

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.’”

In today’s passage, Jesus continues teaching how the word of God works, using a different parable: a lamp on a stand. Jesus tells us what kind of attitude we must have toward the word of God. Jesus taught this same thing again and again, in different ways. Why is it so important? Those who have a right attitude toward Jesus’ word receive eternal life and become his eternal family members. Today let’s learn how we can be members of Jesus’ eternal family.

First, the lamp on a stand (16-17).

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 Jesus states a simple truth. No one lights a lamp and then hides it away to obscure its light. Recently, we replaced all the lights in the main worship service area. By utilizing the latest technology, we could gain 30% more light, using 40% less electricity. This sounds reasonable so far, right? But suppose that we had told the electrician to turn the lights around the opposite way. Of course, this would be totally ridiculous. No one would do such a thing. Instead, he wants to maximize the power and effectiveness of the light. So he puts it on a stand.

In this parable, the lamp represents the word of God. Here we learn God’s purpose in giving the word of God: It is to reveal himself to us. God wants men to know him. God reveals himself in many ways. God reveals himself through nature. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” God reveals himself through the image of God in man. God reveals himself through the history of Israel and the prophets. But most of all, God reveals himself through Jesus and his words (Heb 1:2). God did not send Jesus into the world to make himself more obscure. God sent Jesus into the world to reveal himself more clearly to mankind. This gives us great encouragement in studying the Bible. God wants us to know him personally through Bible study. But Bible study is not easy. As we thought about last time, Jesus taught about the kingdom of God through parables. To some extent, parables are a kind of secret that not everyone can understand. So some may think that God is hiding himself—that God is playing “hide and seek” with mankind. But it is not true. God really wants to reveal himself to mankind. God’s purpose in sending Jesus is to reveal his love to all people of the world. At Jesus’ presentation in the temple, Simeon described Jesus as “a light for revelation to the Gentiles...” (Lk 2:32).

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.” When light shines into the darkness, it reveals what is there. Actually, all men are groping in the darkness without the light of life. They do not know God. They do not know themselves as God sees them. They do not understand the world around them. But Jesus’ light shines into this darkness and reveals the truth as it is. So Jesus is called the Rising Sun. Luke 1:78-79 says, “...because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death....” In chapter 7:11-17 we saw a woman living in darkness, under the shadow of death. She was a widow whose only son had just died. She was full of sorrow and grief. When Jesus saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” Jesus stopped the funeral procession and said to the dead person, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” The young man got up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother. Jesus revealed his resurrection power. Death is not the end of everything. After death there is resurrection. Jesus’ light drives out the darkness of death.

Jesus’ light also drives out the darkness of sin. At the end of chapter 7, a woman who had lived a sinful life came to Jesus. She was full of guilt and shame and fatalism, caught in the darkness of sin and its terrible consequences. But when she came to Jesus, Jesus accepted her broken and contrite heart in spite of the disapproval of the religious leaders. Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Jesus made this declaration publicly. Jesus made it crystal clear that his light drives out the darkness of sin from men’s hearts.

Jesus’ light shines through his word to bring the knowledge of God to our hearts (2Cor 4:6). Before the light of Jesus shines, we live in a dark world of “I, my, me” and “Susie too.” We cannot but be selfish and fearful and

despair. But Jesus' light opens our eyes to see God. God loves us. God shepherds us day by day. God wants to bless us and use us for a great purpose. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." The word of God can guide our feet into the way that God wants us to go. One who discovers God's purpose for his life and lives up to it becomes a truly happy and fruitful person. After 20 years of shepherd life, Shepherdess Christy Toh wondered if it was time to retire and pursue a career. Then one word of God came to her, "You will be a blessing." She found God's intention to use her family to establish a new flock of God's sheep for world mission. Since then, her one-to-one ministry has been prosperous and she looks holier day by day. When Dr. Samuel Lee came to America, he did not know what to do at first. So he prayed and studied the Bible. Then one clear word of God came to his heart. It was Exodus 19:6: "...you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This became our prayer topic. It gave us clear direction in a time of moral and spiritual decline. It gave a new hope to young Americans who were lost in pleasure-seeking and materialism. Now we know what to do: carry out intensive one-to-one Bible study with students. Now we know what we must pray: May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

However, there is a problem. Though God graciously shines his light in the dark world, the world does not like it. John 3:19 says, "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." Those who do evil hate the light. They like the darkness, thinking they can hide their evil deeds in the darkness. One young man heard the word of God and wanted to respond to it. But he had committed many sins in the darkness. When he came into church to attend worship service, suddenly he was overwhelmed by a dark feeling. He did not understand what he was doing, but he got up and went out of the worship service. He reacted like a cockroach when the light is suddenly turned on in the middle of the night. He can run. But he cannot hide for long.

Verse 17 says, "For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open." When Jacob's sons were jealous of their brother Joseph, they sold him as a slave to Midianite traders, thinking they would never see him again (Gen 37:28). Then they lied to Jacob and tried to forget about it. But they could not forget what they had done, no matter how hard they tried. Later, when they were imprisoned, they felt it was God's punishment upon them for the sin committed twenty years earlier. It was only when they repented their sin and asked forgiveness from God and from Joseph that they were set free from the terrible darkness.

When the Israelites were beginning the conquest of the promised land, they experienced God's mighty power to break down the walls of Jericho and won a great victory. But the next time they fought they suffered a stinging defeat at the hands of the people of Ai. After their defeat, Joshua prayed. Then God revealed the reason for the defeat: there was sin in the camp. As the tribes came forward one by one, the perpetrator was revealed. He was Achan. He had taken a wedge of gold, some silver and a Babylonian robe from the plunder of Jericho though God had specifically warned the Israelites not to do so. He thought no one would see or know about it. But God saw everything. God exposed his sin before the entire community of Israel. Then he was stoned to death, together with his sons and daughters. In Numbers 32:23a, Moses said, "...you may be sure that your sin will find you out."

What shall we do then? We must let Jesus' light shine into our hearts. Jesus' light exposes our sins as God sees them. Jesus' light also drives out the darkness of sin completely. Jesus' light enables us to walk in the presence of God as his children. 1 John 1:7 says, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

Moreover, we must discover God's holy mission in the light of his word. Mission is God's best blessing to mankind. It gives us utmost happiness and joy and absolute meaning of life. This mission lies hidden in God's heart. But when the light of his word comes to us, we can know God's holy mission for each of us. All who have received Jesus' light are called to let his light shine through their lives. 1 Peter 2:9 says, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." When we praise Jesus for what he has done in us, we let his light shine into the dark world.

Second, consider carefully how you listen (18).

We have thought about the awesome power of God's word. It is like a blazing light that shines into the darkness and reveals everything as it is. Although God's word has such awesome power, Jesus often speaks to us softly and gently. Jesus told interesting parables. Jesus called sinners his friends. Jesus was gracious to the wayward. Jesus was humble and loving. Many people misunderstand Jesus' kindness, not realizing that he leads us to repentance. This is a great mistake. So Jesus cautions us to consider carefully how we listen to his word. 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." We must consider carefully how we listen.

In America, many people's ears have become spoiled. Unless they are entertained in the proper way they do not give their attention to something. Unfortunately, some people bring this same mentality to their study of the Bible. They want to be entertained by the word of God. If they do not feel entertained, they say it is boring. We must really overcome this kind of finicky listening habit. God's word is not a commercial or a "sound bite." God's word is God's word. God's word gives life to the soul. It is the only salvation for a perishing world. We are not doing God a favor by listening to his word. We need God's word like a thirsty deer needs water. We need God's word for the life of our soul. How we listen to the word of God is a matter of life and death. We must consider carefully how we listen.

Father Abraham knew how to listen to God's word. Once Abraham served the Lord and two angels a delicious meal. As he was leaving, the Lord commented that he would go to Sodom and see if it was as corrupted as he had heard. Abraham knew immediately that God would bring judgment upon the city. Abraham began earnest prayer for God's mercy on account of his nephew, Lot. Lot was spared because of Abraham's prayer. On the other hand, when Lot heard the message of impending judgment, he did not accept it. He tried to bargain with the angels. He delayed and hesitated and finally had to be dragged out of the city by the angels. It is a question whether he would have been spared without Abraham's prayer. In this contrast we learn that Abraham could grow into a father of many nations when he obeyed God's word with a trembling heart. But Lot became a source of anguish down through the generations when he had a poor attitude toward God's word.

Look at verse 18 again. "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." Those who give all their heart to the study of God's word until they receive one word and obey it can grow to maturity. But those who study the word of God superficially deceive themselves. Their inner men do not grow even if their data bank is full of information. In the matter of time, their computer will crash. May God help each of us to hear God's word with holy reverence.

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

Look at verses 19-20. "Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to see you.'" As Jesus taught the word of God, people's eyes were riveted on Jesus. They did not flinch, their heads did not move, their ears were open, and their spirits were drinking in the living water that wells up to eternal life. Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they could not get near him at all. Someone saw them and thought Jesus should know that they were there. Perhaps he expected Jesus to make a way for them to come in right away. What did Jesus do?

Look at verse 21. "He replied, 'My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.'" Jesus did not rush to escort his mom into the meeting and give her a seat of prominence. Jesus did not show any human favoritism to his own brothers at the time of teaching people God's word. Jesus said, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

We find a striking paradox here. When a woman who had lived a sinful life came to Jesus, making a lavish display of affection, Jesus accepted her and forgave her sins. But when holy mother Mary came to Jesus, he did not give his attention to her. He said, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice." Jesus made it clear that his first duty was not to his mother Mary, but to God. According to God's will, he was teaching the word of God to give life to perishing souls. Nothing was more important to him. As a human being, Jesus must have had great affection for his mother. But he denied his human feelings to devote himself fully to saving souls with the word of God. Jesus taught the word of God at great cost to himself.

Look at verse 21 again. “He replied, ‘My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.’” Here we learn how to be members of Jesus’ eternal family: It is to hear God’s word and put it into practice. When we hear one word of God from our hearts, something amazing happens in us. John 5:24 says, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” We cross over from death to life. We receive eternal life at the moment we believe in Jesus and become God’s children. Moreover, we receive the kingdom of God as our inheritance (1 Pe 1:3,4). Those who hear God’s word are no longer just a member of their physical family. They become members of God’s family with a place in heaven reserved for them.

Still, hearing God’s word is not enough. We must also put God’s word into practice. The new birth as a child of God does not occur only in our minds. It is a complete transformation that is reflected in every aspect of our lives. We must put into practice what Jesus teaches. Most of all, we must love God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength and we must love our brothers and sisters in Christ as ourselves.

In this passage we learned that God gives us his word to reveal spiritual truth to us about God, about ourselves and about the world around us. God’s word has tremendous power to expose everything hidden in darkness. So we must consider carefully how we listen to it. Those who hear God’s word and put it into practice become Jesus’ eternal family members.