

“LET IT SHINE”

Mark 4: 21-25

Rev. Ed Hoekstra.

Relax – Let go! After I finished high school I worked for a carpenter to make some money and to learn about the trade. Early in my time on the job, my boss asked me to cut a 2X6 Board with a hand saw because it was in awkward spot to cut it with a power saw. When I was cutting the piece, I put a lot of pressure on the saw. My boss saw what I was doing and said, “Ed, don’t work so hard! Let the saw do its work!” I did what he said and it made a big difference! That little lesson not only helped me in terms of carpentry, but also taught me a life lesson.

One could say the same thing about the Holy Spirit, “Ed, don’t work so hard, let the Spirit do its work!” Last Sunday, Rev. John Park talked about Pentecost. Pentecost was the time when the church was born. At Pentecost, the spirit was released to everyone as a helper – as a guide and counselor. The Holy Spirit is the presence of Jesus with us, strengthening us through his Amazing love-- his amazing grace and presence. We do a lot of talking about the great news about God’s abiding presence through the Holy Spirit, but in our daily lives, we easily revert back to relying on our own meagre resources. Out of fear we hoard our resources for ourselves instead of sharing our abundance with others. Let go, don’t work so hard on proving yourself - let the Spirit do its work!

A point of logical agreement: In the first verse of this parable Jesus appeals to logic that everyone in the culture of the time could agree with. Who in their right mind would have a lamp and not use it for its purpose. Every household at that time would have had an oil lamp to help people navigate with the light at night. The people were poor, and no one would spend the money for this necessity in life, and hide its light. At this point in the parable all are agreeing that they need to let this important light from their lamps shine! Let the lamp (the Holy Spirit) do its work.

Do not keep the Kingdom hidden: Jesus builds on the logic of verse 21 by applying it in verse 22. The parables about God’s kingdom point to the reality of God’s supreme rule over His creation. God’s rule will always be about Grace. In other words, it will always be a teaching about God’s steadfast, unconditional love as being the rule for life in His Kingdom. Sharing the Good news of this Kingdom is vital to its purpose- similar to how a lantern is of little use unless it is allowed to shine! It needs to be shared with others! The Kingdom brings healing, wholeness and unity to the world. No other earthly kingdom can do that! Don’t just keep it for yourself, be generous and let it shine! Its usefulness is greatly diminished if it remains hidden.

The Kingdom his listeners were thinking about was much more to do with material power and military supremacy. Jesus listeners were being persecuted by Roman forces, and they wanted nothing more than

the Messiah to save them by defeating their enemies! This Kingdom of loving one's enemies and forgiveness was so foreign to them they had difficulty grasping its meaning.

Anyone who has ears, listen! Since Jesus counter-culture message about the Kingdom of God is so difficult to comprehend, they need to listen carefully. This news is for anyone who has ears – that means every single person not only the Jews in Jesus time. This news is not only for those who are participating in Christian worship, it is for all people! This is a vital message that needs to be shared.

Giving, not getting is the way: In Mark 4: 24 we read, *“Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give is the measure you get, and still more will be given you.”* In other words, do not listen to the contemporary consumeristic messages that appeal to our greedy natures which are never satisfied. Giving, not getting is the way! Being generous with our love for our neighbor advances God's kingdom – more of the Kingdom of God will be apparent.

In order for us to desire to shine our light, it is important for us to take steps in building our relationship with Christ. An important step for this to happen is to share our resources (by placing our trust in God and not our material wealth, it will be easier to trust him the next time). We are a money oriented culture, and have learned to have faith in our money for security. On the contrary, our faith, our security is meant to be in Jesus Christ. We will limit the light shining upon others by concentrating on making wealth and of securing a name for ourselves. Do not work so hard. Let the spirit do its work. Though it is important to have a plan to allocate our money wisely, work in balance with the Spirit of God. Our money can be used by the Spirit to bring light (Good news) in a world of so much suffering. As followers of Christ, the Kingdom is about giving and not getting. This is so counter to our cultural message that encourages us to believe we live in scarcity and keep everything for ourselves.

In Canada we live in abundance. Most of us live in the top 5% of world's wealthiest people. Only a few of us can give only \$20/week, but most of us can give more than that. I do not have any knowledge of the names of individuals and families who give to the church and the work of his Kingdom, but I want to challenge you today to let the Spirit do its work in your life. Remember you are not alone in this life. God provides and will provide!

Stinginess impoverishes: In Mark 4: 25, *“For to those who have, more will be given; and for those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.”* Theologian Eugene Peterson translates this verse with these words: *“Generosity begets generosity, stinginess impoverishes”*. For an abundant life as God's loved child, be generous as Christ is generous to you. Jesus is not teaching here that the more you give, more material wealth and possessions will come your way. Like a light in darkness draws one towards it, so generosity draws you to the one being generous. It also inspires generosity. In other words, more of Christ's Kingdom will be expanded in sharing God's abundance – people will be drawn to it. Listen carefully: Don't keep the light hidden. Let the Good News of God's grace shine through you! Amen.