

Is a Lamp Put Under a Basket; Mark 4:21-23

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The parable of the lamp. And I'm going to look at this parable. Now, this won't take us long, but we need to look at this because all of this fits in perfectly. These five parables are arranged perfectly for a certain theme. As we've said before, Jesus didn't tell all these parables in the same context. He told them at different times, but Mark and the other gospel writers have put them together in chapter four to make a point.

And so the next parable that we come to is this parable of. The lamp. Let's read it once again from verse 21. And he said to them, so we see a little bit of a difference here. You see that word He, that phrase, he said to them, now the next parable is the parable of the measure. Verse 24. He said to them, same phrase, he said to them, now the next two parables, verse 26 begins this way.

And he said, And then the, the fa the final parable, the parable of the mustard seed also begins verse 30. And he said, so I'm going to take that to mean, and perhaps next week I'll take more time to explain that. But I'm going to take that to mean that the parable of the lamp and the next parable, the parable of the measures, is given to that same small group.

But then these other two parables, the parable of the sea growing and the parable of the mustard seed are given to the bigger group, the, the large group of people that are enthusiastic about Jesus. So he says to the smaller group, he said to them, 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. Can you already see the connection? Can you already see the connection? If anyone has ears to hear, nothing is, is made secret. It's, it's all to be made manifest. Can you already see the connection to the parable of the soils in which we are told the, the purpose of these parables is not to hide anything.

The purpose is to reveal. So once again, is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed and not on a stand. So let's just take a moment to understand what Jesus is talking about Is a lamp brought in so lamp. This would've been. Probably the most common or one of the most common artifacts in any of the households of Jesus' Day.

Literally thousands of these lamps have been discovered by archeologists because there are millions of these lamps. There are just a cheap, little inexpensive terracotta. Lamp, they would have two holes on the top. One was sort of a, a, a rolled hole or a pinched hole in which the oil was put in the lamp, and a wick was inserted through the rolled hole or the, the pinched hole.

And that wick would absorb up oil and they'd light it and they'd give light to the home. Very, very common artifact of the day. Everybody instantly knew what Jesus was talking about is a lamp brought in. So imagine now the sun goes down, the house is getting dark, and a lamp is brought in, is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket.

Now the King James, you read bushel. So what's up with bushel basket? What's it? What's Jesus talking about being put under here? Well, What the, what it's being put under. What Jesus describes is, the word here is *molion*. Now, what a *molion* is or was, is a unit of dry measure or a unit of dry volume. Okay? So we use the imperial system of measurement, the imperial system, the unit of dry volume that we use is things such as, you ever heard of a peck?

Who knows what a peck is. Can anybody describe how much a peck is? A peck is the equivalent of two gallons. Now a gallon is a unit of wet volume. A peck is a unit of dry volume, such as what you'd measure flour or seed or, uh, rice in. Okay, so a peck is the equivalent of two gallons. Two pecks is a kenning.

Raise your hand if you've ever heard of a kenning. Have I ever heard of a kenning? You are learning so much at church this morning. So two Pecs is a kenning. Four pecks is a. Bushel. So four packs is a bushel. So I don't know where the King James got bushel from because the unit of measure of the moron was almost equivalent to a peck, which is the equivalent of two gallons.

So in your mind, you've got this, this size, imagine two gallons of milk, all right? And so what the *molion* was, was a basket that was almost as common as the lamp. Every household would've had this basket. So picture in your mind. A small woven basket, like a small waste basket, the size that two milk jugs would fit in.

That was a mod on every house had this, and the purpose of it was to go to market with it. That's what you took to market, and that's how the ladies knew that they were getting the right amount of seed or the right amount of flour, or the right amount of corn or whatever, whatever they were going to the market to get.

They had their own little measurement of, of dry measure, of dry volume that they would take. And that was what Jesus says here. So that's why our English standard has basket. The old King James with uh, bushel is really a fourth of a bushel, but picture in your mind the small sort of basket. And so Jesus says, is a lamp brought in to be put under one of these baskets of measure?

To which everyone of Jesus's hearers would've said, that's ridiculous. Who would light a lamp? And then put the basket on top of it. Or he says, is it brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed? Now that, that word bed is the word clean A, which is where we get our word recline. And it could mean one of two things.

We're not sure which one it means. It could mean this, uh, the word was used to describe sort of a rollout mat. And so you remember oftentimes Jesus would say to, for example, the paralytic. He would say, stand up and. Pick up your mat, meaning that your pick up your, your clean a, that what you roll out and lie on.

Or it could mean more of a stable piece of a fern furniture, kind of like a short couch kind of thing. Either way, we're not sure exactly what Jesus's meaning was, but either way he says, is a lamp shoved up under a rollout mat, or is a lamp shoved up under this short piece of furniture? He says, is it not put on a stand?

Now, only the richest of households in Jesus' Day would've had a lampstand. Almost all the homes in Jesus' day would've had. A rock shelf. This was very common in the construction of Jesus' Day. And so we can picture exactly what this would look like in the building of a home. In, in the walls,

there would be a, a flat rock that was built into the wall that protruded out to make this little rock shelf kind of thing, and that's what they set the lamp on.

The wealthy homes might have an actual lamp stand. Jesus uses the word lamp stand, and there's a theological reason for that. I'll get to in just a minute. So he says, is this lamp brought out to be put under this basket? And to which everybody was said, that's, that's absurd. Everybody understands exactly what Jesus is talking about is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under bed, not on a stand for nothing is hidden except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret, except to come to light.

So Jesus uses the same parabolic formula in other places, and by parabolic formula, I just mean the, the elements of the story right there. There's a lamp. There's, uh, the idea of the lamp being hidden. There's, uh, there's something that's secret, that's made known. Jesus uses the same formula in other contexts to teach other things.

For example, in Matthew chapter 10, he says this, you'll, you'll pick up on the same phrases, so have no fear of them. For nothing is covered. That will not be revealed or hidden. That will not be made known. You see the same. The same parable. In that context, Jesus is talking about how God will know the secrets of every heart.

There is no such thing as a secret from God. God knows the thoughts and the intentions of every heart. Hebrews four 12, the word of God is living and active and sharper than a two-edged sword laying bare the soul before God. We are all naked before God. There are no secrets before God, and Jesus uses the parable in that context to teach that, that truth.

There are no secrets before God. Or Luke chapter 12, verses one and two. You'll see the same phrase used here in the meantime. When so many thousands of people gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples, beware the Levin of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Nothing is covered. That will not be revealed nor hidden. That will not be made known. The same parable. But in that context, the parable is teaching something else. It's teaching to beware of these Pharisees who are teaching certain teachings, but their hearts are different. But not to worry, everything that's hidden will be made known.

You see how it uses the same parable to teach two different truths, which is how the parables worked. Because remember what the parable is. The parable is an earthly reality laid beside a spiritual reality and the earthly reality, which you see parallels the spiritual reality that you can't see. So Jesus can take the same earthly reality and teach different spiritual truths according to the context.

He just did it right there. Now that's how these parables work, and that's how Jesus taught in parables. For, uh, another example is the example of the lamp under the, the, uh, the basket. Verse 14 of Matthew chapter five. You are the light of the world. A city said on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people get light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all the house.

You see, that's the same parable, but in that context, in Matthew five, what is Jesus teaching? Jesus is teaching the spiritual truth that if Holy Spirit is in you, you are a light and nobody lights a

light to put it under a basket. We sung about that earlier, this little light of mine. Remember, so I'm sure that everybody has noticed that the songs that we sing very, very often, about half the time we sing about the same truth that the scriptures bring.

And so I, I hope everybody's probably noticed that. So we sang about the spiritual truth about that you are a light and, and your light is to be shown however. Is that what this is? What is that? What Jesus is teaching in this parable? It's what he was teaching in Matthew five. But in Mark four, listen carefully.

He's teaching something else. Now. To see this is a little bit difficult, the reason. Is because all of our English translations obscure it. This was one frustration that I had in preparing this. This passage is every English translation I found obscures Jesus', meaning from the King James on down, because all of them translate this phrase Similarly, they translated something to the effect is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, and that's not what Mark wrote.

What WA Mark wrote instead was he made lamp the subject and he made lamp the actor. What Mark wrote was literally, does a lamp come in to be put under a basket? Can you see the theological difference? I have no idea why none of the English translations pick up on that. But can you see the theological difference between a lamp being brought in and a lamp coming in?

Who is the lamp that comes in? Jesus. So this is a parable about Jesus. Jesus In this parable is the lamp, and Matthew five, you're the lamp. In Mark four, you are the lamp. And so what Jesus is saying, he's teaching a parable about his incarnation. Does the lamp come to be put under a basket? He, he's, he's speaking about the countryside on, on a Bethlehem night, three or so decades ago.

And news that came to shepherds and visits by shepherds in worship taking place on that. That's what he's speaking of. Does a lamp come into the world to be hidden? How often would Jesus say, I am the light of the world. I have come into the world to be the light. And so here he says, does a lamp come into the world?

To be hidden. What Jesus is doing here is he's offering a correction to what could easily be a misunderstanding of what he just said earlier, which is to say this to you has been given the secret of the kingdom, but to them it's just parables that could be understood as we the people of God. We know the mystery.

We know that Jesus is the kingdom of God. Come in the flesh. They'll never understand. We'll just keep this to ourself. So do you see how Jesus is immediately offering a correction, though they don't understand, though? They don't perceive? Does a lamp come into the world to be put under a measuring basket?

Does a lamp come into the world to be stuffed under a mat? He is saying the same thing that God said many centuries earlier. Isaiah chapter nine, in verse two, the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, or Isaiah 49 in verse six, God says, it's too light of a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and bring back the preserve of Israel.

I will make you a light for the nations. So Jesus is saying I care. Not whether they understand or don't understand. Of course, he cares, but what he's saying is that has no impact on the fact that I

am here to reveal and I will go on revealing and revealing and teaching even though it hardens their hearts.

Because does a lamp come into the world to be hidden? Why would a lamp come into the world if he's not going to shine? And this is Jesus's point to offer a correction that says, you know, the, they don't understand. They're not God's people. They don't understand the things of God. Let's just stop talking about it to them, and we'll just get together among ourselves and talk among ourselves.

Jesus is offering an immediate correction. The lamp came into the world to shine. So in conclusion, what is the application of this passage? Because all passages have an application. Many passages of scripture have a very pragmatic, practical application that says you take the truth of this passage and you put it in place in your life.

Last week we saw that very same thing. We talked about rooting up the thorny soil of our heart and how the way we do that, as we look to our justification, we looked at how we're made right with God and we understand. I've been made right with God through the righteousness of another of another. I don't need the approval of other people.

I don't need the desire of things. I don't need all these other things. I have the approval of God. Right? So that's a practical, pragmatic application of the text last week. But many passages of scripture, many passages of scripture, particularly New Testament passages, have as the only application the following.

Are you ready? Here's the application of the passage. Look at Jesus. And that's it. That's what this passage wants you to do. The lamp has come into the world, look at it. Look at its beauty. Look at its brilliant light. Look at how it reveals to us the father. Look at how its nature is to show and to reveal and look how it shows us that our God is not a secretive God.

Look to the lamp and see the light that will never be extinguished. Look to the lamp that is also described as the word. The word that we are told will never fade and never perish and never die, but it is eternal. And so that is the application. If you leave this morning doing that, looking at Jesus if in the gathering of his people under the hearing of his word, you do that and you look at Jesus.

You've done what the passage is calling you to do, to look at the savior, look at him and honor. In admiration in love, look to the lamp that came into the world to show us the father.