

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*What God Wants to Reveal.*"

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's Gospel verse-by-verse and we find ourselves at **Luke 8:16**. We'll be looking at the Parable of the Lamp.

I've shared w/ you before that unfortunately sometimes we think the Gospels are a collection of different accounts from Jesus' life that are sort of thrown together w/o any relationship to each other. We think the passages are arranged randomly or arbitrarily.

But this isn't true! The Gospels are written w/ connections between the different accounts.

The parable this morning continues from the Parable of the Soils. Let me make the connection between these parables clear...

Jesus started teaching in parables and the disciples asked Him why. This is a very reasonable question:

- He'd previously been very straightforward and clear in His teaching.
- Now it seemed more confusing and obscured.

Look at Jesus' response in **verse 10** to the disciples' question:

10 And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given in parables, that* 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.

So Jesus said He started speaking in parables so:

- Spiritual truth – or mysteries – would be given – or revealed – to some.
- But spiritual truth would also be hidden - or concealed - from others.

This left people w/ questions about Jesus' new approach. They wondered:

- "*Is Jesus teaching in parables b/c He wants to keep things a secret?*"
- "*If Jesus wanted the truth to be plain and straightforward, then He would teach plainly and straightforwardly. Clearly, Jesus doesn't want the truth revealed.*"

This is partly true! That is part of the reason Jesus taught parables. But it's equally true that Jesus taught parables to reveal truth! For many people, parables had the opposite effect of concealing or hiding truth. They helped people better understand deep, spiritual truths.

Just think for a moment about the Parable of the Soils that we just concluded. Didn't that parable help you better understand spiritual truths about God's Word and people's hearts? Definitely!

So what Jesus does now is He actually teaches a parable to reveal that He wants to reveal truth. Let me say that one more time: Jesus doesn't want anyone thinking truth is meant to be concealed or hidden, so He teaches a parable to reveal that He wants to reveal truth.

And this brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: SPIRITUAL TRUTH (PART I) IS MEANT TO BE REVEALED.

If you just think about truth, we know as Christians that it's meant to be revealed. We know God wants us to understand truth:

- **John 8:40b** Jesus said He is, “**a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God.**” In **John 8:45** and **46** Jesus said, “**I tell the truth.**” This is what Jesus did through all of His teaching and ministry. He revealed truth.
- The devil – on the other hand – is the opposite. He wants to deceive and steal truth away. This is why earlier in the Parable of the Soils, in **Luke 8:12b** Jesus said **the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts.**

And if you understand God wants to reveal truth, then you understand the main point of this parable. Look at **verse 16**...

¹⁶ “**No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts *it* under a bed, but sets *it* on a lampstand,**

These words might sound familiar, so let me be clear about something...

Matt 5:14 “**You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.** ¹⁵ **Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are in the house.*** ¹⁶ **Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**”

This is part of the Sermon on the Mount in **Matt 5-7**. Luke's record of the Sermon on the Mount is back in chapter 6. These are two different parables:

- In **Matt 5:14-16** Jesus is talking about believers being light, and our light should be revealed.
- What we're reading today is about spiritual truth being revealed.

There are similarities, but they're different parables w/ different points.

Now for the understanding...

Obviously, when people light a lamp, they don't hide it: they don't **cover it** or **put it under a bed** where nobody will see the light. Instead, they put it on a **lampstand** where the light will reach the furthest, and the most number of people will be able to see it.

I told you before the word parable means, “*to cast alongside.*” It's related to our word “parallel.” A parable is a story that teaches spiritual truth by putting it alongside something, simple, ordinary and familiar...such as sowing a seed or using a lamp.

I told you this parable is connected to the Parable of the Soils, and another connection is the continuing theme of the Word of God or spiritual truth:

- In the Parable of the Soils the Word of God, or spiritual truth, is represented by **seed**.
- In this parable, the Word of God, or spiritual truth, is represented by a **lamp** or **light**.

If you write in your bible, you can circle the word **lamp** and write, “**Psa 18:28** and **119:105**” ...

- **Psa 18:28 For You will light my LAMP;**
The LORD my God will ENLIGHTEN my darkness.
- **Psa 119:105 Your word is a LAMP to my feet**
And a LIGHT to my path.

So the idea is:

- Just like the light from a lamp isn't meant to be hidden, the light – or spiritual truth – from God's Word isn't meant to be hidden.
- Just like the light from a lamp is meant to reach as far as possible so many people will see it, the light – or spiritual truth from God's Word – is meant to reach as far as possible so many people will see it.
- Just like people are supposed to benefit from the illumination a lamp provides, people are supposed to benefit from the light – or spiritual truth – God's Word provides.

Now one obvious question is: who gets to see this light, or who gets to understand spiritual truth? And who doesn't?

Briefly look back at **verse 10**...

10 And He said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that ‘Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.

According to **verse 10** it's those who are part of – or who have entered – **the kingdom of God** that get to **see the light** or understand spiritual truth.

And this is what the rest of **verse 16** says...

16b that those who enter (this means enter the **kingdom of God**) **may see the light.**

This brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: SPIRITUAL TRUTH (PART II) IS FOR THOSE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Just to make the connection even clearer between this parable and the previous verses, if you want to write in your bible you can:

- Circle the word **enter** and draw a line up to **kingdom of God**.
- Circle the words **see the light** and draw a line up to **know the mysteries**.

The idea is people **enter the kingdom of God** and then they're able to **see the light** or **know the mysteries**.

Listen to the way Paul and Peter explain it...

- **2 Cor 4:4 and 4:6** say unbelievers are those **whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, LEST THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL...should shine on them...6** For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- **2 Pet 1:19a** We have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as **A LIGHT THAT SHINES IN A DARK PLACE.**

Spiritual truth – or the Gospel – is fittingly compared w/ light, b/c it's the light that:

- Reveals our sinfulness...
- Reveals we can never be good enough to go to heaven...
- Reveals we need a Savior...

In **Acts 26:18** Paul said God sent him to the Gentiles to **open their eyes, IN ORDER TO TURN THEM FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT, and from the power of Satan to God.**

Now let's look at the next aspect of spiritual truth...

17 For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.

This verse is filled w/ two contrasting pairs:

1. **Secret** and **revealed**
2. **Hidden** and **[brought] to light**

And this brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: SPIRITUAL TRUTH (PART III) REVEALS WHAT IS HIDDEN.

Verse 17 begins w/ the word **For** which connects it to **verse 16**. The connection is **verse 17** is the interpretation of **verse 16**.

This is God's promise that He will reveal truth:

- The secrets of God's kingdom, which were hidden until Christ, would become known and understood through Jesus' teaching.
- There are no mysteries that God will not reveal completely at some point in the future.

Paul explains it this way...

1 Cor 13:12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

So we aren't able to see all the **secrets** - or **mysteries of the kingdom of God** right now - but at some point we will...because like Jesus says in the verse: **nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.**

But here's the thing...

Most commentators believe **verse 17** goes beyond just spiritual truth being revealed. If you look back at **verse 17** it says:

- **For nothing is secret that will not be revealed** – this means our secrets will **be revealed**.
- **Nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.** – this means hidden parts of our lives will **come to light**.

We will come back to Lesson 1, but for now please look at Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: GOD WILL REVEAL THE SECRETS OF OUR LIVES.

For the sermon I chose the title, “What God Wants to Reveal” b/c I think these verses identify two things God reveals:

- He reveals spiritual truth.
- He reveals the hidden parts of our lives.

There’s no sense trying to “cover things up” b/c God will one day reveal everything. It’s a lie to believe that we can get away w/ our evil thoughts, plans, words, or actions. God will expose all of it.

This is a theme in Scripture:

- **Ecc 12:14 For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.**
- **1 Cor 4:5 The Lord...will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.**
- **1 Tim 5:24 Some men’s sins are clearly evident** (some men’s sins are obvious now), **preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later** (their sins stay hidden until they stand before God).²⁵ **Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident** (evident in this life), **and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden** (they’ll be revealed later).

Now I want to share some practical application from this...

There seem to be two ways for our sins to be revealed. We just discussed that it’s not a question of whether our sins will be revealed. It’s a question of when and how those sins will be revealed. And it seems to me we have two choices:

- We can reveal our sins through confession and repentance. This is something we do knowingly and willingly.
- Or we can wait until God reveals our sins b/c we chose not to confess and repent.

But here’s what you need to know if you choose the second option...

It always seems to involve more people, and it always seems to be more painful for us and those closest to us.

God’s desire seems to be for the smallest number of people to be aware of our sin.

- If we confess and repent, often our sin can stay between us and God.
- If we refuse to repent though, God enlarges the circles of knowledge to introduce as many people as necessary – and often as much humiliation and shame as necessary – to bring about our repentance.

Now it doesn't matter if I believe this or see things this way. It only matters if I can prove this from Scripture. Let me give you one passage that supports what I'm saying, and then a few examples...

Matt 18:15 Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

The words **between you and him alone** make clear God wants the sin to remain between only two people; nobody else should know.

16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

Now the knowledge of the sin has to reach two or three more people...but this is still fairly limited.

17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Finally the entire church has to know, which would obviously be very painful and shameful.

But recognize this is only after God tried to limit the knowledge of the sin...but the person wouldn't repent.

Think of some examples we see in Scripture....

- Think of Achan. After he stole of the accursed things, he hid his sin. God revealed him as the culprit in front of the entire nation: **Josh 7:17 Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me."** You have to wonder: *"What would've happened w/ Achan if he had confessed earlier?"*
- David tried to hide his sin and in **2 Sam 12:12** God said, **"For you did *it* secretly, but I will do this thing** (referring to David's punishment) **before all Israel, before the sun."** You have to wonder, *"What would've happened w/ David if he didn't hide his sin for almost a year?"*

Hopefully you see the application from this for us...

Let me first address the children...

Children look up at me for a moment. Is there a sin in your life that you are trying to hide?

- Confess it to your parents. God already knows and you can trust Him to work through your humility and repentance.
- But if you wait, you're forcing God to have to reveal your sin. Then there will be more pain and consequences.

Katie and I regularly try to tell our children that things will always go much better for them if they come clean, before we have to find out on our own.

And for everyone else here this morning...

If there's sin in your life, confess it:

- God works through confession and obedience. He wants His people to overcome sin.
- One reason sin is compared to leprosy is you can hide it for some period of time, but eventually the spots start showing.

Num 32:23 But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.

Let me conclude by saying this...

We can either uncover our sin through confession and repentance, or wait until God uncovers it. But when we force God – and that is what we're doing by refusing to repent – He often has to do so in a much more public and painful way.

Let's look at the beginning of the last verse of the parable...

^{18a} **Therefore take heed how you hear.**

You can go back to the last part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: SPIRITUAL TRUTH (PART IV) NEEDS TO BE HEDED.

This is similar to **verse 8** when Jesus said: **“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”** We talked about this in detail last week, so I don't want to rehash it again, but you notice that for the second time Jesus discusses the importance of the way we hear Him.

Upon first reading these words they look very awkward. For example, we would expect Jesus to say:

- “Take heed **THAT** you hear”...make sure you hear.
- Or, “Take heed what you hear”...be careful what you hear.

But nobody really says, **“Take heed HOW you hear.”**

Jesus said this though b/c there are two ways to hear:

- You can hear physically.
- And you can hear spiritually.

Most everyone heard Jesus; it's just a question of HOW they heard Him. Did they hear Him physically or spiritually?

The words **take heed** are actually a warning...

Jesus is letting us know that the way we listen to spiritual truth is so important, b/c when this life is over we won't have the opportunity to go back and hear what we missed.

So He provides a very sobering statement for people who **take heed how [they] hear** and those who don't. Look at the rest of **verse 18**...

18b For whoever has, to him *more* will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."

This verse occurs five times in the Gospels:

- Twice in **Matthew**, in **13:12** and **25:29**
- Once in **Mark 4:25**
- Twice in Luke: once here and then in **Luke 19:26** **For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.**

For a verse to be repeated this often, you can tell God really wants us to appreciate it!

For a while after becoming a Christian this verse was confusing to me...not so much confusing regarding what it meant, but confusing why God would do things this way. Then one day I was standing in front of my classroom and I realized something w/ my students that helped me understand God's position.

I know I've shared this story w/ some of you before, but by the time you hit the six year mark at the same church you don't have any new stories...or the new stories you have are about people in the congregation and they don't like you talking about them.

At the beginning of every school year, I would distribute responsibilities to each student:

- Passing out papers...
- Collecting papers...
- Line leaders to the cafeteria...
- Someone who opens the door...
- Someone who takes the lunch money to the office...

You make sure you have a responsibility for each kid.

As the year progresses:

- Some students show themselves to be faithful regarding whatever responsibility they were given.
- Other students show themselves to be unfaithful regarding whatever responsibility they were given. No matter how many times you warn these kids, they won't do what they're expected to do. Finally you say, "If you don't do what I ask, I'm going to take your job and give it to someone else."

And when you take a responsibility from one student and gave it to another, guess who you give it to? The faithful students who already had responsibilities!

By the end of the year you had a number of students who had nothing, and a number of other students who just kept being given more. It really looked like...

For whoever has, to him *more* will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.

It's a great verse about faithfulness. And I really feel like what I was forced to do w/ my students is what God is forced to do w/ His people. And this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: GOD REVEALS MORE TO THE FAITHFUL AND TAKES FROM THE UNFAITHFUL.

If you've ever been in charge of a ministry in the church or a job in the workplace or a project in school and you have a team of people to work with, you've probably seen this happen:

- You have some people who show themselves to be faithful, so they keep being given more.
- You have others who show themselves to be unfaithful, so even what little they have is taken from them.

That's what's going on this verse!

Since the verse is used in different places, we need to look at the context of its use to apply it correctly.

For example, when this verse occurs in **Matt 25** and **Luke 19** it's after the Parable of the Talents:

- **Matt 25:28 Therefore take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents.**
²⁹ **'FOR TO EVERYONE WHO HAS, MORE WILL BE GIVEN, AND HE WILL HAVE ABUNDANCE; BUT FROM HIM WHO DOES NOT HAVE, EVEN WHAT HE HAS WILL BE TAKEN AWAY.'**
- **Luke 19:24 "And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give *it* to him who has ten minas.'** ²⁵ **(But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.')** ²⁶ **'FOR I SAY TO YOU, THAT TO EVERYONE WHO HAS WILL BE GIVEN; AND FROM HIM WHO DOES NOT HAVE, EVEN WHAT HE HAS WILL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM.'**

So when the verse is used in these two passages, the context seems to be responsibility:

- People who are responsible are given more responsibility.
- People who are irresponsible, have even their limited responsibilities taken from them.

But the context for **Luke 8:18** is spiritual understanding, so here's the last lesson...

LESSON 4: THERE'S NO STANDING STILL REGARDING SPIRITUAL TRUTH.

Those who are sensitive to spiritual matters receive more truth, while those who are not sensitive to spiritual matters – the **whoever does not have** – end up in even worse condition.

Let me connect the dots here...

At the beginning of the verse, Jesus said: **Therefore take heed how you hear:**

- The person who does what Jesus said and **takes heed how he hears** will receive greater spiritual truth. The person who listens carefully to God's Word will understand it even better.

- But the person who doesn't do what Jesus said and doesn't **take heed how he hears**, he'll lose even the little spiritual understanding he thinks he has.

You could say this:

- Careful heeding or careful hearing results in greater understanding
- Careless heeding or careless hearing results in less understanding.

Learning spiritual truth is a continual, on-going process. We never reach the point that we know all there is to know, but when we have a spiritual hunger:

- God keeps feeding us His Word and revealing more truth.
- God keeps building and building on top of what we already know, giving us more and more.
- We get to keep learning and learning and learning.

This takes place throughout our Christian lives. There seems to be a momentum to it.

But if we don't have a spiritual hunger, God takes away the little knowledge we have.

So it seems to me, regarding spiritual truth, standing still is impossible:

- We're either gaining or losing.
- We're either advancing or declining.

But it's impossible to stand still.

And let me get you to look back at the verse to notice something interesting...

It says: **whoever does not have, even what he SEEMS TO HAVE.**

This teaches that there are some who look like they're spiritually wise...but they're not.

- It **seems** like they **have** spiritual understanding...but they don't.
- It just looks – or **seems** – that way.

Notice the words **whoever does not have**. So they don't actually have anything.

What does this mean exactly?

I think it means they become even more foolish in their understanding. As God takes away what little spiritual truth they have, they become more foolish.

Paul describes this in Romans 1...

Rom 1:21 Although they knew God (which really means they knew OF God), **they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.** ²² **Professing to be wise** (they seemed to have spiritual understanding), **they became fools.**

So they seemed to be wise, but the wisdom that it seemed like they had was taken away from them, and they became even more foolish in their thinking.

Let me conclude the sermon by saying this...

The Bible seems to be pretty clear in dividing people into two groups:

- The sheep and the goats.
- Those who enter **by the narrow gate** and those who enter the **wide gate**.
- Those who are born again and those who aren't.

And this morning we see those who are given more versus those who lose even what little they have.

Which group do you fall into?

- Is the Lord taking away what little you have:
 - Because you're hiding sin?
 - Or because you're unfaithful?
- Or is God giving you more b/c of your humility and faithfulness?

Let's pray.