

JESUS' MOTHER AND BROTHERS

Luke 8:16-21

Key Verse: 8:21

"He replied, 'My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.'"

Today's passage is a story about a lamp on a stand and Jesus' short story about the qualification of being Jesus' family members. There are two stories in this passage. These stories teach us that we must have a right attitude toward the word of God.

First, the lamp on the stand (16-18).

Look at verse 16. "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light." Here, "the light" is allegorically compared to the word of God. Therefore, this passage clearly tells us that we must have a right attitude toward the word of God. Our attitude toward the word of God determines our eternal future destiny, whether we believe or not. If we have a poor attitude toward the word of God we can be foolish people.

As verse 16 alludes, suppose anyone lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. This man perverts the purpose of the lamp. He also invites disaster of explosion of the jar or burning up those who are sleeping on a bed. There are many kinds of lawyers, even lawyers as real estate agents. But no lawyer wants to defend this stupid fellow who puts his lamp under a bed.

In this verse, the one who lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed is comparable to a cultural Christian. They say that the life of faith is good. But they are ashamed of identifying themselves as Bible-believing Christians. One high school teacher who was known as a Christian warned one of his students, a valedictorian, "Don't say the word 'God' or anything about Christianity in your valedictory speech." These cultural Christians are having a hard time to live a double life in this post-Christian era. They drink and dance with worldly people. At church they pretend to pray with many tears during the Sunday worship service. They have two faces, both an angel and the devil.

Look at verse 17. "For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open." This verse clearly tells us the final destiny of those who lived foolishly as ones who hid the lamp in a jar or under a bed. In the Bible, King Ahaz was such a person. God gave him a sure promise that his army would defeat the army of Aram. But King Ahaz did not depend on the word of God's promise. He depended on the armies of Assyria because it seemed to be more realistic. When he did not depend on the word of God, fear came into his heart and he began to tremble like a tree in the forest. Then his people were all paralyzed by fear (Isa 7:1-9).

There was a great philanthropist and evangelist. When he liked to show off, he used to wear a white wig to look like Jesus and preached at big churches around the world. He established around 1,000 orphanages. But he did not have a right attitude toward the word of God. In short, he did not have one word of God in his heart. When he had to reveal himself as a mature servant of God at a time of emotional turmoil, he blew up instead of praising Jesus. Once, his wife said to him, "You are very popular, but you've gotta be a more humble servant of God." Then his pride was offended. Soon he divorced his wife and died one week later, at the age of 74. It was a sad story that such a popular man of God divorced his wife right before his death. His problem was that he did not have a right attitude toward the word of God. Especially, he did not have one word of God. Finally, his hypocrisy was disclosed, exactly as it was. Life is not a show. Life must be based on the word of God, rooted, grow, and bear much fruit.

Look at verse 18. "Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him." Nobody can be proud of himself. Those who have a right attitude must all the more study Bible faithfully and repent daily to have a right attitude toward the word of God. Those who think they are very good children of God, yet do not have one word of God, will find that they are men of hypocrisy and even what they thought they had turns out to be bubbles. There are many kinds of ways of living in the world. But in truth, there is only one way of living. It is to have a right attitude toward the word of God and retain it by persevering to the end. And we must press on to the kingdom of God, being careful as if we were walking on an icy lake in the cold winter.

Let's read verse 18 from our hearts. "Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him."

Second, the small lamps in history (16).

Look at verse 16 again. "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light." This verse clearly tells us the purpose of the lamp or humankind. Through the parable of a lamp on a stand, Jesus tells us that the purpose of the lamp is to light the room, so that those who come in can see everything in the light.

In view of history, the word "light" was frequently comparable to great men and women. But all great men in history are nothing but candle lights. In the time of Socrates, people knew how to eat and snore, but they did not know how to think. So Socrates (469-399 BC) gave a motto to his people, "Know yourself." His contribution of enlightening man to know himself was indeed great in history. But Alighieri Dante (1265-1321 AD), in his work, "Divine Comedy," mentioned that Socrates is on the second floor of hell, holding two candle lights, one in each hand. Socrates' contribution is great, and he was morally upright. Nevertheless, he went to hell because he did not know the name of Jesus. But we cannot deny that he was a candle light in history. We call China the Great China, not because China is great in size, but because of many great Chinese philosophers. Among them, Mencius (390-305 BC) was one of Confucius' eminent disciples. He wanted to know the truth, the true light (Jn 1:9). But he never had one-to-one Bible study, so he never knew the truth. All his lifetime, Mencius wandered in vain, not knowing the truth, the true light Jesus. In his time, he yearned to know the truth and said, "If I know the truth in the morning, I am happy to die in the evening." We can say that he was one of the candle lights in history because he planted noble integrity in Chinese people. When his teacher Confucius died, he cried, saying, "Oh, heaven is ruined!"

Dr. Albert Schweitzer read the Bible at the age of 11 and found the true way of life. He bowed down and prayed to God to make a pledge. He pledged to God that he would study until age 30 so that he would prepare himself to be a useful man of God, and for the next 30 years dedicate himself to the life-giving work of God. He gave up his music, his books, and financial freedom. He ate African food. He suffered together with African people. The people of Lambaréné, Congo, recognized him as their own father. He said, "I am confined in a small region of Lambaréné, Congo. Yet I am free indeed. I am free indeed to take care of God's flock of sheep. I am free indeed, because I can meditate on Jesus' grace and participate in his suffering freely. I am free indeed, simply because I know that

Jesus is the true light." At that time, the people of the former USSR were very bitter and critical toward other nations. But Russian people tenaciously praised Dr. Albert Schweitzer as a light of the 20th century. We cannot deny that he was one of the candle lights in history.

Jesus Christ is the true light. Once, a beautiful woman who looked indecent was dragged to where Jesus was. The Pharisees dumped her before Jesus and said, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. What do you say? Shall we stone her to death according to Moses' law?" (Jn 8:4,5) Jesus was silent quite a while. Soon all of them ran away because they were overwhelmed by the spiritual authority of Jesus. Jesus looked at her with many tears and said, "Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," answered she. Jesus said, "Go now and leave your life of sin." She lived in the darkness of sin. But she met the true light Jesus. Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Jn 8:12).

Third, Jesus' eternal family members (19-21).

One day Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd (19). Until now, Jesus had been an obedient and hardworking son to his parents, Joseph and Mary. Security-wise, young Jesus was the labor power and income source for his family. But one day, suddenly, he left home and went around preaching the kingdom of God. In the traditional Jewish society, it was an intolerable act because he was the eldest son of the family. Jesus should work under his father, and later inherit his carpentry shop. But Jesus ignored family tradition and left home. Jesus really surprised his family members and relatives. So his relatives concluded that he was out of his mind. They determined to persuade him to give up his non-paying job and come back home. If necessary, they schemed to take him back by force (Mk 3:21).

To Jewish psyche, the family was most important. The Jews rigidly stressed family and community relations. So one day Jesus' mother and brothers came to Jesus to talk about his basic family duty. Probably Jesus' mother expected from Jesus at least a certain kind of apology, such as, "I'm sorry Mother." Probably his brothers expected him to be lenient with them. But they were not even able to get near him. His family members had to stand in line and wait for their turn to see him. Someone saw Jesus' mother and brothers waiting for him. He thought they should be given first priority. So he expostulated, saying, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."

How did Jesus reply? He said in verse 21, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice." What he said sounded like excess frivolity, completely ignoring his family ties. But this was not the case. At the '92 Olympic games many of the gold medalists dedicated their glorious gold medals to their moms, saying, "This is to my mom," crying many tears. Like them, Jesus also had great affection for his family, especially for his mother. At the time of his crucifixion, when he hung on the cross, he was in anguish and pain. At that moment, he did not think of his own pain; he thought about his mother's pain. Jesus saw his mother standing near the cross, weeping. Jesus said, "Mother, I am your son." When Jesus saw the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, Jesus said, "Take care of my mother" (Jn 19:25-27). Jesus was deeply mindful of his mother. What then does it mean when he said, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice"? This tells us two conditions to be God's family members.

First condition, God's family members must hear his word. Those who hear the word of God are qualified to be the members of God's family. Why is it so? It is because only the word of God remains forever, and everything in the world, even the family members, vanish someday, one by one. 1 Peter 1:24,25a says, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever."

Look at verse 21. "He replied, 'My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.'" This verse draws a clear dividing line between the children of God and the children of Satan. There are many parables about the kingdom of God and its family members. Matthew 25:31,32 says, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." If a husband is a goat and his wife is a sheep, they cannot be together.

Second condition, God's family members must practice his word. Look at verse 21 again. "He replied, 'My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.'" What does it mean to put it into practice? Precisely, it means to obey the word of God. Human beings are always at a crossroads: to follow their giant ego or to follow God's word. Many people say, "I want to obey the word of God." Some say, "I want to suffer loss for campus evangelism." But

when they really must practice his word, overcoming their giant egos, they boggle at God's word and become offensive and self-righteous.

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) was an Englishman. During Bible study he was called by God when he was 19 years old to be a missionary to China. For this, he studied medicine and astronomy. He married Maria Dyer, a missionary teacher who shared his vision. She bore six children and died 12 years after they married. To the ministry of Hudson Taylor, 1,153 joined. Surprisingly, most of them were women. In the uprising against the foreign devil, among Hudson Taylor's coworkers, 58 missionaries and 21 of their children were massacred. But his shepherd heart for Chinese people did not change because of John 3:16, which says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Hudson Taylor was a man who heard the word and practiced it. We cannot deny that Hudson Taylor was a member of God's family. May one word of God dwell in our hearts so that we can be members of the kingdom of God.