



“Seeing and Hearing the Truth”

or ‘who is the man behind the curtain?’

Mark 4:21-25

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Mark 4: 21 Also He said to them, "Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? 22 "For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. 23 "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." 24 Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. 25 "For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

Jesus often taught with parables so that those who truly had a heart to understand would indeed understand, but the rest would be left with merely a ‘nice story.’ Even in that day ‘Pastor Jesus’ was separating the sheep from the goats, the real from the faux, and He made no apologies for doing so. There were then as there are now those who have the ability to sit through a sermon and truly never hear a thing. The ‘lamp is covered’ in their hearts and therefore just as the gospel of John chapter 1 verse 5 says, *“the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”*

Jesus began today with the story of the light that was not to be hidden. Throughout all of Jesus’ parables, He would universally use natural elements of life that would be common to man and understood by anyone who really wanted to understand. A ‘lamp’ in that day was a familiar and common part of life...something that everyone would know and recognize. Such lamps were not aromatic fixtures owned for ambiance around the house! They existed for *function*. It was dark at night and electricity wasn’t to come along for another 1800 years so an oil lamp was all there was. It is not a minor point that such was functional and needful, not an ‘optional’ tool. If you wanted to see, you needed a lamp!

The point that Jesus was making here was a simple one: if you owned a lamp, you put it out there where it could serve its created purpose. One did not cover the light nor did they hide the light, for to do so would inevitably mean they would be left in the dark. Such seems to be an obvious no-brainer, but apparently not so, for Jesus felt the necessity to share this parable then, and to see to it that it would be recorded for us today.

John 3:19-21 said that *“God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”*

To watch this phenomena is the craziest thing...to watch folks hide from the light. And when people do not want others to see what they are doing, they creep around in the dark...away from the community of believers...isolated and apart from the light. They do things in secret and say things secret. There have been famous experiments over the years by scientists to see the affects of life without light and they universally found it causes depression on the short run and madness over the long haul.

'Light is critical for our health and wellbeing. Ensuring that we receive adequate light levels at the appropriate time of day benefits our alertness, mood, productivity, sleep patterns and many aspects of our physiology,' says Dr Victoria Revell, a chronobiologist at the University of Surrey. It is obvious that we **need** the light! Perhaps that is why Christ took upon Himself this analogy saying *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* Scripture also tells us in Matthew 5:14 that we...those with Christ in us and walking in His presence *"...are the light of the world."*

When Jesus came to earth, He came to bring light into a great darkness. There was the darkness of the corporate social system...the greater 'world' as we know it, but there was also the more intimate darkness...that of the souls of men. This light was given to show men the escape route, and to literally *be* that escape route; the embodiment of light. To show them that there was a way for them to be saved and then to save them through the very possession of that light.

The thing about light is that it illuminates indiscriminately. Meaning that it not only shows us the way out and the path to freedom, but it shows the wickedness of this world and that which lurks behind the shadows in the hearts of man. This is why there is so often inexplicable hatred and angry reaction toward those who reside in the light. Paul said in 2Co 2:16 *"To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life..."* They do not want the truth to be known nor do they want others to see the reality behind the façade. They do not want people to see the 'wizard' behind the curtain, for the truth is damning and exposing.

In the shadows of darkness we pretend. We rewrite the events of the past and reinvent the truth of the present in order to serve our will and wants. We whisper in the dark and duck the presence of the light as much as we can. Oh, some will sit in the dark and talk a lot about the light, but in fact still fail to actually embrace that light. It's a neat idea to talk about on Sundays but we don't want to actually come out into that light or everyone would find out that our actions are evil. We do our best to stay out of the illuminating light and when living so we even go out and seek everyone else we know that is living in the dark and they are our new best friends!

But those who attempt such a ruse fail to hear this passage...they fail to know Jesus' word's herein that *"...there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light."* Maybe you have to have lived awhile to see such occur! Whether you are Watergate Nixon or Clarence Thomas or just some smuck in Menomonie Wisconsin, the word's 'nothing' and 'anything' are for us! And we need to realize the seemingly inconsequential aspect of all of this, and that is that light is not the absence of darkness, but rather darkness is the absence of light! The darkness will always be out there, but it is chased away by the presence of light!

When we start to seek secrecy and self-indulgence, we naturally move away from the light in all of its forms and in all of its locations. We move away from the Christian community...we start staying away from dynamic Christians and begin to seek out and live amongst the marginal and the others who have also moved away from the light. We gravitate toward the imaginary and the 'smoke and mirrors' of oz and reinvent the truth like the man behind the curtain.

The fact is, no one has ever gotten away with sin! That is the clear teaching of the Bible! There was Reuben in Genesis 49:3-4, Achan in Joshua 7:1-26, Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. The supposed hidden works of darkness will always be brought out into the light. Sooner or later, your *"sins will find you out."* (Num. 32:23)

Certainly one would then argue that it is far better to drag your own sins out into the open and confess them to the Lord than it is to hide them away, waiting for God to expose them. Proverbs 28:13 speaks in warning: "*He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*" When we get honest about our lives we can experience that light and find there His mercy and His forgiveness.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9). When we try to hide our sins away, when we try instead to live in the dark...like those test subjects, we begin to experience the symptoms of 'light deprivation': *Depression, paranoia, fear and anxiety*. And maybe finally, the madness we see in the world out there. I have known many professed believers who found that darkness is just as dark when you go back to it after knowing the light. In fact, coming out of the light, its worse than it was before. (at least at first) 2Peter 2:21tells us that *"...it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them."* We read of the heart of David after his sin with Bathsheba in Psalms 38:1-11 and Psalms 32:3-5. It's hard not to feel his pain!

Christ goes on in verse 23 to warn us then to also be careful what we *hear*. For our hearing can be just as illusive and just as imaginary as what we see...or what we *think* we see. We chalk up those imaginary voices that people claim they hear as mental health issues, but yet the fact remains that many of us in the spiritual realm are quite frankly hearing things that aren't there either, but we are banking our lives on those voices. How do we know the factuality? How do we know the source of such voices? How do we know whether it is of God or just "the man behind the curtain claiming to be the Great Oz?"

The most difficult parts of ascertaining all of this is learning to discern God's voice takes time (a patient heart) and the setting aside of our pride, (a humble heart). Jeremiah 29:12-13 says, *"Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."* We *can* know the source. But there are three different voices that we can hear. We know we can hear God's voice but we need to be aware that there are other voices whispering into our ears as well. There is indeed the voice of God, but scripture says that such is a "still small voice." There is also louder voices...like that of our own fleshly desires, and that is a loud and forceful voice, and then there is even the voice of the Devil. But Jesus tells us in John 10:4b and 5, *"...and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."*

Hebrews tells us that we can train our ear to know the voice of God above all the other voices. But the voice of own flesh can scream pretty loud (especially when we are under pressure, or we want something very badly). And the Devil is the father of lies -- he is the great deceiver. So how do we really know whether it is the "Great Oz" who is speaking to us, or just a deceiver behind a curtain?

First and foremost there is **Scripture**: *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (II Timothy 3:16-17). This however must also come with a secondary warning! If persistent, we can...*as they say*, torture the text until it says whatever we want it to say. We may find a verse that gives us the go ahead, but fail to read that passage in the context of all of scripture and thereby ignore several other verses that tell us "no." This is often the case with those who came to the scripture not seeking an answer but rather a confirmation for what they already decided to do.

#2, The Holy Spirit speaking to our heart: *"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, 'know the Lord,' for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them"* (Hebrews 8:10-11). What is the Holy Spirit saying to you? Not merely a feeling or a want, but truly His voice. If that voice is always telling you what you want to hear, I would be suspicious...

#3, Godly counsel: *"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety"* (Proverbs 11:14). What are those around you saying? Those who you have trusted and have proven themselves to be faithful to both God and to you over the years of your walk in Christ? For it is through these that God sends the prophetic 'word of knowledge' and the word of wisdom: *"Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good"* (I Thessalonians 5:19-21).

#4, Confirmation: This goes along with the past three. Are they in harmony? Or are you choosing to hear just the voice that tells you what you want to hear? *"By the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed"* (Matthew 18:16).

#5, The peace of God: *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful"* (Colossians 3:15). Again, word of warning! We must be sure that it is actually the *peace of God*, and not the 'peace of satisfaction' or the 'peace of relief' that we gain in the flesh when we decide to move ahead on something we want really bad! Often people on their way to disaster have told me they have "peace" about their action, when in hind sight they later admitted it was actually the peace that comes with stress relief. Once they made up their mind to move ahead despite all other signs, they had a 'peace' that was actually the pressure from God relenting and His Spirit departing. That can...in the flesh, bring us huge natural relief.

#6 - Circumstances/Timing: *"After these things he (Paul) left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers"* (Acts 18:1-3 -- this relationship between Paul, Aquila and Priscilla -- which happened as a result of circumstances -- became one of the most important strategic partnerships in the book of Acts). We must look around at the reality of our life and circumstances. Where has God placed us? Does this fit with my spiritual maturity? Am I currently living out other good decisions and righteous holy interactions? (I.E. – *"faithful in the small things?"*) Are we attempting to make a decision in our lives amidst chaos and other problematic issues that we are experiencing? What am I giving up by making this move?

#7 – The Open Door: This one's tricky, because Satan can open doors and often does! Is it *really* open or am I *forcing* it open? Opportunity is often a great sign from God, but it can never operate alone. It must exist in the context of all these other points we have already covered. So while an open door is a great 'period at the end of the sentence' one must always look carefully: *who opened the door?*

Jesus is herein giving us a warning. If we fail to see and hear the truth, we stand to lose so very much. God is good and gracious. He has plans for us all. But failure to pay attention to these warnings can cause us to lose our way. And instead of gain, there will be great loss. *"For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."* The key to all of this is humility! It is the great sin of pride that robs us of His blessings and renders us spiritual impotent. It will be our pride that blinds us and deafens us. When we fail to hear, those around us fail to hear **us**: *"With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given."* This is a gospel truth! We eventually end up outside of God's will and plan, and are rendered unusable for kingdom pursuits.

James 4:10 "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and **He** will lift you up."