover the light. The world is setting the agenda. But we have a responsibility to teach what we see in Scripture, even if the world doesn't like it.

God's laws, and God's light, is being covered. And Jesus says – I didn't come to be hidden.

And we must not allow God's light to be hidden. I came to be the light of the world.

And it's the duty of the Church and of every Christian to take that lamp and remove it from under the bowl, and put it in a permanent place so people can see the truth of God and of His Son.

As John says, Jesus came into a world of darkness, but the light shines in that darkness and the darkness has no power to quench that light. Jesus, the light, who made the world, yet His world does not recognise him.

But to all who receive him, who believe in his name, he gives the right to become children of God. This is the Good news!

And so we live in a world of darkness. A world that prefers to be in secret. After the very first sin was committed, Adam and Eve went into hiding from God. They feared the light, because when the light shines, we are exposed, naked and ashamed.

It's our nature to try to put some kind of covering over the pure light of the Gospel.

But Jesus said – it's impossible to quench this light. Nothing that is in secret now, will stay secret. Everything that is hidden, or concealed, will be revealed when Jesus returns.

The more you pass on the light of Jesus to others, the more will be given to you.

If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear. Are you listening? Are you paying attention?

Jesus says - I am the lamp of God. And I am to be made known.

We are called children of light. Called to show the light of Christ to this dark world, having turned its back on God.

So what happens when the light of Jesus shines? We see growth. Growth in the kingdom of God. And Jesus illustrates this growth with two parables:

1. The kingdom of God is like a man scattering seed

We are to scatter the word of God. We're not talking here about the different soils that we saw last week. But something else. We sow the seed. We share Jesus with others in what we say, and in what we do.

We then go to bed and sleep. And the seed that was sown, is at work in the earth.

It sprouts, it grows, it produces corn, and then it's harvested.

Jesus says that's the way the kingdom of. A tiny seed in the ground.

You go to sleep, and while you're sleeping, the seed comes to life. We don't know how it works.

But God makes it grow. Our words with others have impact. (Eg friend Sandy)

God uses our words to challenge and encourage others. (And our words can cause hurt and scars)

A simple word can be so powerful. We won't always see the results – that doesn't matter - Paul planted the seed, Apollos watered it, But God made it grow. We don't know what God will do with our efforts

We plant the seed, go to bed, and God takes that seed and it germinates, and it grows, and produces a harvest

Don't worry if you don't see the results immediately.

We are to take that light, make it shine, and let God do His work.

2. Then take the mustard seed

A very small seed.

Put it in the ground, and from this tiny seed the earth erupts, a plant, then a bush, growing so big that the birds make their nests in it.

Out of the smallest word that you speak, the smallest service that you give, God can take that seemingly, tiny, insignificant thing, and bring a kingdom out of it.

God is at work every day to bring about His plans.

We're not wasting our time.

Litter picking, conversations in the workplace, that text message encouraging someone.

We listen to the word of God, and that word is at work in you and me right now.

You may forget everything from today.

But that doesn't matter.

Because the word of God is in you and is at work.

That's how God's kingdom works.

It's not about having a clever plan, not about our efforts, not about entertaining, but about obedience to God, and His word, and His Spirit, and the seed that is planted will grow and grow and grow until the Lord of the harvest comes for his fruit.

We are called to shine the light of Jesus into our world, to walk in His ways, and leave the growth to God.

If anyone has ears, let them hear.

AMEN