

Introduction

1. In the last lesson, we began our journey through Mk 4:1-35, which contains a series of five parables centered on the topic of the kingdom of God.
 - a. Remember Jesus' central message from the beginning of his ministry has been "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mk 1:15).
 - b. The five kingdom parables in Mark 4:1-35 are:
 1. Parable of the Sower Mk 4:1-20
 2. Parable of the Lamp Mk 4:21-23
 3. Parable of the Measure Mk 4:24-25
 4. Parable of the Growing Seed Mk 4:26-29
 5. Parable of the Mustard Seed Mk 4:30-34
 - c. In this lesson, we will examine two parables: Parable of the Lamp and Parable of the Measure.
 - 1) These parables are shorter and less detailed than the Parable of the Sower.
 - 2) Unlike the Parable of the Sower, Jesus does not provide an interpretation of these parables.
 - 3) We must use what we have heard in the previous parable to gain insight from these parables.
 - 4) As James Brooks notes, ". . . one should not expect all of the parables of Jesus to represent the same oral or literary form, and that is certainly the case" (James A. Brooks, *Mark*, 77).
2. "Verses 21-25 contain five or six sayings of Jesus that technically are wisdom sayings dealing with lessons from everyday life but that are easily included under the broad term 'parables.' One is in each verse, and perhaps there are two in v. 24. Each may have previously circulated independently" (Brooks, 83).
3. **Read Mk 4:21-25.**

A. Parable of the Lamp (21-23)

1. Jesus continued to teach his followers using parables in this passage.
2. He asked, "Do you bring in (Gk., *erchetai* = "comes") a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed?" (21a)
 - a. In my opinion, the NIV translation "bring" in this verse is inferior to other translations that translate this verb as "come," which more closely matches the meaning of the Greek verb *erchetati*. Also, the Greek has a definite article with the word lamp (Gk., *ho luchnos*). It is a specific, definite lamp.
 - b. The NIV has followed normal English construction by describing the bringing of a lamp rather than the coming of a lamp. A lamp is brought. It does not come in on its own.
 - c. However, the use of the verb "come" and the definite article "the" are I believe both intentional.
 - d. Jesus is "the lamp," the source of light (i.e., the word of God), who "comes" into the world.
 - 1) John described Jesus as "the light of all mankind" (Jn 1:4).
 - 2) Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (Jn 8:12).
3. The implied answer to Jesus' question is "No." We don't put the lamp under a bowl or bed.
 - a. Jesus said, "Instead don't you put it on its stand?" (21b).
 - b. Jesus came to shed God's light into the world by proclaiming the good news of the coming of the kingdom of God.
 - c. However, Jewish leaders rejected His message and sought to kill Him. Even those whom He healed did not fully accept the truth that He declared. They were fools to try to hide the light of God's truth.
4. Jesus then declared, "For whatever is hidden (Gk., *krupton*) is meant to be disclosed (Gk., *phanerothe*), and whatever is concealed (Gk., *apokruphon*) is meant to be brought out into the open (Gk., *phaneron*)."
 - a. Jesus spoke this wisdom saying using a traditional Hebrew poetic form by repeating His statement a second time using similar parallel words for emphasis.
 - b. What has been hidden/concealed is God's kingdom and His plan for establishing that kingdom on earth through sending His son Jesus.
 - c. The time has come for disclosing and bringing God's plan out into the open.

- d. Remember the Messianic secret that we discussed earlier in our study. Jesus commanded demons (cf., Mk 1:25, 3:12) and even those whom he healed (cf., Mk 2:43-44) to keep silent about his identity. His true identity was to be veiled/hidden until the right moment when it would be revealed through his death and resurrection. What is hidden now will soon be revealed for all to see.
 - e. Jesus had come not only to declare the coming of God's kingdom but also to establish it by inaugurating the New Testament church through his life, sacrificial death, and resurrection.
5. Jesus concluded this short parable with another call for anyone who ". . . has ears to hear, let him hear." He wanted those who listened not just to hear His teaching in this parable but to understand its meaning and allow that meaning to change their lives.

B. Parable of the Measure (24-25)

1. As Jesus ended the previous parable with a call to hear what he was saying, so he began this second short parable with a command to "Consider carefully (Gk., *blepete* – "look upon; look into") what you hear" (24).
 - a. Jesus called for those listening to Him to hear His teaching in Mk 4:3,9,13,23,24.
 - b. ". . . parables can veil the truth from those who have no appreciation for it; vv. 21-25 emphasize how parables ultimately reveal the truth to those who consider them carefully and understand" (Brooks, 83).
 - c. Jesus still calls for us to listen to what He says beyond the surface of the parable and to reflect deeply on its meaning and application in our lives.
2. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more" (24).
 - a. This image from the marketplace or kitchen pictures a person scooping wheat or another commodity from a bin using a scoop or measure (Gk., *metro*).
 - b. The commodity being scooped up in the parable is the truth of God and His kingdom revealed in Jesus.
 - c. The person who uses a big scoop, who truly hears and heeds Jesus' teaching about God and the kingdom, will receive much truth in an ever growing proportion.
 - d. The person who uses a small scoop or fails to even scoop at all will not perceive the truth in Jesus' teaching. They will miss out on the generous portion of truth God has for him/her in His word.
3. "Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them" (25).
 - a. At first reading, this verse sounds almost harsh. It sounds like a proclamation that the rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer. It doesn't sound fair. What does Jesus mean?
 - b. Jesus was not talking about money or possessions in this verse. His focus was on the truth of God and His kingdom.
 - 1) Those who see the truth of who Jesus is, receive His teaching, and follow Him by faith will receive even more of God's truth.
 - 2) Those who fail to see who Jesus is, reject His teaching, and turn away from Him will lose even the initial revelation of God's truth given to them.
 - 3) Continual rejection of God's truth results in the one rejecting God getting what he/she wants—an eternity apart from God and His kingdom.
 - 4) Continual reception of God's truth results in the one receiving God getting more and more of what he/she wants—a deeper faith walk and eternal life with God in His kingdom.
 - c. Wiersbe concludes, "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. . . . Our spiritual hearing determines how much we have to give to others" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 54-55).

C. Lessons for Us

1. Receive the light of Jesus and allow His truth to come into your life and change it.
2. Don't hide the truth of God from others but "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5:16).
3. God will make a final revelation of Himself and His kingdom at the Second Coming. Until then we must work to share His light/truth through the gospel/Jesus with as many other people as we can.
4. Daniel Akin counsels, "How we respond to Jesus day by day is of the utmost seriousness. Do not take for granted the relationship you have today. It could all be lost tomorrow" (Daniel Akin, Exalting Jesus in Mark, 93).
5. Dig into God's truth/word with a big scoop. The more you truly see, hear, and obey Jesus, the more His truth will be revealed to you and be alive in you.
 - a. Read God's word daily.
 - b. Reflect with the Spirit on what you see/hear.
 - c. Apply what you see/hear in God's word to the living of your life, your words and actions, each day.
 - d. Keep on growing in your faith walk with Jesus using a big scoop.