

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 4:21-25

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Let's continue reading Mark 4:21-25.

Jesus used parables to explain the mystery of the kingdom of God: The kingdom of God has existed since creation and will continue to exist until the future eternity. However, in the new heaven and new earth, the kingdom of God will be fully and eternally manifested on earth. Before that, Satan, through human sin, usurped the earth created by God, becoming the ruler of this world, so that the whole world lay under the sway of the wicked one. The actual manifestation of the kingdom of God, in the Old Testament, existed only among the Israelites; and even that existence was not glorious, filled with weakness, failure, and betrayal, ultimately forcing the departure of God's glory from Jerusalem.

In the New Testament, God sent His only begotten Son to the earth, and His message was proclaimed as stated in Mark 1:15: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel!" Jesus came to earth and brought the kingdom of God with Him. This kingdom is a kingdom of life. His method of expanding the kingdom of God on earth was through preaching, casting out demons, and healing the sick; preaching was the primary purpose, while casting out demons and healing the sick were done in addition, to facilitate preaching more smoothly. Because of the enemy's interference, the scribes, Pharisees, and Herodians conspired to kill Jesus, forcing Him to speak of the kingdom of God only in parables to the crowds. And the mystery of the kingdom of God was only revealed to those who earnestly sought it, including Jesus' twelve disciples, to whom Jesus explicitly explained it.

Jesus then spoke the parable of the sower. In this parable, Jesus is the sower, and what He sows is the Word of life. The Word of life falls on four different types of soil, representing the condition of people's hearts. The seed is the same, but the condition of the heart determines whether the seed of life can take root, grow, and

bear fruit. Only when the seed falls on good ground, where people hear the Word, receive the Word, and obey the Word, will it bear fruit; the fruit produced may be thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold. When life grows and bears fruit, it will definitely bring forth a testimony of life, for John 1:4 tells us, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Life from God will surely shine forth, and the extent to which this light can shine depends on where this light is placed.

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?'"

The seed of life, when rooted, grown, and bearing fruit in people's hearts, can produce a life filled with light. This light comes from a lamp, and when the lamp is filled with oil, it can be lit to shine. Oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit, and what God speaks to us is spirit and life. Dear brothers and sisters, every day as we read the Word of the Lord, we are adding oil to our lamps. The lamp is a container, and only when the lamp is filled with oil can it continue to shine.

This passage isn't about the oil. In other words, having the lamp filled with oil is a prerequisite; a lamp filled with oil will definitely shine when lit. The focus of this passage is on where you place the lamp. This verse tells us there may be three different positions: whether you put it under a basket, under a bed, or on a lampstand? Have saints ever considered that these three different positions seem to correspond to the three scenarios mentioned in verse 20 when the seed falls on good soil and produces a crop, yielding 30, 60, or even 100 times what was sown? Let me try to explain; see if it makes sense.

One possible position is to put it under a basket. A basket, made of wood at that time, was a container for measuring grain, with a capacity of about two gallons or eight liters. Placing the lamp under a basket illuminates only the space under the basket. What does this mean? The basket represents the tools for livelihood, signifying our life on earth, especially the work we must do in our lives. After being saved, God doesn't immediately take people to heaven but leaves us on earth, where we still have needs and must work to sustain life, and this basket is our tool

for livelihood. This person has a basket (not worrying about life, as in the third type of soil, which grows among thorns and does not produce fruit). Here, the seed falls on good soil and yields a crop, thirty times what was sown. This means that, by relying on God's grace, he experiences God's protection, guidance, and provision in his livelihood, so his basket is filled with light, but only that.

In Genesis 3:19, after Adam's fall, when God came to judge, the judgment He gave to Adam was, "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread." This is the life humans must live under the principle of judgment after failing. Cain, the second generation of mankind, chose to toil, so he became a farmer. This person is better than Cain; he experiences God's provision and grace in his toil, yielding thirtyfold; he also has light, but unfortunately, this light only illuminates a basket.

We know that God's promise is greater than judgment. Abel, Cain's brother, lived by the principle of God's promise. He saw that although humanity had fallen, God killed a lamb, and even with the lamb's skin, people could be covered; he understood that God would cover people with the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, he became a shepherd. Unfortunately, this person couldn't live up to God's promise and enjoy the abundant grace God prepared; he put the lamp under a basket.

The second possible position is under a bed, and of course, the space under a bed is much larger than under a basket. You can calculate; if it's a queen-size bed, approximately six feet long and five feet wide, assuming a height of one foot, the volume under the bed is thirty cubic feet, equivalent to more than two hundred gallons, so its capacity is a hundred times that of a basket, illuminating a much larger space. What is a bed? A bed is where people rest after a busy day. He lives according to the environment God has given him, maximizing his abilities in the environment, allowing all his various gifts to develop. Therefore, when it's time to rest at night, there are no regrets, and he lies on the bed peacefully. He has oil and a lamp, but it only illuminates the space under the bed. Although the space is a hundred times larger than under a basket, he still hasn't surpassed his limitations; he has produced sixtyfold; he has done what he should within his limitations, perhaps he is satisfied,

but God is not satisfied. He has done his duty, but at most, only illuminates under his own bed.

God wants us to put the lamp on a lampstand; that's where the lamp should be, and it can light up the whole house. God wants to work in us, not only according to our natural abilities but even beyond our limitations. This means that we as individuals need to be broken by God and then filled by God so that we can produce a hundredfold.

The principle of producing a hundredfold is to put your lamp on a lampstand; the lampstand represents the church, meaning we should be fully engaged in church life. Our lives, work, and service are all for God's house. And our spiritual growth is also for better service in God's house. When we put the lamp on the lampstand, we can light up the whole house. Dear brothers and sisters, without the church, we cannot produce a hundredfold. Be willing to fully engage in church life, serving wholeheartedly among brothers and sisters. Then you can experience God's leading and His work in you, enabling you to surpass various limitations on yourself.

Verse 22: "For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light."

Life is hidden; it's something outsiders can't see. But after life grows and bears fruit, there are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. When people interact with you, they may feel something, but it may not be very conspicuous. When you place yourself in church life and put your lamp on a lampstand, the light shines. At this point, you can't hide; you can't conceal; it will definitely be revealed. Of course, putting your lamp under a basket only illuminates a basket; under a bed only illuminates a bed; but when you put it on a lampstand, it can illuminate the whole house. Dear brothers and sisters, we have received the seed of life, and under God's preservation, our hearts are good soil. Life can grow and bear fruit. We must have a good testimony in life, just as oil added to a lamp can produce light. This light not only illuminates our work, our lives, and our rest, but it also illuminates the family in the church, becoming a help to others. This cannot be hidden.

Verse 23: "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

In Mark 4:9, after Jesus finished the parable of the sower, He also ended with "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Verse 23 adds "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear," indicating the conclusion of the explanation of the previous parable. It also expresses the intention of the sower regarding the seed he sowed, which is to let the seed fall on good soil and produce a hundredfold. Life is internal, and with abundant life, there will definitely be a beautiful testimony in life. And this testimony, like putting a lamp on a lampstand, is to illuminate the whole house; it cannot be hidden. From the seed of life to becoming a shining light, this is an inevitable phenomenon after life grows; it happens naturally, not something we actively do. Here we see a person who initially hears the word, then receives the seed of life, grows in life, becomes a shining testimony, visible to others. The next step is for you to go out and preach, so that others can also hear this message of life.

Verse 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.'"

"The same measure you use will be measured to you." This exact same verse appears in Matthew 7:2. Although it's the same verse, when placed in different contexts, it can have different meanings, so interpreting the Bible requires looking at the surrounding context. For example, in Matthew 7:2, it talks about judgment, "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." That means as you judge others, so will others judge you.

But in Mark 4:24, using the same verse, it represents a completely different meaning. Here, it's not about judgment but about going out to preach. Because you have heard the Word, you can have life within you, you can grow, you can become a shining testimony for others to see. And now, you need to go out to supply, to preach, to tell others, to imitate Jesus Christ and become the sower. Remember

Jesus' sowing; He was very generous, sowing everywhere, by the roadside, on shallow soil, among rocks, and among thorns. God wants us to be generous sowers as well, meeting others' needs with our lives. And how you supply others, how you measure to others, will also be measured to you, but even more generously.

Dear brothers and sisters, spiritual matters are such that the more you share, the more you have. This is different from earthly matters, where the more you divide, the less you have. Therefore, people on earth are usually very stingy, unwilling to give more, because they think if they give to others, they'll have less for themselves. But the principle of God's provision is not like this. Everything we have comes from God's grace; God freely gives to us, and when we freely give, what you give, God will supply you with, and even more. In God's Word, in the revelation and experience of His Word, and in our testimony for God, it's the same. The more you give to others, the more you supply, the more God will give to you. Paul himself is the best example. In Acts 20:34-35, Paul testifies to the elders of Ephesus, "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Verse 25: "For to him who has, more will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

"To him who has," means you will continually use all you have. You're willing to supply, you're willing to serve, and the more you use your gifts, the more skilled you become, and God will continue to give you even more. And that's "to him who has, more will be given." But from him who does not have, is someone who withholds God's grace and refuses to use it to supply others. As a result, eventually, even what he originally had will be lost.

This is true for all spiritual things. In sharing God's Word, in supplying life, in serving, your gifts are the same. What you have, you continue to use; the more you use, the more abundant you become. But what you don't use, you refuse to use, and

eventually, even what little you have will be lost. Remember last year when we read about the construction of the golden lampstand in Exodus? In Exodus 26:33, it mentions that there were cups, knobs, and flowers on the branches of the golden lampstand. The cup signifies emptying yourself, pouring out, and when you empty yourself, God will come and fill you, making you more overflowing, more abundant. Through emptying and being filled, flowers will bloom on you, representing the glory of God shining through you. And the golden lampstand represents the church, it's made like this.

In today's passage, we see the sower going out to sow, not only to bear fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or even hundredfold in good soil but also for this abundant life to produce a beautiful testimony in life. And this testimony, like a lamp, shines forth, and this lamp is to be placed on a lampstand, becoming a bright testimony in the church. Not only that, but we also need to imitate Christ and go out to sow, generously sowing. The footsteps of those who preach the gospel are indeed beautiful. When we are willing to give, willing to share, God will abundantly give us various spiritual blessings and grace, and to him who has, even more will be given. This is God's promise to every church.

Let us pray together: Lord, bless the church where I am, filled with Your Word, filled with the supply of Your life, and make us all into lamps that can be placed on lampstands, able to illuminate the whole house, to become a beautiful testimony. Help us also to become sowers, to share Your grace everywhere. Bless the church where I am, I pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.