

The Parable of the Lamp Under a Basket

Here's a **Full Breakdown** of:

● **Mark 4:21–25** and ● **Luke 8:16–18** **The Parable of the Lamp Under a Basket**

◆ TEXT COMPARISON CHART

Element	● Mark 4:21–25	● Luke 8:16–18
Context	Following the Parable of the Sower (Mk 4:1–20)	Also follows the Parable of the Sower (Lk 8:4–15)
Opening Question	“Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed?”	“No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed”
Key Phrase	“For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest...”	“Nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest...”
Command	“Pay attention to what you hear...”	“Take care then how you hear...”
Measure Principle	“With the measure you use, it will be measured to you...”	Omitted
Added/Removed Principle	“...more will be added to you... the one who has...”	Similar phrasing: “...to the one who has, more will be given”
Purpose of Parable	Encourages careful hearing and responsiveness	Stresses visibility and responsibility with what is heard



CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE



Narrative Flow

This parable directly follows the **Parable of the Sower** in both Gospels. After Jesus describes how the word is received differently depending on the condition of the heart, He adds this short parable to emphasize the **purpose of revelation** — not to hide truth, but to **illuminate** it.



Literary Structure

This is a **wisdom saying**, using common imagery from daily life (lamps, jars, baskets, measuring tools) to illustrate spiritual truths.



CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Element	Explanation
Oil Lamps	Small clay lamps were lit with a wick and olive oil. They were essential for indoor light at night and placed on lampstands to illuminate rooms.
Baskets and Beds	A <i>basket</i> (Greek: modios) was a grain-measuring container; placing a lamp under one would snuff out the flame or render it useless. A bed (klinē) was a low platform — putting a lamp under it was both dangerous and foolish.
Measurement Idiom	"With the measure you use..." was a proverbial Jewish saying about fairness, reciprocity, and spiritual receptivity (see also Mt 7:2).

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GREEK WORD STUDY

Greek Word	Translation	Meaning
λύχνος (lychnos)	Lamp	A small portable oil lamp
μόδιος (modios)	Basket / measuring bowl	A dry measure (about 9 liters)
ἀποκαλυφθῇ (apokalyphthē)	"be revealed"	Root of the word "apocalypse," meaning to unveil
μετρέω (metreō)	"measure"	Used both literally and figuratively for judgment, fairness, and expectation
προσέχετε (prosechete)	"Pay attention" or "Beware"	A strong imperative urging spiritual attentiveness



THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Theme	Explanation
Revelation is meant to be seen	Jesus' teachings are not esoteric secrets but are meant to illuminate hearts — like a lamp that gives light.
Disciples are bearers of light	Just as lamps are placed high for maximum effect, disciples should publicly live out and share the message they've received.
Responsibility in receiving truth	Those who receive truth and respond will receive more. Those who reject or ignore it will lose what little understanding they have.
Accountability of hearing	The way one hears and responds to Jesus determines their spiritual fruitfulness (connects to the Sower parable).



CONNECTION TO OTHER PASSAGES

Passage	Connection
Matthew 5:14–16	Also uses lamp imagery: "You are the light of the world... Let your light shine."
Luke 11:33–36	Jesus again speaks of lamps and eyes being the lamp of the body.
John 3:19–21	Emphasizes that light has come into the world, but some love darkness rather than light.
Isaiah 42:6, 49:6	Prophecies that the Servant of the LORD would be a light to the nations — fulfilled in Jesus and extended to His disciples.

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SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION

Symbol	Represents
Lamp	The revelation of God , especially the word of Christ and the truth about the kingdom
Basket/Bed	Obstacles that suppress or obscure the light (fear, secrecy, shame, disobedience)
Lampstand	A visible, elevated position — a life lived openly, without hypocrisy
Measuring	The standard of reception we use to accept or reject truth — with consequences for growth or loss



REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

- 💡 **Am I hiding the light I've received?** Are fear, pride, or complacency keeping me from sharing what I know about Christ?
- 👂 **How am I listening?** Am I attentive, humble, and responsive to God's Word?
- 📈 **What measure am I using?** Am I giving generously — of time, faith, and obedience — so that I may receive more insight and blessing?
- 🔄 **Do I expect reciprocity from God?** Jesus suggests that spiritual openness **multiplies**, but spiritual apathy **diminishes**.



SUMMARY

The Parable of the Lamp Under a Basket reinforces the message of the Sower: **revelation must lead to response**. Just as good soil receives seed and bears fruit, those who receive the word must **shine** — not hide — and **hear with attention**, lest even what they think they have be lost.



"With the measure you use it will be measured to you — and even more will be added to you."



"Take care, then, how you hear."