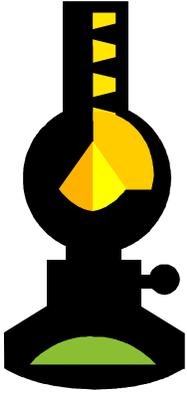


Parable of the Lamp **Pastor John E. Dubler**



The parable of the lamp appears in all three of the synoptic gospels. The message is similar in the Gospel of Mark, but varies significantly in Matthew's Gospel.

All have the same message: Our lives are like lighted lamps, not to be hidden away but shining forth in the midst of a dark world. All the mysteries of the Kingdom, though they might seem hidden now, will be revealed in due time. In the meantime, we should be careful about what teachings we receive. Those who have been well instructed in the ways of the Lord can receive even more good things from Him. But those who are careless about the Word of God stand to lose what little they have.

The Parable from Luke 8

Luke 8:16-18

Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light. So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.

Before we take a closer look at the parable, take a look at the parallel passages:

Matthew 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Mark 4:21-25

And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand? For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

The Lamp



Luke 8:16: “Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light.” The lamp represents the life of the believer. Those who walked in darkness have seen the Light of Life. Jesus is the light that has come into the world and illumines every man. The light of His countenance, shining across the centuries even today, lightens the hearts and lives of all who come to Him for salvation by grace through faith.

[Photo: replica of a Herodian oil lamp (c. BC 50 to 50AD) for sale at Victorie, Inc.
www.victorie-inc.us/Herodian.jpg].

We see this principle in the pages of the Old Covenant in several different ways, but especially in 2 Samuel 22:29 (and identically in Psalm 18:28):

For You are my lamp, O LORD;
And the LORD illumines my darkness.

The Gospel of John, which mirroring the beginning of Genesis begins with strong references to the Light of the World, gives us additional illumination: “There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man,” John 1:9. “The eye is the lamp of the body,” we are told in Matthew 6:22, and the Gospel of Luke repeats the concept in this way, “If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it will be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays.” Luke 11:36.

If we allow no darkness, becoming day by day like Jesus in whom there was no darkness at all, then the lamps of our lives are meant to be lifted up so that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

The concept of our lives being a light in the dark world is worth a further look.

Our lives are on public display. Sometimes believers are, as Paul said, a public display, as “men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men, (1 Corinthians 4:9-10). Not a spectacle in the sense of dishonor, for if anyone suffers as a “murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler,” he is to be ashamed. “But if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.” (1 Peter 4:15-16).

The way we live each day is a testimony to the world. Returning the money which was paid to us in error, pointing out that we were undercharged, willingly putting others first, not demanding our rights.



Bearing with the infirmities of the weak and so, not just pleasing ourselves. “Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification,” not complaining about him or gossiping about him, (Romans 15:1-2).

Working together in harmony as believers is a testimony to the dark world, whose dreary residents hope against hope that somewhere there are people who can live together in peace, edifying each other, and helping each other.

And so your marriage is a testimony to the world, indeed, those two lamps which have come together as one, shine brightly when you are fulfilling the law of Christ. Husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the church. Wives seeing to it that they respect their husbands. (Ephesians 5). Husbands living with their wives in an understanding way as with someone weaker, showing them honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life so that their prayers will not be hindered. And in all ways both great and small, to show the world what the Love of Christ for His church is like through their marriage, and in the words of 1 Peter 3: 8-9, “To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.”



We rake leaves together at the homes of those who cannot do so themselves as a public testimony the love of Christ. Thus our light shines before the world. While we have opportunity we “do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith,” (Galatians 6:9-10).

We should never seek the stage, but live in such a way that God is glorified. The idea here is not a works for righteousness program or an attempt to “practice our righteousness before men in such a way so as to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven,” (Matthew 6:1). And so we give, we pray and we fast in secret, and our Father who sees in secret will reward us.

The main point is that our good works will bring glory to our Heavenly Father. Thus all that we do is intended for God’s glory. And that is why the apostle Paul writes to us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.” (1 Corinthians 10:31-33).

The Lampstand. Putting our lamps, that is our properly motivated good works, up on a lampstand where the world can see them is a matter of practicality for the Kingdom of God and not of pride. Raking leaves at night when we would not be seen by the neighbors is neither logical nor prudent. But sounding a trumpet before the leaf raking crew and marching to work to be seen by men is demeaning, silly, proud and even laughable. We must always give some

thought to not doing our good works deeds in pride to be seen of men. But keeping our talents, our abilities, or deeds of kindness, our desire to help, totally obscured does not help anyone see the light.

So, if you have a special skill or ability, don't flaunt it, but use it. Use it well. Do not hide it. Can you sing, can you play an instrument, can you fix a car, a washing machine, a furnace; can you set up a wireless network, can you drive a car or a truck? Can you paint a house or a portrait or a sunset? Can you write a play or a book or a prescription? Can you teach a child or read a book to a dying man? Whatever you can do, do it heartily as unto the Lord. Do it well. Do it skillfully. Do it so that when they see your work they will say, "Thank God for that person." That's Christ in you the hope of glory shining out into a dark and dying world. Of course there are times when everyone needs a season of rest. Rest well when it is time to rest. Minister well when it is time to minister. Be aware of the grace and gifts which the Lord has given you—He did so for a good reason.

Secrets will be revealed. The parable takes an interesting turn at the end of Jesus' remarks about the lamp and the lampstand. Here is somewhat a shift in subject in that we now consider some things that are hidden.

The parable may be taken in one or both of two ways: Negative, that is there are some hidden sins or misdeeds that will eventually be revealed; and positive, that is all the mysteries of the Kingdom of God will be revealed eventually.

"For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light." Since the Word says, "*nothing* is hidden that will not become evident," it is perhaps best that we embrace both viewpoints.

All sins will be revealed. There is a day coming when "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus," (Romans 2:16).

And there is a day coming when all the mysteries of the kingdom will eventually become clear and evident. "What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops," Jesus told us, (Matthew 10:27). On that day "every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen," (Revelation 1:6-7). And on that day, "every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," (Philippians 2 10-11).

Be careful about what you are taught. The parable concludes with some instructions for the believers and a warning: "So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be



given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him,” (verse 18).

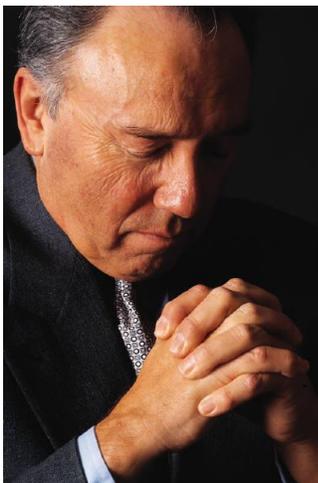
“Take care” from the Greek infinitive βλέπω, (blepo) means literally “to look at.” In context the word means *carefully perceive, to examine*. Like the Berean Christians we are to eagerly receive teaching from the Word of God but to examine each teaching carefully and verify its authenticity. “Now these [of Berea] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” Βλέπω is the same word used in Matthew 24:4 when our Lord says, “*See to it that no one misleads you,*” when speaking of the end-times. Therefore the emphasis is on a rather thorough consideration, not a just a cursory look.

The landscape of Christian teaching is littered with reams and sheaves of paper espousing doctrines of men and not God. It is best to stay with the Word of God directly. Take nothing from it; add nothing to it. Avoid carefully the snares of false teachings.

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.
Ephesians 4:14-15.

The warning: The parable concludes with this warning from our Lord, “For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him,” (verse 18). The phrase is repeated in similar forms at least six times in the New Testament.

Those who have been given knowledge (in this case more revelation about the mysteries of the kingdom), can receive more revelation. Their acceptance of the good teaching in a pure heart enables them to build on the foundation laid. The writer of Hebrews noted that his readers



should have gone on to deeper revelations already, but their failure to master the basic doctrines hindered them from receiving more. “Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation . . .” Hebrews 6:1.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Hebrews 5:12-14

Failure to grow in the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ can result in actually sliding backwards and losing ground. The warning concludes, “and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he

has shall be taken away from him,” (verse 18). This is a “use it or lose it” statement. If we are diligent in paying attention to sound teaching and grow in grace, we will receive more. But if we become slothful and inattentive to the Word, the things which we “think” we have will slip away.

Conclusion: Our lives are like lighted lamps, not to be hidden away but shining forth in the midst of a dark world. All the mysteries of the Kingdom, though they might seem hidden now, will be revealed in due time. In the meantime, we should be careful about what teachings we receive. Those who have been well instructed in the ways of the Lord can receive even more good things from Him. But those who are careless about the Word of God stand to lose what little they think they have.

