

基督徒传福音的责任——马可福音 4:21-34(上)

Christians' Responsibility in the Work of the Gospel – Mark 4:21-34 (1)

Introduction, outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 4:21-34; James 1:19-25

21 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? 22 For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” 24 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. 25 For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.” 26 And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; 27 and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. 28 The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. 29 But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” 30 And He said, “How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, 32 yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade.” 33 With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; 34 and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

- The key to interpret these four parables is the parable of four soils in verses 1-20. Verse 13 suggests that these parables are closely interrelated, and their common theme is the mystery of the kingdom of God. It's about the growth of the Kingdom, not about personal salvation. How would the kingdom of God grow? Verses 21-25 give us two parables that emphasize the responsibility of Christians. Verse 26-34 give us another two parables which emphasize the sovereignty of God. For all who love the kingdom of God, these parables provide us with great motivation to serve God more fervently.
- Outline:

Title: **Christians' Responsibility in the Work of the Gospel**

1. Parable of the Lamp—Responsibility Is Innate (vv 21-23)
2. Parable of the Measure—Responsibility Determines Reward (vv 24-25)

Parable of the Lamp—Responsibility Is Innate (vv 21-23)

- “A lamp is not brought to be... put on the lampstand” : The lamp in that time was a ceramic bowl filled with oil with a wick at the rim of the bowl. It burns oil to give light. The proper use of this kind of lamp is to put it on the lampstand, which is a platform nailed high up on the wall.

- “put under a basket ... or under a bed”: Doing so is totally against common sense. Basket is a common container for grains. No one would empty out the grains in the basket and put a lamp under it. Likewise, no one would put the lamp under a bed. This would only deprive the lamp of its very purpose for which it exists. A lamp is a lamp because it gives light to people.

Psalm 119:105: Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

【Key point】 A lamp put under a basket or under a bed is totally useless. Likewise, a Christian who does not evangelize is useless. The responsibility to evangelize is innate to the very nature of a Christian. The nature of a Christian is light!

Matthew 5:14-16 “ You are the light of the world. A city set on a [a]hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a [b]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.”

【Key point】 The light of a true Christian cannot be hidden. Give him enough time and opportunity, and they will definitely manifest Christ in their life, as He will continually cleanse them from their sins, and enable them to live a sanctified life.

【Self-examine】 : What are some of the common “beds” and “baskets” that Christians hide their light under? What are some common excuses or obstacles that stop us from evangelism? First, sinful fear. Afraid of being rejected or laughed at. Second, false humility. I know too little of the Bible. I don't know how to say it. I'm not gifted. Third, my life isn't good enough, I don't want to cause others to stumble. Fourth, pride and selfishness. I just care about myself and who cares there're people going to hell.

【Conclusion】 After all, these are all because of a lack of faith and love. A Christian with love and faith cannot help but shine the light of Christ. Being light of the world is the Christian's essential nature.

【Application】 Ways to shine as light of the world. Share the word of God (Psalm 119:105), witnessing with good works (Matthew 5:16).

1 Peter 3:15 “ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence”

【Principle】 : If you know enough to be saved, you know enough to share the gospel. The light of a true Christian has no excuse not to shine, no excuse to be hidden under a basket or under a bed.

- "For nothing is hidden...": Yes, the sinful things done in private will be revealed before the judgment seat of God in the end (Ecclesiastes 12:14), and it is necessary to explain this when preaching the gospel (Ephesians 5:13). But Jesus' focus here is not the final judgment. He is still talking about the responsibility of Christians to preach the gospel. The text can be translated as "nothing is hidden except *in order* to be revealed". The very purpose of hiding it is to reveal it. If it were not for the purpose of revealing, it would not have been hidden in the first place.

[Analogy] The purpose of a man hiding an engagement ring is in order to show it at the right time and place. When you buy a birthday gift for your spouse in advance, you won't put it out in the open in the house before the birthday. People hide valuable items to prevent them from being discovered too early and being misused. However, the ultimate purpose of hiding them is to show them at the right time.

The hiding here is not sinners hiding their sins, but **God hiding a treasure** in order to reveal it at the right time. This treasure is **the mystery of the kingdom of God!**

Matthew 10:26-27 "...Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops."

【Key point】 God's purpose in giving the disciples the treasure of the kingdom mystery is not to let them hide it and never share it with others. Disciples must share what God has revealed to them. This is the unshakable responsibility of disciples.

- "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!": Everyone has ears so everyone should hear. But only the disciples could understand it. The meaning of the parables is hidden from outsiders (vv. 11-12). Who is the one who truly can hear? Only those who obey what's been heard. If one doesn't do what he hears, the truth is, he doesn't really understand anything. This is the point of the next parable.

Parable of the Measure—Responsibility Determines Reward (vv 24-25)

- "Take care what you listen to": You can only benefit if you take care. It'd be better not to listen if you don't take care. Listening has consequences! God's Word carries God's authority, and with listening comes the obligation to obey it. If you obey, you will be rewarded; if you don't, there will be consequences. This is always the case with God's Word, that listening obligates obedience, with which comes either reward or consequences (Deut 11:26-28).
- "measure": A measuring tool used in the marketplace to ensure fair transactions. The point of this parable is to emphasize the responsibility of doing the Word, and, in context, with special focus on the responsibility of Christians to evangelize! The key to interpret this parable is the context (v. 13). What the measure measures here is the seed of the gospel.

【Explanation】 "By your standard of measure", that is, how much you participate in the gospel ministry, God will use the same measure to give to you, so that you have more seeds to sow! It is to give you more opportunities for evangelism. The more disciples participate in the work of preaching the gospel, the more they will benefit from it, the more they will understand the gospel, the more they will live a life of witnessing the gospel, and the more they will be able to sow seeds for the kingdom of God.

- "For whoever has, to him more shall be given": This is a universal principle in the Kingdom of God. Who is the one who has? It is he who diligently measures out to others. He doesn't just have biblical knowledge, but the practical application of that knowledge, especially in evangelism.

2 Corinthians 9:6 “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

【Application】 The more you give, the more God will give you so you'll have more to give; The more you participate in the gospel ministry, the more opportunities you will have to participate; The more you pray, the more you will see the need to pray so you will pray more; The more you use your spiritual gift to serve the church, the more God will grow your gift and give you more opportunities to serve.

- "whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him": This refers to those who do not measure out to others generously, that is, they do not work hard in the work of evangelism.

[Analogy] Is there any skill that you used to have, but now you've lost it because you haven't used it for a long time? They say that's often the case with musical instruments, that if you don't practice for a long time, you will lose your skills.

【Explanation】 If a person does not diligently use the various gifts God has given him in the work of gospel ministry, the power of that grace will become weaker and weaker in him.

【Example】 If he does not use his God-given tongue to preach the truth, his preaching skill will become more and more clumsy. If he does not use his God-given spiritual gifts to serve the church, the ability to use these gifts will become weaker and weaker...

【Warning】 The most terrifying thing is that "even what he has shall be taken away from him." The Gospel of Luke says "even what *he thinks* he has shall be taken away from him," meaning he's never truly had it. This kind of person deceives himself and thinks that he already has the gospel, but he does not. If you truly have it, you will definitely participate in the gospel ministry.

【Conclusion】 People who truly receive the gospel, their life will be constantly changed. One of the inevitable changes is faithful commitment to the work of gospel ministry. The absence of such life change indicates one has never truly received the gospel to start with, that any outward appearance is fake, and that one is not saved at all.