Responding to the Light
Luke 8:16-21
Sunday, November 2, 2025

Let's begin with a quiz. True or False: Daylight Savings Time was created to help farmers maximize daylight hours to get their farm chores done. Raise your hand if you believe that it's true. Raise your hand if you believe that it's false.

According to an article published in the Washington Post, farmers are not the ones to blame.[1] The farming origin story is a myth. In fact, farmers were some of the most vocal opponents to adopting Daylight Savings Time as a national standard. The time change would actually make their job harder. So if you're upset about the time change today, don't blame a farmer.

It's understandable that we get grumpy twice a year when we're required to "spring forward" or "fall back." In addition to disrupting our sleep schedule, this time of year we resist any further loss of daylight hours. Not to put salt in the wound, but today in Bemidji, we'll have 9 hours, 54 minutes, and 48 seconds of daylight. In just seven weeks, our daylight will be reduced to just 8 hours, 26 minutes, and 39 seconds. By then, 65% of our day will be in the dark!

Generally speaking, we prefer light over darkness. But that's not always the case. Speaking about himself as the light, Jesus famously said,

> "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed" (John 3:19-20, NIV).

Light is a metaphor that is used throughout Scripture to describe the way in which God reveals his ways, his will, and his word to his people. This is true of both the Old Testament scriptures as well as the New Testament. Light is a theme that features prominently in the four Gospels through the teaching and ministry of Jesus.

That is what we see when we come to our next passage in Luke's Gospel. Following the parable of the Sower that we considered last Sunday, beginning with verse 16 of Luke 8, Jesus switches from comparing his message with seeds that penetrate good soil, to a lamp on a stand that fills the room with light.

In one sense, we are building on the theme from last Sunday's text. Jesus's teaching in today's passage is still focused on how men and women receive God's word. We're not just talking about how we respond to Scripture itself, though that certainly is one aspect of it. I would argue that Jesus's primary concern has to do with how people respond to the message of the gospel, that which he refers to in Luke 8:1 as "the good news of the kingdom of God."

To be clear, responding to the good news of the kingdom of God is more than the initial decision a believer makes to trust in Christ. Such a response to the gospel with saving faith begins the journey of discipleship, but that is only the starting point. As deeply devoted followers of Jesus, how we respond to the good news of the kingdom is a decision that must be made every day.

[1] https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2015/03/06/five-myths-about-daylight-saving-time/

Or to put it in terms of the word-picture Jesus uses in this passage, discipleship is a daily decision to respond to the light of Christ with faith and obedience.

The good news of the kingdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ is a light that illuminates the way of discipleship. As the Psalmist says in praise to God,

> "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psa. 119:105, NIV).

The question our text invites us to consider this morning is this: **How am I responding to the light I have been given?** A flashlight may illuminate the trail ahead, but the hiker must choose whether or not to move forward. Streetlamps may make the route to our destination easier to see, but the driver must decide whether or not to continue the trip. How one responds to the light they have been given is what ultimately matters.

We'll be looking at verses 16-21 of Luke 8 together, and I want to show you from this text that **there is a right way and a wrong way to respond to the light**.

Jesus continues to teach his disciples following his explanation of the Parable of the Sower, this time using a proverb about light to make his point. In verse 16, Jesus says,

> "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light."

Again, the concept of light is invoked frequently as a metaphor in Scripture. Even the picture of hiding one's lamp rather than allowing it to shine shows up in the teaching of Jesus on other occasions in other contexts. Here, Jesus's point is not that we should let our light shine so others may see and believe, as he commands in the Sermon on the Mount. His point in this passage is simply to invite his hearers to consider light's intended purpose. Light was meant to shine. It makes no sense for a lamp to be hidden.

Unlike the previous parable, Jesus's proverbial statement in verse 16 doesn't require us to ask who is the one who lights the lamp in order to interpret his teaching. His point is simply that covering a lamp or obscuring its light is absurd behavior. Not allowing light to do what it was created to do benefits no one. Hiding the light is not only foolish, it's also dangerous.

You've likely heard someone use the phrase "an embarrassment of riches" in reference to having numerous good options of something to choose from. Select any aisle in the grocery store and you'll see this principle illustrated. The same can be said of the wealth of resources and opportunities we have for discipleship and spiritual growth as American Christians.

My guess is that most of us own more than one copy of the Bible. Those Bibles are likely complete, containing both the Old and New Testaments, and are in English. Whether you're a reader or not, you probably own or have access to more Christian books and literature than many believers globally. You probably didn't have any concern this morning that someone might prevent you from coming to church or accessing the livestream. Flip through your bulletin, and you'll see numerous opportunities for weekly discipleship growth.

My point is that our problem isn't lack of access to the light of God's word. Too often, it's a lack of interest. To change the metaphor, it's like having a fully stocked pantry and no appetite for any of what's there. Parents, has your kid ever opened the fridge right after you've returned from the store and declared, "There's nothing to eat!"

The solution isn't to buy more Bibles, build a bigger library of Christian books, or attend more Bible studies. We don't need more content; we need more intent. Discipleship is a daily decision to respond to the light of Christ with faith and obedience.

But Jesus is addressing more than just an apathetic approach to discipleship. The foolish behavior illustrated in verse 16 is that of a person who lights a lamp and chooses to hide it. The one who covers the lamp doesn't do so accidentally, or even neglectfully, but he does so intentionally.

The Apostle Paul speaks about our sinful tendency to want to hide the light we've been given in Romans 1.

> "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom. 1:18-21, NIV).

While such rebellious behavior is certainly true of the nonbelieving world, the urge to "suppress the truth," or as Jesus put it, to hide the light, resides within all of us.

The urge to suppress the truth is there when we justify actions we know to be wrong. It's there when we actively ignore the Spirit's conviction at work. We suppress the truth when we discount the importance of time with the Lord, or the necessity of gathering together for worship on a Sunday morning. What then are some of the foolish ways you've tried to suppress the truth of God's word or hide the light of the good news of the kingdom?

There is a right way and a wrong way to respond to the light. **The wrong way is to foolishly try and hide the light that you've been given.**

Jesus goes on in the next verse to give a reason why hiding the light is such a foolish idea. In verse 17, Jesus says,

> "For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open."

Our foolish attempts at hiding from God or hiding the light of his word goes all the way back to the first two humans on the planet. After Adam and Eve deliberately chose to rebel against God's explicit commands, the first couple attempted to cover up their sin.

> "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid" (Gen. 3:7-10, NIV).

We might chuckle at their foolish attempt to play hide and go seek with an all-knowing, all-seeing God, but again, you and I have done the same. The sobering reality is that even if we think we've gotten away with something by hiding the lamp under a jar, ultimately everything hidden will be brought to light. What happens in the dark will not remain in the dark. The light of God's word and the good news of his kingdom not only reveals the truth, it also exposes unrighteousness and what is false.

It is important that we not only hear Jesus's words, but we also hear his tone. This is a word of warning. Like any good doctor, Jesus our Great Physician not only offers us healing and restoration, but he also warns us about that which is making us sick and ultimately killing us.

There is a right way and a wrong way to respond to the light. The wrong way is to foolishly try and hide the light that you've been given. The right way to respond to the light we're given is what Jesus emphasizes next. In verse 18, Jesus says,

> **"Consider carefully how you listen."**

It's interesting that Jesus now moves from a visual metaphor, that of light, to receiving the message of the kingdom audibly by hearing the word. As Pastor Shane said last Sunday, Jesus invites those with ears to hear to take care how they hear (cf. 8:8). The key word in Jesus's command is the word *how*. "Consider carefully," Jesus says, "*how* you listen," or *how* you hear.

To return for a moment to last Sunday's Parable of the Sower, how did those represented by the four soils each respond to the good news of the kingdom? What did the fruitfulness–or lack thereof–show about how each one listened and received God's word?

Jesus's statement is more than, "Consider carefully *what* you're listening to." His emphasis is on more than just the quality of the content. Jesus said, "Consider carefully *how* you listen." Upon receiving the light, upon hearing God's word, upon listening to the message of the kingdom, what happens next? How is what you're hearing shaping your values, your theology, and your priorities? How is the sermon you're hearing, the Bible study you're attending, or the book you're reading moving you further down the path of discipleship?

In other words, even if your week is filled with spiritual activity, is any of it having a real impact on your life? Are you being transformed as a disciple of Jesus Christ? How can you tell?

Jesus has more to say about responding to the light in verse 18. We are to, "consider carefully how [we] listen." Why? Because,

> "Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them."

Here we have both a promise and a warning. What does Jesus promise his hearers? He says,

> "Whoever has will be given more."

More of what? More Bible knowledge? More spiritual insight? More biblical wisdom? Maybe. Those things may be true. Carefully considering how we listen to God's word will yield these results. But I think Jesus was saying more than this. I think Jesus was promising those with ears to hear more of himself.

In John 17:3, Jesus said,

> "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

Similarly, the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:8-9,

> "But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ."

The light of the gospel, which is the good news of the kingdom of God, illuminates not only the path of discipleship, but it also shows us more of Jesus and draws us into a deeper relationship with him.

Now listen to Jesus's warning in verse 18. Jesus says,

> "Whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them."

Whoever does not have ears to hear, whoever does not consider carefully how they listen to what God's word says to them is in danger of losing what little light they have.

There's an old Graham Kendrick song based on that passage in Philippians 3 where the chorus goes,

> "*Knowing you, Jesus. Knowing you. There is no greater thing.*"

I hope you're convinced that there is no greater thing than knowing Jesus. But there is no greater tragedy than confusing proximity to Jesus with knowing Jesus personally. Proximity to

Jesus is easy. Proximity to Jesus is rarely costly. Proximity to Jesus can look like those in the previous parable "who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root," or those who. "believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away" (8:13-14). Churches, Bible studies, youth groups, and ministries are filled with people in proximity to Jesus but who don't truly know him personally.

Take care that you don't confuse proximity to Jesus with knowing him personally.

Look at the very next account that Luke records in his Gospel. Picking it up in verse 19, we read,

> "Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice" (8:19-21).

Large crowds of people continued to follow Jesus wherever he went. On this occasion, the crowd surrounding Jesus made it impossible for even Jesus's own mother and brothers to get near him. Someone in the crowd alerted Jesus to the fact that his mother and brothers were waiting outside to see him. We might expect Jesus to pause his teaching and grant his immediate family members a few minutes with him.

But as the Lord often does in the Gospels, this episode quickly became a living illustration of the very principle Jesus had been teaching. "My true family," Jesus says, "are those who hear God's word and put it into practice. You truly belong to me, and I to you if you respond the right way to the good news of God's kingdom that I preach."

Dozens, maybe even hundreds of people were in proximity to Jesus. Many may have identified as his followers. But those who considered carefully how they listened to his teaching, those who saw the light of the gospel and did not hide it, but responded rightly to it with repentance and faith, those who heard God's word and put it into practice, they were the ones who knew Jesus personally.

Discipleship is a daily decision to respond to the light of Christ with faith and obedience.

How are you responding to the light you have been given?

Let's pray.