

16 “Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, in order that those who come in may see the light. 17 “For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. 18 “**Therefore take care how you listen;** for whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.”

19 And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. 20 And it was reported to Him, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.” 21 But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who **hear the word of God and do it.**”

Our culture finds the God of the Bible to be immoral. That's right. Because of our great learning and science we now sit in judgement on God. At least the God described in Holy scripture. Men keep re-creating god's in their own image that they like better, but the God of this book is declared immoral. I speak as if with the voice of the world.

On many levels. So many levels. First He claims to be the sovereign owner and judge of, well, everything. He actually claims to hold the keys to life and breath, of every man, woman, and child.

And from time to time He wipes out large swaths of men. For instance, the flood, killed everyone except 8 people that God spared. Then He commanded His nation Israel to kill pretty much everyone in the land that He gave to them. They failed, but never-the-less, that was His command.

And so it goes. So there's **that**. Then He makes males and females different and has a bunch of rules about **that** that we hate. Right down to the whole binary thing. It's immoral and unfair that He only made two categories, so we've set about to fix that.

Apparently He hates women, because He made them smaller and has a bunch of rules about them being subject to their husbands. Only one husband, for life. He says sex with any other person except the person of the opposite binary that you marry for life is an abomination.

Slavery! There's an embarrassment! He doesn't outlaw slavery. He just tells slaves to serve well. Be free if it's offered, but don't run away from it if it isn't. In fact the book teaches that we are all slaves to Him. Most in rebellion, but some re-purchased by His Son's blood.

Our culture says He's a child abuser, since He murdered His own Son. (on their behalf, but they reject that).

And then there's the whole problem of disasters and disease that He could do something about if He wanted to, but He doesn't. People perishing in disasters and weather and wars all over the place. If He was moral He'd put a stop to that.

Racial hatred. Why did God make different races, and why does He stand by and do nothing about entire people groups getting annihilated by other people groups. Ethnic cleansing. No end in sight. He did that. Why? And if He can fix it, why doesn't He??

So much wrong with the God of this book. Then you read Revelation and find out, we've actually got it easy compared to when He turns up the heat! One fourth of the population of the world perishes in one chapter, and later one third more. Don't know how good your math is, but according to my rapid mathematical calculating skills, that's half.

If that happens tomorrow, it's about 3 billion 800 million people who perish. And then an angel shows John something and he begins to write it down and the angel says, don't write it. It's too horrific. As if half the population wasn't. So many dead there's nobody left to bury them.

How about *that* God. How're you doing? Still want to believe this book? Still want to have a relationship with the God described in this book? Our culture not only rejects that God, they're beginning to get serious about segregating out of society anyone who accepts *that* God. Loves *that* God.

Religious freedom is fine, but not if it teaches the God of *this* book. We'll need to crush that fire. Eliminate that kind of religious liberty. That God is dangerous and immoral. He has to go.

God is judged, and anyone who would hold onto this book, *that* God, probably needs to go on a watch list at this point. Better keep an eye on those folks. They need to go in the same category as other dangerous radical types.

What have I said so far that isn't true? Have I overstated anything? OK, then, where in the world am I going with this, and what does it have to do with a nice story about lamps and lights shining in the darkness?

Well, in a nutshell, Jesus is going to teach that this book is in fact the light and that the literati, the folks in our culture who are in the know, are actually in the darkness.

And that's not all. Then He's going to teach that anyone who rejects the absolute authority over their lives of the Words of this book, isn't a christian at all. Won't be dwelling with Him in His Kingdom. In fact it gets even scarier. He says the good things they seemed to actually have will be taken from them and given to someone else. Pretty harsh, right?

Are you squirming a bit? Thinking maybe it might be a good idea to go see if the new preacher 3 blocks over is a little easier to listen to? Maybe not quite so narrow and limited.

Let's look at our verses this morning and see if perhaps I could have

gone someplace a little bit more comforting. A little less harsh.

16 “Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, in order that those who come in may see the light.

This is a metaphor. He's taking something obvious, something very easy for our minds eye to see, and ultimately, the obvious truth about the common objects will have a spiritual equivalent.

Like the soils that we just considered. They represent people who hear the word of God, and what the ultimate result of the word of God was. Different metaphor, same reality. Jesus is mixing His metaphors to proclaim the same truth. The Words of God have an effect . . . or not.

Remember? 4 soils. 3 ultimately fail. One does not fail, but produces like kind, and reproduces and reproduces and reproduces, many times over.

The 4 soils are about the Word of God. This book. The one I just described. And the current metaphor is also about this book. In the case of the four soils, how many people hear the words from this book?

All of them! Right, class? All of them hear the words from this book. How many that hear the book have a response that reproduces . . . this book? 3 soils represent people who don't bear fruit. One soil represents people who reproduce . . this book.

The moral of both the soils and the lamp illustration is in verse 18 and vs. 21. We'll get there. This is what both parables are about. Are you ready? *18 “Therefore take care how you listen; “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”*

All of the soils listened. They all heard the same words from this book.

But only one soil takes root and produces fruit. All kinds of reasons are given why the other 3 fail. But ultimately, only one of the groups of people within the larger group, who hear the words from this book, flourish. They flourish and reproduce . . . the book.

Jesus says, 18 ***“Therefore take care how you listen; hear the word of God and do it.”*** Whether you flourish and reproduce, and whether you are a shining lamp in the midst of darkness has everything to do with HOW you listen to the words of this book. Response. Obedience to the words.

Both parables, or metaphor's if you will, are about the same thing. What do you do with the words of this book. ALL of the words of this book. The ones you don't like so much, and the ones you do like.

16 “Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, in order that those who come in may see the light.

We used to sing in Sunday school the little song, this little light of mine, I'm gonna make it shine. This little light of mine, I'm gonna make it shine, make it shine, make it shine, make it shine.

It was meant to encourage us little ones to be different than the bad little kids. We were to be shining examples of what Jesus does with His little ones. We memorized the 10 commandments. We learned Ephesians 4:32; *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

But in digging a little deeper this morning, we have to ask, in this metaphor, who is it that lights the lamp?

“Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, in order that those

who come in may see the light

Ultimately, the person who lights the lamps is the same as the person in charge of the soils. It's God who quickens us from the dead. It's God who creates the good soil where the Words of God can thrive and flourish. And it's God who lights the lamp.

And the same effect works in both parables. The seed thrives and reproduces itself in God's good soil. And lamps that God lights produce light in the darkness. The evidence of regeneration is clearly and easily seen in both parables. Fruit and light.

But there is a slight difference. Fruit reproduces itself over and over. Light illuminates darkness. The Words of this book reproduce themselves over and over in the hearts of some of the hearers. And likewise, the words of this book expose darkness. Sin. It has that dual effect.

Both parables are about kingdom people who will eventually dwell with God in heaven. In the soils the kingdom people are evident because they reproduce much fruit. And in the lamp metaphor, kingdom people are the ones who shine brightly, illuminating the darkness by doing the words of the book.

17 "For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light.

Ultimately, everything comes under the scrutiny of the words of this book. Every deed, every thought will come under judgement by being compared to the words of this book.

The words of this book are the standard. We used to say, the gold standard. And in a similar way the value of things is compared to the value of gold which never changes.

This book is the anchor of unfailing truth. Everything else must be compared to what the words of this book, revealed by God, say in order to establish truth or falseness. Light or darkness.

Judgement day, lives will be compared to the light of the words of this book. But that's not what Jesus is saying here I think. Less ultimate. The idea here is that Christians are to live lives that illuminate darkness. We are to be so saturated with this book that our obedience to it illuminates for others the difference of light and darkness.

If you're saturated with this book and by the power of God's Spirit living in you, you're a living example of the words of this book, that light can't help but illuminate darkness.

Is the church doing that in our time? Can anyone tell any difference between the church and the world? Is there still light in darkness? Or have we covered up the glow with a closet. Hidden the light. Darkness hates illumination. Sin hates discovery.

Jesus is pretty black and white about it. He says when God lights a lamp, He sets it out so it illuminates the room. Obvious. What do we make of all the churches who put the words in a closet so as not to offend the darkness.

18 "Therefore take care how you listen;

This is the crux of the matter. What does it mean. Well, in the illustrations, the words tumble on all kinds of soil but only one produces fruit. People claim their lamps are lit, but there's no light. No fruit. No light. No Christian.

The bottom line is what you do with the words. Cause and effect. The words come; what is the effect. Take care how you listen is an

exhortation to listen in such a way that change comes. The words take root and grow. The words become a lamp, a light in the darkness.

Or the words have no effect. No change. No light. It's all about what the effect of the words is. Therefore, take care how you listen.

James, the author of the book that bears his name, has very much to say that builds on what Jesus says here. James chapter 1:

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Jesus says, be careful how you listen. Careful listeners are those who understand that the words have authority over their lives. The book is the standard. The book has authority.

Therefore, I need, with God's help, to become an obedient doer. An effectual doer. As opposed to the hearer who sees the image of himself compared to the words of the book and forgets and makes no change. The book has no authority over him.

That's the division point of people who belong to God, and people who do not. James gives us an example in the next verse. He says *26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.*

The world is full of people who claim to be christians. We could divide them into two groups. The ones who submit to the authority of the

words of this book. All of the words of the book. And the ones who have authority over this book.

What do I mean by that? One group says we have to rightly divide the words of this revealed truth and then we must obey the words. Those words have authority over our lives. What we do. What we do not do.

The other group stands in authority over the words. They are in control of the words, not submission to obey them. They decide which words are in and which words are out. They decide what is inspired and what is not inspired. They put the wisdom and knowledge of man as authority over the words. They keep the parts they sort of like. They reject and ignore the rest.

Pew research says the percentage of the world population that claims to be christian is roughly 1/3. Easy math. There's about 2400 people in Tonopah. So there's 800 christians even by Pew's worldwide percentages. But America being a christian nation, it should be double. But we'll go with the low number. 800. Where are they?

My preaching is bad, but it's not *THAT* bad. Where are all the people who think they're christians? 40%? 50%? 60% of the people of Tonopah would tell a census worker they are christians, but on any Sunday we get 3/4 of 1%.

James just said, if there's no change, no evidence, *this man's religion is worthless*. Worthless. Not my word, it's from the book. Worthless. 1600 christians in Tonopah Nevada that are not going to heaven. They are going to hell. That's what worthless means. Their religion is worthless. They are christians in name only.

for whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

I hope we are careful listeners this morning. Because I just read you some of the scariest words in the Bible. *even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.*”

James said the same thing. *If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but **deceives** his own heart*

People deceive themselves. Jesus says the person "thinks he has" something. James talks about **deceiving** your own heart.

Words that don't have effect, words that don't change your heart, are words that have no authority over you. You hear them. You forget them. No effect happens. They have no authority over you. Be careful how you listen. Be a listener who repents of evil and sin and comes to Jesus for cleansing and ownership.

Not much offends me out at work. Almost everything rolls off. But lately, the term; *have a come to Jesus moment* . . . I hear that term used in total derision and it disgusts me. Satan knows how to turn the most important thing in the world into a derisive throw away line.

OK, how does the little story about Jesus mother and His brothers fit here? Actually, it's an illustration of exactly everything we've just said. But you'll need a little background.

In Mark chapter 3 we learn that Jesus family thought He'd lost His mind and they were actually there to do an intervention. Sort of like Peter tried when Jesus told him Get behind Me Satan. God has His plan, but Peter has a better idea. Don't go to the cross Jesus. This can never happen. God forbid it.

No real difference in Mark 3:20, 21 *And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. 21 When His own people (His family) heard of this, they went out to take*

custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."

John tells us His half brothers didn't believe until later. At this moment they're trying to save Him from Himself. A conflict that when Peter tried it, we learn that the origins of that conflict are satanic.

His family is attempting to have authority over Him.

*19 And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. 20 And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You." 21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who **hear the word of God and do it.**"*

Be careful how you listen. Hear the word of God, and do it.

We want to be in a relationship with the Creator of the universe. We want to see God. We want to be with Jesus, clothed in garments white and clean. We want to be His brothers, sisters, mothers, family.

Blood doesn't do that. Jesus makes it clear. It's the people who are under the authority of the Words of this book, who hear it and do it, who are related to Jesus.

I hope you're understanding what I'm saying. I'm not teaching about some kind of works righteousness.

What this passage teaches is that Christians are those who have come out of this world, this darkness, they belong to Jesus, He dwells in their hearts, but the way we see that that has actually happened is that those folks who have that personal relationship with Him are the ones who are submitted to the authority of the words of this book.

Jesus told a parable that illustrates the idea taking away even what you

thought you possessed and giving it to another. It's in Matthew 25, the parable of the talents.

14“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. 15“And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. 16“Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17“In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18“But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master’s money. 19“Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20“And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents.’ 21“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.’ 22“The one also who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents.’ 23“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 24“And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25‘And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours.’ 26“But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no seed. 27‘Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28‘Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’ 29“For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30“And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness;

in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It's a long parable to read, but I want to submit to you that the talents, the money, the thing of value is the truth of God's words. The light in the darkness.

And the wicked slave buried it. Put it away from him. Did nothing with it. He was like, I've got my own stuff to do. I can't be burdened with investing your stuff for you. It's all about me, not you.

No fruit. No return for the Master. In fact the Master's very ownership and expectations are called into question. Why should you reap a profit from someone else's labors. *Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed.*

God, you're being unreasonable expecting fruit from your slaves. Who do you think you are?

Notice also, we can't produce anything. It was the original talents, the coins that reproduced themselves. The slaves are just the stewards of the investment. But if you bury the investment in the ground and go do your own stuff, there can be no return.

My heart's desire is that we would be people invested in this book. We should be having discussions about the book. Our focus should always be about the book. Because the life is all mixed up with the book. It gives life.