

# Let The Light One In

Mark 4:21-25 June 18, 2025

Can you hear fluorescent light bulbs? Those who can usually dislike the buzz and hum above them. Studies show that young students, in particular, have adverse effects when their classrooms are lit by fluorescent tubes.<sup>1</sup> That said, we don't usually pay much attention to the *sounds* of light bulbs.

Unless of course you're an Israeli security researcher. A team at Ben-Gurion University developed a method where spies take a telescope, an electro-optical sensor, and a laptop, point it at a hanging light bulb that might be visible through a window, and are able to discern the audio in that room.

The sound waves create vibrations on the glass bulb, which cause minuscule changes in its light output. The electrical signals are then analyzed and converted so that listeners can hear exactly what's going on around that light. They're calling it "Lamphone."<sup>2</sup>

In this text, Jesus wants to speak through a lamp. He urgently insists that we listen to the light and that the way we respond will not only make a difference in this life, but will be definitive in the next.

**Mark 4:21 - <sup>21</sup> He also said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed? Isn't it to be put on a lampstand?"**

In that day, the average house was one room with no windows.<sup>3</sup> If you wanted light in the house, you had to bring it in. They would use little clay lamps, filled with olive oil and a wick, and set them on a shelf or a carve out in the wall.

Jesus' questions are very simple, taken from a common sense situation. *Obviously* they would set the lamp on the stand, rather than under a bed or beneath a basket. Putting a lit flame under something like that was not only silly because the light would be hidden and therefore leave you in the dark, but it might actually cause a dangerous fire in the house.<sup>4</sup>

But Jesus wasn't talking about a literal clay lamp. He's making a much bigger point. Our English translations alter the peculiar way that Jesus phrased this question. What He said was actually, "Does *the* lamp *come* for the purpose of being placed under a [basket]?"<sup>5</sup>

*The Lamp comes* to your house. That's the image. Jesus was making reference to the fact that *He* is the Light of the world.<sup>6</sup> That His arrival was a new dawn of eternal import.

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<sup>1</sup> Brenda Morrow *The Impact Of Fluorescent And LED Lighting On Students Attitudes And Behavior In The Classroom*

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wired.com/story/lamphone-light-bulb-vibration-spying/>

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Earle *Mark: The Gospel Of Action*

<sup>4</sup> Archibald Robertson *Word Pictures In The New Testament*

<sup>5</sup> William Lane *The Gospel Of Mark*

<sup>6</sup> John 9:5

Remember: He just told His disciples that through the parables He's giving them the secrets of the Kingdom. That He came to sow the word of God and those who receive it with faith and obedience will continually receive *more* understanding and knowledge and spiritual fruit from God.

Now, as He continues this discussion, we see not only is He the Sower Who sows the word, but He is the Light Who has come, and hopes to be brought into their lives.

What is the purpose of light? It illuminates. It gives us vision. It reveals. It *exposes*. It facilitates movement and activity and growth. But, as we see in the parable, only if it's in the right position.

Christ came to be the central focal point of our lives. He's not just the old garage light that gets 2 or 3 minutes of use a day. His light is meant to flood our lives, expose everything to His warmth and His cleansing and His inspection. And we need it. We can't live in the dark - not really. If we can't see things as they are, if we can't see obstacles around us, if we can't see the way ahead, if we can't see other people around us, what kind of life is that?

So Jesus asks these questions with obvious answers: Do you want light in your house? What wouldn't these first century Galileans give for 100 watt bulbs! But on a deeper level, this simple parable reveals the sad spiritual reality: That humanity loves darkness, rather than light. That our sin natures cling to the shadows and tries desperately to cover the Light, to overcome it.

Just after the most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16, Jesus went on to explain that:

**John 3:19-21a - <sup>19</sup> The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light**

Our sin nature tries to flee from the Light of the world. That's the first thing Adam and Eve did after they disobeyed God - they *hid* from the Lord. But God has come to bring light into the dark so that people can finally see the truth, so they can be saved from the darkness of sin. Because in Jesus, the Light of the world, is life. "And that life was the light of men," John says.<sup>7</sup>

Now, this parable has multiple layers of application for us as Christians. Because *Jesus* is the Lamp - He's the One Who came to shine the light of the Gospel for all humanity. But He said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

What happens now that He has ascended into heaven? Is the world left in darkness? Not at all. He also said to His disciples, "*You* are the light of the world. Like a city on a hill that cannot be hidden. So let *your* light shine before others."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John 1:4

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 5:14-16

Not only do we want to respond to this parable by properly positioning Jesus in the center of our lives and allowing His light to do all He wants to do in us, but we also respond by remembering the position we're in as light bearers. Now we bring the Light of salvation to those trapped in the dark.

**Mark 4:22 - <sup>22</sup> For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light.**

Jesus came to reveal. He reveals our sin. He reveals the plan of salvation. He reveals the heart of God. He reveals the power of God. He reveals the true nature of man and the only hope for man. He revealed that He is the One and only Messiah. There will never be a *new* revelation. There isn't another, secret universe where God is running a *different* redemption experiment. When people claim to be the Messiah, or claim to be Jesus, we can *confidently* say, "No you're not," because the Lord has shared with us the secrets of the Kingdom and the plan for His return.

Meanwhile, as His plan unfolds, verse 22 reminds us that our Lord knows everything. In the end, *all* will be made right. *Everything* will be accounted for and judged according to His plan and truth.

But this verse isn't only about the *global* work of Gd, it's also what He wants to do in *your* personal life: That everything in us be brought into the light, nothing held back from exposure to His grace.

Years ago I went to a dermatologist for an issue on my nose. It was my first visit, and the doctor said, "I want to do a whole body inspection." I wasn't really on board with that. Just look at my nose and *I'll* decide if anything else needs to be examined.

We don't want to have that kind of relationship with Jesus, the Great Physician. "Ok Lord. Here's the problem I'm having at work, or here's the hard time I'm having in my marriage, but leave the rest of me alone - I've got it covered. You can give me instruction on this issue, leave the rest alone."

Instead we want to have David's outlook from Psalm 139. "Lord, search me and know me. You observe all my travels. You know all my thoughts. You have encircled me and placed Your hand on me and I welcome the floodlight of Your truth and grace and presence to bring me out of darkness and into Your marvelous light."

**Mark 4:23 - <sup>23</sup> If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen."**

Jesus was imperative here. His words were more like, "If you have ears, you better listen!"<sup>9</sup> As we learned last week, parables aren't just interesting stories. They're essential truths that we *must* respond to. That's why Jesus used parables: So that we would *hear* the way He wants us to hear.

We "listen" in different ways. Sometimes we listen to extremely important information with absolutely no interest. I haven't flown in a while, but even when I did I paid no attention to the safety instructions before take off.

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<sup>9</sup> The NET Bible First Edition Notes

Sadly, that's how many people "hear" the Word of God. But Jesus presents these words as urgent and essential and as the most important consideration of our lives.

Jesus is looking for hearing that is thoughtful and attentive and most of all responsive. That we hear the word of God, *believe* it, and then take action accordingly. In this case, that we take God at His word that we are in darkness unless we receive His light and then respond by receiving the Light that has come into the world.

**Mark 4:24 - <sup>24</sup> And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear. By the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and more will be added to you.**

"Pay attention." So, again, the Lord is driving, driving into us that we must respond to His teaching. We're not only to soak in the Gospel and the word of God, but here we see this activity of measuring and growth and reciprocation. It's as if we're scooping what we hear into our lives.

We've just seen an example of how this plays out. Jesus preached truth to a crowd and a *few* responded by coming to Him and asking for understanding. Once that happened, the Lord started revealing more to them. And then more. And then more. As they received the word by faith and in obedience, more understanding was given and then more transformation happened and more fruit grew in their lives.

Jesus says here that the sort of measure we use has an impact on what we continue to receive.

I was thinking about how this might apply in a real Christian life and a few pictures came to mind. First, imagine you have a very *small* view of God - that He's not really mindful of your life, that He's not really going to do anything on your behalf, that He's far off or disinterested or cruel. In that sense, your measure is a tiny little thimble cup. Well, as you go to God's word with that sort of measure, you're not going to come back with much that can refresh you. It will be hard to fill up.

Or, perhaps someone falls into a theology that really makes man the center of everything - where you think the Bible is really about you being healthy all the time and wealthy all the time and living your best life now. That's a measure full of holes. More like a sieve than a scoop. So when you go to God's word, a lot of understanding is going to leak out.

Whereas if we come to God's word in humility and surrender, acknowledging that we *don't* know everything, we haven't figured it all out, but we know God is the Supreme King and Creator and the Lover of our souls and that if we will go to His word, there we will find all we need for life and Godliness and that within it it reveals a God of grace and kindness and faithfulness - a God Who calls us and commands us but walks with us day by day - *that* kind of measure is one that can hold a great supply - one that can fill a life and refresh it and overflow to the lives around us.

**Mark 4:25 - <sup>25</sup> For whoever has, more will be given to him, and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."**

This is not the haves versus the have-nots. This is about the haves and the *will*-nots. Those who choose to stay in the dark rather than let in the Light. Those who did not hear the word, welcome it, and produce fruit, but instead keep the door of their hearts closed when the Light came knocking.

*They* will not only lose out on wisdom and understanding and perspective in this life, but in the end they will miss out on the *Kingdom*.

Some people will say, "I believe in God." And they think that's enough. A tiny pinpoint of light in the dark. The Bible says, "Look, even the *demons* believe in God."<sup>10</sup> People walking in darkness don't understand that they're going to lose it all. In Luke's telling of this verse it says, "Whoever does not have, even what he *thinks* he has will be taken away from him."<sup>11</sup> Ephesians 4 fleshes it out.

**Ephesians 4:18 - <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts.**

Rather than giving themselves over to the Lord, they gave themselves over to promiscuity and impurity - the love of the dark. So they cover the lamp - they tuck it under their bed. And the result will be a deadly fire instead of a transformed life.

Perhaps to some verse 25 seems harsh. Yet, the truth of this principle plays out in the real world. Use it or lose it. That happens with the vacation that is allotted to many of you at work.

Or consider a well of water. When in use, it gives life, it helps us wash things and grow things and nourish things. But when a well is abandoned, after a time it becomes polluted and toxic. In fact, an abandoned well even threatens the *other* water supplies in the area.<sup>12</sup> All simply from not using it.

Clifton Allen writes, "*If a man keeps responsive to the way and word of Jesus, he is given more and more. If not, his mind is hardening, God's wrath is operative, and the limited spiritual insight he once had will be lost.*"<sup>13</sup>

And so not only do we welcome the Light of the world into our lives, we perpetually receive the Light through the Word being sown into our hearts. And we *listen* to this Light, because through Him we have life. And as we continue in this relationship with the Lord, our part is to keep receiving the word, to keep allowing the light to shine on our hearts, on our actions, on our choices, on our attitudes so that God can continue to illuminate us and cleanse us and grow us and show us what life is *really* all about.

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<sup>10</sup> James 2:19

<sup>11</sup> Luke 8:18

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/drinking-water-and-environmental-health/water-well-construction/abandoned-water-wells>

<sup>13</sup> Clifton Allen *Matthew-Mark*