

All Welcome

Croeso i Bawb

With Ben

Luke 8:16-18

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## The Basket Case

God is speaking all the time. The issue is whether we are listening to him all the time. These verses follow on from the Parable of the Sower which is all about God speaking and are you hearing what he is saying to you. Jesus is speaking to everyone in this huge crowd; to each individual and to the whole

community although not everyone understood what he was saying. His disciples came to him afterwards and asked him what the parable meant. (v9) Some of the things God has to say can be quite complex and serious but the question is are you interested enough to want to know more and to ask. "Teach me your ways, O Lord" (Ps 86:7) It is the attitude of mind and heart. It is the attitude of a disciple and a pupil. Sometimes you just have to ask because that's how you learn and grow when you want to know the things of the kingdom and the things of God. There can be plenty of reason why you don't get it. The number one reason is because of the devil. The devil is the ultimate narcissist. It all has to be all about him. He cannot abide the idea that there is anything outside of himself that could command any of your affection or attention. He wants all your focus to be on him all the time. He will use every ploy to get you to listen to his voice rather than God's voice. Jesus says he appears as an angel of light. So subtle. He looks a bit like the truth, a bit like Jesus and the gospel but he is not the real thing.

People make such assumptions about what the will of God and the gospel are. We took a survey in a village where we were living. We asked, "Do you think you are going to Heaven?" Almost invariably the response was, "I hope so" When asked what the basis of their confidence was the reply would be, "If I am good enough." They had bits and pieces of a muddled and confused jargon so that there was no hope, no gospel and no salvation. The devil will try to make what you are hearing a reinforcement of your own assumptions so make sure what you are hearing is God. Are you hearing the gospel truth? I'd love to be able to tell you that if you believe the gospel everything will be fine but that is a lie. Life will continue to be hard. There will be tests, trials, heartbreak, tears, disappointments, frustrations, offenses, opposition. If you do not have a realistic point of view about that you will hear the gospel and think, 'If I did that, it will be difficult' and you will give up.

Another thing that could happen is that there is plenty of contention for your attention. It's not all bad stuff but if you are trying to fit God in around all your other priorities your relationship with God will get so thinned out along with everything else, that you will end up with a very wishy-washy form of Christianity that is lukewarm and powerless so that it isn't the gospel at all anymore. But if you hear and treasure his word above all else, if you put him first, you will be fruitful in the kingdom. The word of God will bear fruit in your life. You may feel there isn't much fruit but keep at it. Fruit takes time to grow, mature develop and be established. There is plenty of encouragement here to keep at it and you will bear good fruit.

So, as it says here, put your light on a lampstand. Give it the highest place of prominence. Make hearing the word of God the most important thing. Other things will find their place and purpose under the light that shines around under the lamp. Put God's word first! The alternative is to put it under your bed or a clay jar.

This sermon's title is 'The Basket Case' The word jar can be translated as any vessel. Some translations use bowl or a wicker basket. This is not the age of electric lights. If you put your little lamp with its open flame under a wicker basket or your bed it is like having your last fag in bed before you fall asleep. Too often that would happen while your cigarette was still alight. At one time the number one cause of domestic fires was from falling asleep with a burning cigarette in your hand and people died from smoking in bed. If you put the

word of God under a basket or kind of lampshade it will dilute or dampen down and soften the naked flame of the word of truth when the safest place for it is in the lampstand where it benefits everyone. If you don't your basket or bed will catch fire and it will reap destruction. God's word is his plan of salvation that saves you from destruction. Jesus is warning them (and us) for their good. We must give God's word the priority because your very soul and its eternal future depends on it. This is not a game or pass-time you can secretly hide away but when your house is on fire then everyone will know and be shocked because they thought you had your lamp on its stand. Not a happy day!

"Therefore consider carefully how you listen." (v18) The HOW is to listen seriously. Pay attention. Take notes. Make sure that behind those busy distracted lives of yours that God's word has the priority. It will save your soul.

Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them." Keep hearing. Keep building on what you are hearing. Develop your understanding, wisdom and insight. The best way to consolidate what you have learned is to put it into practise immediately. Do not deceive yourself by hearing and not doing the will of God. Do it! Whatever the teaching: praying, evangelising, fellowshiping, loving your neighbour, then do it: pray, evangelise, have fellowship, love your neighbour and more will come.

Jesus is saying that it is possible to be under a false impression of where you stand with God. "...even what they think they have will be taken from them." It is very dangerous to think that you have something when in fact you don't. One of the evidences of this is when you start putting your lamp under a basket. You slip your lamp under your bed. That is a presumptuous, foolish, playing with God, playing at church delusion. This is very serious.

You've got the point so we'll sing, "Trust and obey" God is speaking, you've heard it, do it. There is plenty of stuff that will try to stop you. By God's grace don't let it.

1. When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,  
What a glory He sheds on our way!  
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,  
And with all who will trust and obey.  
Refrain  
Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.  
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2. Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,  
But His smile quickly drives it away;  
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,  
Can abide while we trust and obey.
3. Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share,  
But our toil He doth richly repay;  
Not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross,  
But is blessed if we trust and obey.
4. But we never can prove the delights of His love  
Until all on the altar we lay;  
For the favour He shows, for the joy He bestows,  
Are for them who will trust and obey.
5. Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet,  
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;  
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;  
Never fear, only trust and obey.