

This Little Light of Mine

Luke 8:16-18

[Play video – Geneticist Francis Collins and his journey to faith]

Last week we discovered from the parable of the soil that upon hearing the Word of God, the gospel message, we have but two choices to make. One choice is to reject it, described by the three types of soil – the soil that is *indifferent* or the hard soil; the soil that is *inadequate* or the shallow, rocky soil; or the *invasive* soil which is the thorny, weedy soil. The other choice is to have *ideal* soil or fertile soil that will aid the germination of the seed of God's Word to take root, grow, and eventually bear fruit.

Fruitfulness is seen in several ways:

The development of godly character

The desire to win others to Christ

The desire to give to the ministry of the church

The desire to do good works

The desire to praise God by confessing His name

In verses 4-15 we are taught about hearing and receiving the Word of God.

In verses 16-18 we are taught about hearing and sharing the Word of God.

Please turn in your Bible to Luke 8:16-18. Let's stand and read this passage together.

(Display verses on screen.)

Let's pause once again for prayer. For a moment silently invite God to reveal His truth to your heart and mind as we unfold this passage together that it might light our way and guide our path. (Pray)

James 1:22 exhorts us to be doers of the Word and not just hearers so that we don't deceive ourselves. We see in this passage three challenges that require action on our part. We are challenged to present the Gospel; we are challenged to be clear about the gospel; and we are challenged to grow because of

the gospel. Let's consider four points.

The Gospel must be purposeful

The Gospel must be plain

The Gospel must be progressive

The Gospel must be practical

I. THE GOSPEL MUST BE PURPOSEFUL – v. 16

There is a story about a University professor who challenged his students with this question. "Did God create everything that exists?"

A student bravely replied, "Yes he did!"

God created everything?" The professor asked.

Yes sir, he certainly did," the student replied.

The professor answered, "If God created everything; then God created evil. And, since evil exists, and according to the principal that our works define who we are, then we can assume God is evil."

The student became quiet and did not answer the professor's hypothetical definition. The professor, quite pleased with himself, boasted to the students that he had proven once more that the Christian faith was a myth.

Another student raised his hand and said, "May I ask you a question, professor?"

"Of course", replied the professor.

The student stood up and asked, "Professor, does cold exist?"

"What kind of question is this? Of course it exists. Have you never been cold?"

The young man replied, "In fact sir, cold does not exist. According to the laws of physics, what we consider cold is in reality the absence of heat. Every body or object is susceptible to study when it has or transmits energy, and heat is what makes a body or matter have or transmit energy. Absolute zero (-460 F) is the total absence of heat; and all matter

becomes inert and incapable of reaction at that temperature. Cold does not exist. We have created this word to describe how we feel if we have no heat."

The student continued, "Professor, does darkness exist?"

The professor responded, "Of course it does."

The student replied, "Once again you are wrong sir, darkness does not exist either. Darkness is in reality the absence of light. Light we can study, but not darkness. In fact, we can use Newton's prism to break white light into many colors and study the various wavelengths of each color. You cannot measure darkness. A simple ray of light can break into a world of darkness and illuminate it. How can you know how dark a certain space is? You measure the amount of light present. Isn't this correct? Darkness is a term used by man to describe what happens when there is no light present." Finally the young man asked the professor, "Sir, does evil exist?"

The professor responded, "Of course, as I have already said. We see it every day. It is in the daily examples of man's inhumanity to man. It is in the multitude of crime and violence everywhere in the world. These manifestations are nothing else but evil.

To this the student replied, "Evil does not exist, sir, or at least it does not exist unto itself. Evil is simply the absence of God. It is just like darkness and cold, a word that man has created to describe the absence of God. God did not create evil. Evil is the result of what happens when man does not have God's love present in his heart. It's like the cold that comes when there is no heat, or the darkness that comes when there is no light."

From time to time Jesus used illustrations that, from our logical mind, would seem utterly ridiculous, even absurd. We considered one such illustration a couple of weeks ago when Jesus challenged His

hearers to consider a man with a log in his eye attempting to remove a speck of sawdust from the eye of someone else.

In this verse He challenges the logic of lighting a lamp and hiding it in a jar or putting it under the bed. In the days of Christ a lamp was saucer like with a handle on one end and a spout on the other end where a wick would be inserted into the lamp that was filled with oil.

What is the purpose of a hammer? To pound or pull nails. Some might use it to crack walnuts or pry open a door, but its primary purpose is in carpentry.

What about a waffle maker? Its primary purpose is for making waffles, but it was also used by the man who invented the waffle sole on Nike running shoes

How about a chair? Its intended use is for sitting but many have been known to use it as a step stool or to block a door shut to make indoor forts with chairs and blankets.

We could go on and on with examples of items that we have used other than for their intended purpose and some of those uses seem rather silly when you think about it.

Jesus says that it is ridiculous to consider lighting a lamp and then hiding it where it will do no good. You wouldn't stick it under a bushel basket or you wouldn't put it in a dresser drawer where once the drawer is closed it does you no good.

Something just as ridiculous would be to light it and put it under your bed. Keep in mind that their bed was just a mat they would unroll on the floor and then roll up when done sleeping. We think of our beds up on legs and it might seem natural to put a light under the bed if we're looking for a missing sock or lost shoe. But to Jesus' hearers what He had to say would sound absurd, crazy, besides, it's a good way to set your bed on fire.

As a matter of fact the primary purpose of a lamp when lit is for lighting up a room to see better. We might go to Wal-Mart or to Art Van's and look for a lamp that is not only functional but have some aesthetic value as well to go with the color scheme or décor of the room. But when you buy a lamp, you buy it for the primary purpose of lighting up an area. In Jesus' day a lit lamp was either placed on a stand in the middle of the room or on shelf that stuck out of the wall on which the lamp was placed. In that way the whole room would be lit up.

Jesus uses this illustration to point out that when a person receives the Word of God that person must not hide it. The disciples thought Jesus used parables to hide the truth, but in fact Jesus is showing that parables revealed the truth to those who were willing to hear and obey it. His teaching is a light that must shine so sinners can hear and believe. It is not to be hidden and we have the responsibility to be a light of God's Word.

If a lamp is placed in the corner and turned on we know that the area closest to the lamp would be the brightest, the further away from the light the dimmer the room is. It is the same for us, the closer we are to the light of Christ, the brighter we will be in reflecting Him to others.

I'm afraid that we have hidden the light or made it dim.

When it comes to education we have allowed the light of God's Word to grow dim. 52 years ago prayer was banned in schools by a ruling from the Supreme Court. The light of the gospel was dimmed in schools and with that decision other unwritten laws have been enforced. You can't read your Bible in class. You can't draw pictures representing Christianity in art. Graphically pornographic books are now required literature.

Where is the light of God's truth in education?

The light is dim in the political arena and the courts. Let's keep God and the state separate they say. Is

that what was intended by the framers of our Constitution? There are many in the courts who want to rewrite the Constitution rather than uphold it. Some go so far as to say that being a Christian disqualifies you from public service. And many in the church have concluded that, well, they must know best. Our light has become dim.

How about in the sports arena or in the business world? We're being told to check our faith at the door and click, the light of the gospel is dimmed some more.

How about in science? Let me share a quote from Neil DeGrasse Tyson an American astrophysicist, and director of the Hayden Planetarium. "Evolution really happened. Accepting our kinship with all life on Earth is not only solid science, in my view, it's also a soaring spiritual experience. So you're made from detritus (Exploded stars). Get over it...After all, what nobler thought can one cherish than that the universe lives within us all? I want to put on the table, not why 85% of the members of the National Academy of Sciences reject God, I want to know why 15% of the National Academy don't. God is an ever receding pocket of scientific ignorance." If we accept what he says then poof, the light of the gospel gets dimmer.

You may have grown up watching Bill Neigh the Science Guy on TV. He was quoted as saying that Creationism is not appropriate for children. Ken Ham the founder of Answers in Genesis challenged him to a debate and when the date and time were announced, tickets sold out in 2 minutes. When the debate occurred and Ken Ham was given the opportunity to answer he argued that the evolutionists and creationists agree on observational science. The difference though in his argument lay in the historical science. Both have the same data available. They have the same dinosaur skeletons, the same animals in nature, the same DNA to study, the same radioactive decay elements. Ham argued that the difference in interpretation of all that

data was not in science but was in ideology.

He argued that investigation of the past depends on a proper starting point. If I ask to have my property surveyed and the surveyor begins at the wrong starting point, the outcome will be wrong. There are only two starting points: you either begin with the authority of God's Word or you begin with man's ideas. If someone concludes that God does not exist then the natural beginning point must be in man himself. When it comes to how the universe came into existence, who is the authority – God or man? When it comes to science we have allowed the light of the authority of God's Word to become dim and many churches and pulpits have bought into the naturalistic view of science as truth. When that happens the authority of God's Word and the gospel becomes dim or hidden.

No wonder the moral compass in our nation is off. No wonder the world is indifferent to the gospel or they Christianity as similar in beliefs. Professor Jonathan Turley said "It's true that the Utah ruling (on some of the polygamy laws) is one of the latest examples of a national trend away from laws that impose a moral code...Our morality laws are falling, and we are a better nation for it." We have allowed our lamp to be hidden.

Jesus was saying that if we understand what He was teaching and believe it, then our lives should reflect it so that others see the difference. The gospel becomes a mirror by which it reveals our need of a Savior. It pierces and divides the soul. It challenges us, then it convicts us, and if we allow the conviction of God's Spirit from the Word of God to do its thing, then the Word will change us. The mirror then becomes a window through which we demonstrate to others that we are fundamentally different in character because of the transforming power of the gospel. There are a number of New Testament passage that point to Jesus being the light – to show us our need for salvation. As the light He proclaimed good news.

When we respond to the light then we become lights bearing testimony of the light.

John 1:1-5, 9

John 3:16-21

John 8:12

John 9:5

John 12 35-36, 46

Matthew 4:16-17

Matthew 5 14-16

John 1:6-7

John 5:35

Jesus exhorts us to consider in Matthew 5:14-16 that we are the light of the world. We are to be like a city that is built on a hill. He would be leaving this world, but leaving us behind to bear testimony of the light until He returned. How bright is your light today?

One of the things I enjoy about flying at night is in the landing. The city is all lit up. You can see car lights and house lights and street lights and business lights. Everything is lit up. You can't miss it. It's visible.

We are not to dim our light, we are to let it shine. Let it shine in the neighborhood. Let it shine at school. Let it shine in the grocery store or the factory or the office. We put a light in a room to dispel darkness. The light of the gospel must shine in the darkness of the world.to point them to Jesus. The Gospel must be purposeful.

II. THE GOSPEL MUST BE PLAIN – v. 17

In a word, Jesus gives a warning about hypocrisy. I like the simple wisdom of an old farmer who once said "Be who ya is, cuz if ya is who ya ain't then ya ain't who ya is."

In a nutshell, we need to be genuine when it comes to proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. We

need to be open and honest about the gospel. It needs to be plain.

Warren Wiersbe has written that “it is a serious thing to hear and understand the Word of God, because this puts on us the obligation to share that Word with others.”

Very plainly Jesus tells us we are a sower and a light bearer of the gospel.

I Thessalonians 1:5-8

I Corinthians 2:1-5

The gospel must be plain.

There should be no ambiguity.

There should be no concealment.

The Gospel should be verbally and visibly plain.

As we articulate the Gospel, our actions need to match.

Verse 17 gives a further explanation on verse 16.

The disciples were to go out and proclaim the gospel. That is our mandate as well. We don't need to be polished, but we do need to be plain.

The gospel we proclaim must be evident to others in how we live so that our message will have credibility. They must match.

My visit to a pharmacy many years ago bears repeating. As I went to pick up a prescription the pharmacist, who was bald had a pocket protector that read ‘ask me about Rogaine.’ Now as someone that also is follicly challenged why would I ask someone about a hair growth product that was also bald?

Would you listen to someone share the gospel whose life did not plainly exemplify what he was saying? The Gospel needs to be plain visibly and verbally.

Paul stressed on several occasions that he did not come into a city with enticing words to woo people. He came and plainly proclaimed the gospel so that

their salvation was not the result of being enticed with the smooth talk of a used car salesman, but that salvation would come from the plain gospel and powerful conviction of the Holy Spirit.

How plain is the gospel message you proclaim by your verbal and visible witness?

The Gospel must be purposeful.

The Gospel must be plain.

III. THE GOSPEL MUST BE PROGRESSIVE – v. 18

NLT – “So be sure to pay attention to what you hear. To those who are open to My teaching, more understanding will be given. But to those who are not listening, even what they think they have will be taken away from them.”

The Amplified concludes “...even what he thinks and guesses and supposes that he has will be taken away.”

Jesus calls the disciples to pay attention, to listen carefully. Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with admonition to take heed to God and to His Word. We are to give it earnest consideration with the idea that we obey it, do something with what we learn, apply it in some way. As Psalm 119:105 reminds God's Word lights our path and guides our way. In our passage we are urged to consider that the path we take is to follow the gospel of Jesus Christ; to understand that He is the only way through whom we have eternal life. We are to hear the gospel, believe and receive. Once that decision has been made then we continue on a daily journey of growing in godly character.

I had a history professor in college who was notorious for announcing the day before a test with about five minutes to go in the class that what he was about to cover in the closing moments of class would be a major section on the next day's exam. If

we wanted to do well on the test we needed to listen attentively, carefully to what he had to say. There is coming a final exam someday that will determine how well we listened to the gospel message.

That word listen or hear has two meanings. It means to hear the sound of and it can also mean to hear the meaning or message of. For example, I can be standing at a railroad crossing when a train approaches. Two things happen. First, the two bars lower to block traffic from crossing and the flashing lights and bells indicate that a train is approaching. The second thing that happens is the train blows its whistle. I hear the whistle make a noise, but I also hear the whistle which gives a warning.

We can hear the words of the gospel just like hearing the sound of the whistle, or we can hear the gospel as a warning that should result in action. Unfortunately, just like there are those who do not heed the warning sound of the train whistle and try to cross the tracks, so individuals do not heed the warning of the gospel. They are like the three types of soil.

Paul says in Romans 1 that they have plainly been given the knowledge of God, but because they refused it, even what they had was taken away, just like Bill Nye the science guy, unwilling to listen.

But for the person who has, more will be given. It's an interesting tense in the Greek and means to keep on having or keep on acquiring. There is a progression in spiritual growth where the more you learn about God, the more God reveals so that you learn more. But the emphasis isn't just in the accumulation of knowledge, it's in the application. The person does something with it. The Pharisees knew a lot about Scripture, but they were far from the truth of the gospel because they refused the truth that had been given to them in the Old Testament about the Messiah.

As we learn and grow, God's Spirit teaches us and

develops godly character in our lives consistent with what we are learning (John 14:26; Galatians 5:22-23).

Jesus gave the disciples two reasons they were to listen carefully. The first reason was for them. They were to listen carefully to what Jesus was teaching them because it would be of spiritual benefit to each of them as they listened and obeyed. It would help them grow godly. The second reason they were to listen carefully was for those they would be sharing the gospel with. They needed to listen well to pass on the good news to others. It's hard to go if you don't grow.

They were given the secrets of the kingdom of God not to possess, but to proclaim, after all it was good news, and why should we keep good news to ourselves. The world is hopelessly confused and dark and we have been given the light of the gospel to share.

I Peter 2:9 "But you are 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."

Chuck Swindoll gives some challenging words to ponder: "When you live in darkness, you not only have no ray of light, you don't even know where home is. That is the way it is for the majority in the world. Some folks are born, raised, and die in cultures that have never seen their first flashlight of hope. Imagine it! When the truth of that hits me, I find myself a little impatient with Christians who do nothing but shine lights for themselves. They even have what we might call flashlight parties where they just shine the light on each other. Lots of light! Too much light to be hoarded! Jesus says to shine for the world. Shine your light into the darkness; that's where it is really needed. Spend less time in your own little well-lighted all Christian world and more time there in the darkness."

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IV. THE GOSPEL MUST BE PRACTICAL

In closing I want to share five thoughts from Pastor Scott Distler on how to make our light practical so that we don't hide it.

L – Love People Passionately

Isn't that the reason God sent Jesus? John 3:16 and Romans 5:8 tell us that God loved us passionately and sent His Son to die for us so that we could have eternal life through believing in Him. In the same way we are to have a passionate love for the lost. It doesn't matter who they are or what they've done. Hey, we were once where they are.

I – Intercede for People Persistently

Do we regularly pray for the lost? We all know at least one person who needs Christ. Let's pray for them regularly. I'm inviting you to do two things this morning. The first is to take that 3x5 card out of your bulletin and on the side you haven't doodled on, I want you to write down the names of people you will persistently pray for to come to Christ and then put it on your bathroom mirror or use a magnet to hang on the refrigerator door or stick on the dashboard of your car and then pray for them. The second thing I invite you to do is to come up to this table and write their names on the paper. It's a public commitment that you will pray for them.

G – Go to People Purposefully

If you tend to go to the same restaurant to eat, ask for the same waitress. Frequent the same places and get to know the same people but then don't hide your light. Don't be a silo Christian. Yes, Jesus went to the synagogues, after all there were lost people there, but He also ate with publicans and prostitutes and pilferers. Just like Jesus we need to go out to seek and save the lost.

H – Help People Practically

For almost a year some of our ladies have been trying to reach out into the community with their AMEN (A mother's escape night) offering mothers a night of free babysitting.

Many of you will remember the bad ice storm we had last December that left a mess in the spring to clean up. My neighbor was out trying to clean it up when it was still caked with ice. A lot of it had fallen on our yard. I told him not to worry about it. We could clean it up in the spring when everything had melted. The spring thaw came and they were on vacation so I had a friend help me over a two day period clean it up and burn it before they got back.

Maybe your neighbor needs a ride to the doctor or some help painting the garage. There are a myriad of practical things that we can do to let the light of the gospel shine through.

T – Tell People Plainly

There comes a point when all our actions need to be put into words.

Romans 10:9-10 "How, then, can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

Sing it with me: "This little light of mine"

Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

I would suggest to you today that if your light isn't shining, God isn't being glorified. Let it shine!

We're writing a gospel, a chapter each day
 By the deeds that we do and the words that we say;
 Men read what we write whether faithless or true.
 Say, what is the Gospel according to you?