

### 13. Jesus Taught the Parable of the Lamp

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to work with the Trinity as they share the Word of God with those who are not Christians. We also want to help them understand that the hearts of individuals are like the various kinds of soils, and so, they need to pray that the Lord will open the hearts of those with whom they share so that those individuals are able to hear, understand, and allow the Word to bring forth fruit in their hearts. In this topic, we will see that Jesus gave two additional parables.

The first parable is about a lamp. Mark 4:21-23 says, “Also He said to them, ‘Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.’” In the time of the New Testament, a lamp was just a small clay bowl with a spout. The people would put oil in the clay bowl and then put a wick into the oil through the spout. The oil that came up the wick would cause the wick to burn and give light in the house.

Since the purpose of the lamp was to give light to the house, Jesus asked if anyone would put that lamp under a basket or under a bed. The answer was obvious to all who heard Jesus that day. Then, Jesus asked another question. He said, “Is it not to be set on a lampstand?” Again, the answer was obvious. Jesus went on to explain why He had asked those questions. Jesus said that there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed. A key to remember is that these parables were about the kingdom of God. At that time, Jesus was teaching His disciples about the kingdom of God. However, the plan of Jesus was to equip the disciples to spread the kingdom of God throughout the world. The final words of Jesus, before He returned to heaven, are given in Acts 1:8, where we read, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” This verse clearly explains that the plan for the kingdom of God is for the entire world.

Jesus also said, “Nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.” We saw, in an earlier topic, that the scribes from Jerusalem were already looking for an excuse to condemn Jesus. Later, when Jesus was placed on trial, the high priest asked Jesus about His teaching. We see His answer, in John 18:20-21, “I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.” Jesus made it very clear that He had not said things in secret. The problem of the religious leaders was the fact that they heard parables just like this one, but they lacked spiritual understanding. That is why Jesus said here, as He did at other times, “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” The scribes, and Judas, could not hear with spiritual understanding.

Jesus went on to explain the importance of both hearing and obeying. Mark 4:24-25 says, “Then He said to them, ‘Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.’” The word translated

“take heed” means “*to have spiritual understanding or to see.*” Jesus wanted His disciples to have spiritual understanding, even if that understanding was lacking in the lives of the crowds and the religious leaders.

The phrase, “with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you,” was an encouragement to the disciples to make a real effort to both hear and understand the parables Jesus spoke. We can hear and we will soon forget. Then, we will not be given more. In contrast, we can hear, pray that the Holy Spirit will give us understanding, and then obey what the Word of God says. Solomon prayed, in 1 Kings 3:9, “Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” We need to have the same attitude Solomon showed in this verse and ask the Lord to give us an understanding heart as we study the Word of God. Then, we need to follow the instructions given in James 1:22, which say, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

As we hear, pray for understanding, and then obey what the Word of God says, Jesus promised that we will be given more understanding. This is the thing that will make it possible for our lives to have an impact for eternity. In contrast, those who are not Christians cannot pray and ask the Holy Spirit for spiritual understanding. Like the crowds in the day of Jesus, they will just hear and then forget because they lack spiritual understanding. They may enjoy what they hear, but their hearts are like one of the first three kinds of soil given in the earlier part of this chapter. Because they do not understand and obey, the Word they have heard is quickly forgotten.

Then, Jesus went on to explain what happens in the lives of people whose hearts are like the good ground. Mark 4:26-29 says, “And He said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.’” Here, we see that we will learn more when we are obedient and share the Word of God with others. We see that as we scatter seed by sharing the Word of God with others, the Lord will work through the Word shared. Psalm 126:5-6 gives us a wonderful promise. Those verses say, “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him.*” We are to share the Word of God.

One of the things this parable teaches us is that we do not know what happens in the hearts of people after we have shared the Word of God with them. The Lord is the One who must work in hearts. That is why, in the previous parable, we saw that the hearts of people can be like four kinds of soil. Some are hard-hearted; they hear the Word of God and Satan quickly takes the Word out of their hearts. Some have hearts like rocky soil; they immediately receive the Word with gladness, but quickly turn from it when tribulation or persecution arises. Some have hearts like thorny soil; their hearts are turned away by the cares of this world. However, many are like the good soil; their hearts hear the Word of God, accept it and bear fruit.

This parable talks about what happens in those whose hearts are like good soil. We see that the Word takes root and begins to grow in those whose hearts are like good soil. However, we cannot know how it is growing in their hearts, because only God can know the hearts. The thing that the Word teaches us is that the Holy Spirit is the One who is causing the Word to take root and begin to grow. Jesus promised, in John 16:7-8, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” In these verses, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit. He also said that the Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of those who are like good soil and do three things for those who are not Christians. In verses 9 through 11, we see that the Holy Spirit will convict them of their sin of unbelief; He will convict and convince them that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One; and He will convince them that Satan has already been judged and those who continue to follow Satan will share in his judgment.

In some individuals, the seed will grow rapidly, while in others, it will grow very slowly. That is why we cannot know in whose hearts the Word is taking root and how it is growing. With some people, we will see that they begin to resist more because the Holy Spirit is convicting them of their sin of unbelief. That was certainly true of Saul, who later became Paul. Acts 8:3 says, “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.” In his case, the Lord had to knock him to the ground to get his attention. Acts 9:3-4 says, “As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’” In contrast, others begin to ask many questions because the Holy Spirit is convicting them.

Both are being drawn by the Father, as John 6:44 says, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” We saw in the earlier parable that the good soil is the heart. Here, Mark 4:28 says, “For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.” God prepares the hearts and He causes the Word to take root in those whose hearts are like good soil. We see that the seed continues to grow until the crop is ready to harvest. When the harvest is ready, the sower immediately harvests the crop. Luke 19:10 says, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” We see that we are working with the entire Trinity as we share the Word of God with those who are not yet Christians.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to work effectively with each member of the Trinity by showing them how to share the Word of God with love, especially as we share the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to work with the Trinity in evangelism.