

Beyond These Walls: Use It or Lose It

Mark 4:21-25

Welcome to Mothers' Day at Chapel Hill! I pretty certain that nearly every one of you had a mother. So whether you ARE a mom.... are celebrating a mom...or remembering a mom...we're glad to share this day with you!

And the big news in the world of mothering comes from Britain: the birth of Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor, son of Prince Harry and Meghan. Apparently, though, this pregnancy violated protocol in several ways. Meghan's maternity outfits were insufficiently modest; she painted her toenails black; they kept their birthing plan private; and perhaps most horrifying of all, they are considering hiring an American nanny! Apparently, for those who care, this has been a very exciting pregnancy.

We are in the midst of an exciting pregnancy of our own. Chapel Hill is about to give birth...to a new, fresh, baby church. Chapel Hill Port Orchard. You read in your folder about our Beyond These Walls vision. Well...this new church is a HUGE part of that vision. Last week we learned about the sower who cast his seed lavishly, generously across his land...in hope that God would bring a great harvest. Chapel Hill Port Orchard is OUR attempt to cast our seed broadly and generously. We are sending great people to this new church and we are committing \$250,000 over the next four years because we believe God wants us to spread the gospel-seed a little farther north of us.

That's a huge commitment...but it is at the heart of our Beyond These Walls Vision. So... we'd better pay close attention to the rest of what Jesus has to say. This evening/morning we pick up where we left off last week. And Jesus is about to introduce a really important principle: Use it or Lose it!

And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

OK... Jesus throws us a curve ball. For just a moment, he changes gear and uses a different image to describe the word. What is it? Light. Put a pin in that...we'll come back in a moment. Then...he returns to the seed image. And this time...he's talking about the harvest. Earlier, the sower was planting the seed. NOW...the seed has come to harvest. And he's asking: how much of that harvest... how much of that blessing... do you want to have? Because here's the deal: I don't hand out samples. I don't dole it out with toothpicks. I only deal in Costco portions.

Didn't see that in there? Listen again: "...with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

Did you hear that? You can come to Jesus and say, “Lord, I want your harvest in my life...I want your blessing. Will you do this for me?” So...what kind of vessel do you bring to him? Or this. THIS is what he wants you to bring. He says, “Bring a jug; bring a barrel. I will fill it up...to overflowing. If you ask me for a lot of me...I will give you more and more of myself.”

But here’s where it gets scary. If we want only this much of Jesus...just a little taste...just enough to be a little religious...you might not even be able to keep that! “...and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.” Jesus doesn’t give taste tests. He wants to pour himself into our lives...recklessly... extravagantly... lavishly.

In other words, if you want MORE of Jesus...MORE of what he has to offer...then use up what he has given you. Go ahead and try; it’s impossible. You can’t hoard the blessings of Jesus. It’s like Manna in the wilderness; it rots if you store it. The only way to get more of Jesus is to try and use up what he’s given you. When it comes to our spiritual lives... the blessings we receive and pour back out...the principle is “use it or lose it!”

A few years ago. I blew out my knee playing on the church softball team. The doc took a graft from my hamstring and rebuilt it. For months, I was limited on how much I could use my right leg. And I watched my muscles shrivel up. You lose as much as 5 percent of your muscle mass for every day you are not exercising! After three months, I didn’t even want to stand in front of a mirror. It looked like I had a log on one side and a twig on the other. Use it or lose it!

Jesus says that the gift of the gospel...when his life is sown into your life...is not something to be hoarded or saved. It is meant to be used! To be spent! To be shared! Which is what I think that whole lamp thing is about! Remember that part of the parable. What is the point of having light if it doesn’t shine?

Remember that shed I talked about last week...the one I locked myself into? The one without electricity? Well... I installed a battery powered motion-sensor light. Actually, there are two sides to the shed. Cyndi had already installed one on the other side on the ceiling. For reasons I cannot recall, although it seemed to make sense at the time... I decided to install my light on the wall. Stupid! The light shoots down on the floor; when I stand in the shed, it casts a huge shadow. So...I had to use the “W” word with Cyndi. What is the “W” word, guys? “Wrrr...wrrr...wrrrong. I was WRONG. You were right; I was wrong!” That’s always fun for a man...especially when it comes to tools.

Jesus says, “Why would you light a lamp and put it so low...under a bed...under a basket...on the wall of your shed... that its light does no good? If you’re going to light a lamp...let it shine!” And you realize he’s talking about the Word again. Why...if you are given the word...if you have been given this incredible gift of the gospel of Jesus that heals and forgives and transforms and produces a great harvest...why would you hide it? Why wouldn’t you raise it up for all to see?

The word...the gospel...the good news...the seed...the light...that we have received is intended to be shared! Poured out! Raised high! It is not meant to be hoarded or saved. Jesus wants us to receive his blessing in abundance! The more we have...the more we use; the more we share, the more he pours into us! And apparently...if we don’t share...don’t give away...don’t use it...don’t broadcast it...even what we have might be lost. Might be taken. Might shrivel up.

You need to grapple with what that means for you personally. Do you want just a little bit of Jesus...a little bit of religion...a little bit of church? This much? Apparently, it doesn't come in this size. Jesus doesn't want to barely save you...barely bless you...barely use you. He wants to pour his salvation and blessing and life and gifts into you. He wants to pour his Spirit into you. If you have just enough of Jesus...and are content with just enough...you might want to open your ears! Because Jesus says if you are stingy seed-hoarder, you might lose what little you have!

This applies to churches too! It was part of what drove us to launch Beyond These Walls. There is a sense in which we have it all! Beautiful facilities, great staff, countless programs and ministries. It would be very easy to say, "That's enough! We'll just hoard what we have and ration it out and we can go on indefinitely." And the Lord said, NOT A CHANCE!" He called us to give ourselves away as we had never done before.

ONE of the ways we are doing that...is by planting this new church. In Port Orchard. We'd never done it before. Never even wanted to do it before. We had a big building and big programs that required lots of people and lots of money. It would be crazy to send away some of our people and some of money...wouldn't it? But the more we prayed, the more we realized this was EXACTLY what we needed. A risky, extravagant casting of our seed. We need to give ourselves away....to shine more brightly...to pour ourselves out and trust that God would refill what is made empty.

And so...Chapel Hill Port Orchard is OUR attempt to receive...and pour out...with THIS instead of THIS. To trust God by believing that he will replenish what we choose not to hoard. As you know, Pastor Megan is leading the team in Port Orchard...we are pouring her out of here and into there. But it's a two-person team and I thought you might enjoy hearing from the other half. Pastor Larry.