

Take Care How You Hear, Part 1

Luke 8:16-18

What is Jesus illustrating with the lamp lighting analogy? What are the hidden things that are made manifest? What are the secret things that will be made known and come to light? Are Jesus' disciples to take that as a word of caution? That is why we are to take care how we hear? Is that the fact that all of our dirty laundry will one day be hung out to dry? So we better be sure we listen carefully to make sure that our laundry is clean? Or is this something, rather than being more negatively oriented, more threatening, more foreboding, is this more like a positive statement? Is this a word of encouragement?

So rather than leaving you in suspense, let's get right into the text and see what we can find out by paying close attention to what Jesus says here in this context. So for the first point, God's intention in revealing the truth. And that's the main point. But we want to begin with a simple

straightforward illustration Jesus uses there in verse 16 and ask a simple question about it.

This is sub-point A in your notes and the question I'm asking there is why do we turn on the lights? Simple question, why do we turn on the lights? Look what it says there in verse 16, "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."

Why does anyone turn on a light? To promote seeing, right? Very simple. That's it. That is Jesus' point in giving you that analogy. People turn on lights so they can see. And you say, duh. Yes, that's exactly where he wants you to come. Jesus here he is talking about the light. He's talking about the lamp. He's talking about a small handheld oil lamp. It's like a little bowl. Some were made out of metal, but most in common use were made of clay pottery. You might imagine a small shallow saucer shaped bowl that could fit in your hand, about the size of maybe a cereal bowl. Edges of the bowl were folded inward, leaving openings in the top to add oil, allow access for air. But to

make sure you didn't spill oil over the edges, if you're careful.

It was a nozzle shaped extension attached to the lip of the bowl. There would be a hole running through that nozzle to allow a wick to go through and run the length of the nozzle. The lower end of the wick would be dipped down into the oil and draw that fuel into the upper end of the wick and keep the flame alive. Now, no one lit one of those handheld oil lamps with the purpose of covering it. Very simple, people did not light lamps and then cover it over.

It says in our ESV text, a jar, the word is broader than that. It speaks of a vessel. It's a *skeuos*, it refers to containers of all shapes and sizes. Could be a smaller jar, could be a basket, could be a water jar that's larger, a pot. Any of these containers of all shapes and sizes used for carrying liquids, solids, all that for domestic use.

So no one would light an oil lamp and then go and empty out a grain basket, or pour out the water out of their water jug and

then put it over a lit lamp. By the same reasoning, no one would put that lit lamp underneath a bed and hide it under there. Once someone lights a lamp, the progression, you can see here, notice the progression of illumination that you see in verse 16. It goes from the private and personal, to the public and the corporate. The handheld lamp starts out in the hand, but then it ends up in a prominent place. That's the progress of illumination. To take what is illuminating on a small sphere for personal use, but then elevating that and broadening that, and spreading that to a wider sphere for public benefit.

Many houses had an indentation that was built into the side of the wall with a little shelf to hold exactly these kinds of small handheld oil lamps. In larger rooms, bigger rooms, larger houses, you'd have a stand, a pillar kind of in the middle of the room. It was a small but sturdy, maybe waist high, maybe a little higher, little pillar and it had a horizontal surface on the top of it, built sort of concave to provide a seat for holding that handheld lamp in place. And that allowed that light to go beyond just the handheld and then benefit anybody who entered into that room. It freed up that individual tying up his hands so he could put that on the stand, not have to carry a

lamp around and then freed up both hands to do work or read or whatever. Lamp stands in homes, very common.

Same thing today, right? We all have flashlights in the house in case of a power outage or a breaker going off or something like that, but we prefer to use electric lighting for public places, public spaces. If someone overloads the breaker in your house, lights go off. What do you do? You grab a flashlight. You don't pull out the flashlight and then immediately tape over the lens with black electric tape so no light can get out. Of course, you take that flashlight, you go to the breaker box. And you turn on the breaker and light comes on in your home once again. And everybody who enters into the rooms of your home can see.

So far so good, right? Simple. Light is for seeing. We light lamps. We turn on flashlights. We turn on electric lights so people can see. We illuminate on a small scale that we might, whenever possible, provide light on a bigger scale, a larger scale, a wider scale. The question now is, what is Jesus trying to say by talking about the human purpose in lighting lamps?

So let me give you the punchline first. The interpretation of verses 16-17 in context, and then I'll come back and unpack it for you a bit. Jesus is using the lamp on a lampstand illustration here to teach his disciples about God's intention in revealing the truth. Jesus is using the lamp on a lampstand illustration here in this context to teach his disciples about God's intention in revealing the truth. And according to this understanding, and in this context, God is the lamplighter. And God is the one putting the lamp up on the lamp stand.

So let's go in your notes to sub-point B. And the question is, why does God turn on the light? Why does God turn on the light? God turns on the light to reveal the truth, not to conceal it. And you think, well, of course he would do that. He would turn on the light to reveal the truth and not to conceal it. It's a very simple point, but it is much needed to state that clearly in this postmodern age. Because the instinct of the time, the skepticism of the age is to reject the intention of the original author in favor of the readers, changing interpretations of the text. You'll see this applied to the U.S. Constitution, as well as to the Bible. The instinct today is to

deconstruct the text, to read the text through the lens of skepticism, to let the modern interpreter interact with a living document and derive new meanings for a new age. One that applies to us in our own day.

We interpret Scripture, not according to our own changing age, not according to our own preferences, not according to what fits our time and LGBT issues and all the rest. No, we go back to the authorial intent. What did God, who revealed the Bible, what did he intend when he wrote this down? So the instinct today is to deconstruct the text. Interpreters interacting with the living document to derive new meanings.

So it's no wonder that people come to a myriad of conflicting interpretations. You've talked to people and they say, I can't trust the Bible, so many interpretations. Those many, many, many interpretations, all of them except one are false. But all those interpretations are conflicting, confusing. It's no wonder people are confused out there because they're hearing all of this. The modern mind going into Scripture and using it like Play-Doh and forming it to however they want to

make it. It's like gumby. And then they have the nerve to accuse the Scripture of being unclear. How dare they, right?

Jesus' point in context, he's telling us here that God is the lamp lighter. And God has lit the lamp and he has turned on the light in order to reveal the truth that all who come into the house might see and benefit from light. He doesn't turn the light to conceal the truth. He turns on the light to reveal it. When God speaks, he speaks in a clear, consistent, non-contradictory voice. He does not stutter. He doesn't speak in esoteric mysteries. He doesn't speak in confusion. When God speaks, he speaks clearly. And when he speaks to us, he uses normal, everyday, unambiguous human language.

So why is Jesus making the point that God is the lamplighter and God is the one who put the light on the stand. Why is he making that point to his disciples here in this text? And why, we might add the human author into this and his authorial intent; why is Luke recording this for the sake of his initial reader? You might say, "The most excellent Theophilus," Luke 1:3. Why is he recording this for Theophilus's sake and for our sake, how does this fit the context?



Let your eyes go back up to verse 10. And Jesus told his disciples the reason he speaks in parables, "So that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand." You might get the sense from that that Jesus' intention is to hide the truth from people. Is that true? According to our text here, no, not at all. As we've said when we went through that section of Scripture, Jesus spoke here to the crowds. The largely unbelieving crowds, and he spoke to cause people to listen more carefully, actually. He wanted them to look beyond the simple story about a sower sowing seeds in different kinds of soils. That if you took it just, it wouldn't make any sense at all.

And so he's provoking them to discern a deeper meaning. He wanted them to see, but, not merely with their physical eyesight. He wanted them to hear, but not just merely with their natural sense of hearing. He wanted them to go beyond their natural perception to seek spiritual perception. He taught in such a way, using these parables, so as to frustrate any attempt to rely on our own natural perception to use human intuition, human experience. Because you need to understand something from

Scripture. We don't have wisdom in us. We need to seek it from outside of us.

Think about the analogy of a light. The light is external, it's absolute. It's not a subjective issue of my opinion, it's either on or it's not, right? Same thing here. He doesn't want us to rely on human intuition, subjective experience. He wants the crowds not to lean on their own understanding. In fact, he wants them to absolutely despair of their own sense of wisdom. He wants them to come to him to gain a deeper, truer, fuller, spiritual understanding. That's what the disciples did, right? They heard something and they're scratching their heads and saying, doesn't, doesn't make full sense. That's not how farmers, that's not how farmers farm. What is Jesus after?

So they come to him in verse 9, "His disciples asked him what this parable meant," and what did Jesus say? He responded, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'"

He didn't hide the truth. Quite the contrary. He is here revealing everything. Profound insight, he's delivering and pouring out to all those with spiritual perception, but in parables it is true. He did make a distinction. Jesus did discriminate between those who listened with spiritual perception, that is his disciples, and those who listen with merely natural perception, that is the others; the unbelieving crowds, those with hard hearts, shallow hearts, hearts distracted by worldly cares and affections. That's all pictured in the hard packed soil, the rocky soil, the thorny soil.

So when you go back to verse 16. You can see that Jesus is using that illustration of a lamp and a lamp lighter to argue from the lesser to the greater. If it's true, that on a mundane, common, human level, that no one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar, puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand so that those who enter may see the light. If that's true on a common, mundane, human, normal, day-to-day life level, how much more true is it when God lights a lamp and when he puts it on a lampstand? If the principle is true on a human level, then certainly they could understand Jesus' intention as well is to reveal the truth not to conceal it.

So it's God's intention in lighting a lamp, putting it up on a lampstand, God's intention that all might see, and hear, and perceive, and be saved. That's Jesus' intention as well. Even when he's speaking to the crowds in parables.

Here's another question, sub-point C. What does God intend to reveal? What, in specific, does he intend to reveal? During Jesus' ministry on earth, the seed that he was sowing, the light that he was shining, we can see a definite revelatory intention in Jesus' ministry. That is, he's specifically revealing something in particular. God intended to reveal something very specific by sending his own beloved son, Jesus Christ. In fact, turn over to Mark's gospel for a moment. Just so I can show you what I mean here.

Mark 4:21-25, we find Jesus there speaking once again about the lamp on the lamp stand, this is a true parallel to what Luke has recorded in Luke 8. What Mark tells us and what Mark records about the lamp on the lamp stand is not a different time, occasion, context, or purpose. It's the same thing that Luke

recorded, and in both places the illustration of the lamp on the lampstand, it follows immediately after the Parable of the Sower. So we should pay close attention to this.

Notice in Mark 4:21-25, "Jesus said to them," who's them? Back in verse 10, it's his disciples. It's those who are with them. "And he said to them," in verse 21, 'Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.' And he said to them, 'Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.'"

That sounds a good bit like what we just heard in Luke 8, doesn't it? Notice what follows though in Mark's record. There are two parables that follow immediately after about the kingdom of God. You see, in verses 26-29 there, it's the parable of the seed growing into a fruit bearing plant. It's an illustration of the growth of the kingdom. And then in verses 30-32, it's the

Parable of the Mustard Seed. Again, a parable about the kingdom; small beginnings, massive growth.

Starting with the Twelve, or go into Acts chapter 1 and 2, the hundred and twenty, hidden up in an upper room in Jerusalem. Here we are in Colorado two thousand years later. It's clear from Mark's gospel, the truth about the kingdom of God, that is the light that Jesus came to shine on the earth, the revelatory intention of Jesus' ministry, the purpose for which God revealed, it's to reveal God's plan about the kingdom, about things pertaining to the kingdom. The lamp is lit. The light started shining when God sent the king of the kingdom into the world. The Christ born of the Virgin Mary.

Back in Luke 1:76-79, Zechariah prophesied about his son, John, "the prophet of the Most High." Who would go before the Lord to prepare his ways? And it says there, "To give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high," to do what? "To give light to those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet with that light into the way of peace."

Simeon saw that same light when he came into the temple. When the Holy Spirit drove him into the temple and Simeon saw the true light. And he held the baby, who is light, in his arms, a saving light. And he praised God for sending the light of his salvation, for not hiding it from anyone. Instead, he praised God in heaven for sending salvation that God had, quote, "prepared in the presence of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to God's people Israel." Kingdom truths, not a Kingdom for Jews only, but for Jew and Gentile alike. Not a Kingdom won by external military force and conflict. But going down to the heart, the spiritual nature of the conflict and dealing with sins. That's the kingdom of God.

If you go back to Luke 8:16, we can see there that God lit the lamp with the light of truth about the kingdom. He set the light of that truth on a lampstand. He elevated his own son, Jesus Christ. And then this in verse 16, "So that those who enter may see the light." Whoever enters with forgiven sin, with a clean conscience. Whoever enters, covered with the righteousness of Christ. Whoever enters, Jew or Gentile, male or

female, slave or free. All those who enter may see the light, find salvation, being kingdom citizens.

Jesus' mission statement, back in Luke 4:18-19, he quoted from Isaiah 61:1-2. So this is not something that was even hidden in the Old Testament. Jesus said, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind." There it is, sight again. "To set at liberty those who are oppressed and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Look, that's what God is revealing in Christ.

That is what Christ is teaching in his parables, truths about the kingdom of God. He's not clothing the truth about the kingdom in parables to render them unintelligible, to give confusion, to hide them under a vessel, or put them under a bed. Rather, he speaks about the kingdom openly, publicly, clearly. He sets that truth up on a lampstand so that everything can be viewed, and heard, and discerned, and examined; ah, but only by those with eyes to see, only those with ears to hear, only those who've been granted spiritual perception through spiritual regeneration. They, and they alone will see, and hear, and





discern unto salvation. They, and they alone are the true citizens of the kingdom.

So, why does God turn on the light? To reveal the truth. What truth does God intend to reveal? It's the truth about the kingdom of God, which starts with Jesus Christ and culminates in Jesus Christ. As the commentator Frederic Godet put it, "Whilst the night thickens over Israel on account of its unbelief, the disciples would advance into even fuller light until there is nothing left in the plan of God, which is obscure or hidden."