



VISION YOUTH DEVOTIONAL

Term 2, 2020

Volume 4



Day 1 - Are you hiding your light?

Read: Mark 4:21; Matthew 5:13-15

When we moved out of the old church building recently, most of the furniture, equipment, office supplies, and everything else you could think of, went into storage at the new building. A few weeks ago I needed to find one of the youth lamps to use in the live-stream room, and so I ventured into the dark store room to find where I thought it might be. Sure enough, it was there, hiding away in the darkness, which of course, is not what a lamp is made to do.

In the passages you've read today, Jesus uses an everyday life illustration to reveal a spiritual truth - that as followers of Jesus, we are not called to hide away the light of Christ, but rather shine brightly for His glory!

If Jesus warned against the futility of lighting a lamp only to hide it away, it must be because perhaps there is a tendency for us to do that in our lives of faith. Perhaps it's because there are times when we want to 'fit in' or 'look cool' and we might be worried that 'shining our light' for Jesus will mean we might get teased or won't be liked or we might have to change and grow.

What does it look like to hide away your light? It looks like staying quiet when we should speak up for justice, truth or righteousness. It looks like going along with the crowd just so we can fit in or be popular (even when we know the thing the crowd may be doing is wrong). It looks like allowing sin to take hold in our lives and dim the light. It looks like becoming self-focused and not looking to the needs of others.

Are you hiding your light? Or are you shining for Jesus?

Lord, forgive me for the times I've hidden your light away. Where I've sought to fit in rather than shine for you. I ask for your help to shine brightly! Amen

Day 2 - Shine!

Read: Matthew 5:13-15

I've found it frustrating when, on more than one occasion, I've purchased a lamp only to unpack it and realise that the light bulb is sold separately, meaning I have a lamp without light! A lamp without light is not much good though is it? The purpose of a lamp is not to simply be an ornament. Similarly, the purpose of a lamp is not to be hidden away - you wouldn't hide a nice lamp in the cupboard and expect to light up the room! The purpose of a lamp is to shine!

Our purpose, as followers of Jesus, is to shine brightly for His glory - pointing others to Jesus in the way we live, speak and do life. Just as a lamp needs to be plugged into the power source to produce light, so we need to be plugged into the true power source - Jesus! Only then are we truly able to reflect His light and shine.

Our faith is meant to be seen. It's meant to be on display! If people look at our lives they should see and notice something different - not in a 'we're better than you' kind of way, but in a 'my life has been touched and changed by the love and grace of God and I'm just seeking to live that out' kind of way!

Jesus said 'you are the light of the world'. That's pretty amazing if you think about it - it means we are carriers of His light, we are reflectors of His light to the world around us. The question is - in the way you speak, the way you live, the way you treat others, the way you honour your parents, in who you are in your friendship groups - are you shining for Jesus?

There is a world that desperately needs to see the light of Jesus - to see and know His love, mercy, grace and salvation. It only takes a bit of light to light up the darkness...so wherever God has placed you - SHINE!

Lord Jesus, may my life reflect you and point others towards you. In the way that I live, speak and treat others may I shine brightly for your glory. Amen

Day 3 - What to do in the midst of a storm

Read: Mark 4:35-41; Psalm 46

Are you someone who likes storms? The thunder, the lightning, the heavy rain? I like them - and whilst I'm definitely not a 'storm chaser', there is a sense of awe and wonder for me when I see the dark clouds rolling in, the power of the wind, the sound of the thunder, the amazing patterns of lightning filling the sky. The storms of life however, can be less enjoyable, especially if we find ourselves in the middle of one!

Have you ever found yourself in the midst of a storm? I'm talking about a storm that you may face in life - a storm of opposition, of going through a difficult season, facing disappointment, dealing with discouragement, perhaps circumstances happening to you that are out of your control. How do we navigate these storms successfully in life, so that we come through them stronger, with character, and with our faith unshaken?

I think we can find a few keys in this passage. First of all, follow Jesus' example. I'm always amused by the fact Jesus is just asleep in this story! The disciples are facing the biggest storm they'd seen on the water and here Jesus is, sleeping! I think it shows something of Jesus' heart posture - one of peace and one of trust in His Father. He modelled perfectly the peace that comes when we know that 'God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in time of trouble' (Psalm 46:1). When the storm arose, Jesus could sleep peacefully because He lived in surrender to, and trust in, His Father.

Secondly, we can turn to Jesus and ask for His help. We can learn from the disciples however, and turn to Him with faith, rather than with fear.

Day 3 - What to do in the midst of a storm

Finally, we can shift our perspective of God - remembering that He is indeed God and Lord of all! More on that tomorrow though :-)

In John 16:33 Jesus says that 'in this world we will have trouble'. Wow, thanks Jesus for those encouraging words! In this world we will face storms, we will go through difficult seasons. But He goes on to bring good news - He tells us to 'take heart' for He has 'overcome the world'. If you are in the midst of a storm right now, let me encourage you to take heart, to turn to Jesus in faith and ask for His help, and remember that you can 'be still and know that He is God' in the midst of whatever you are facing.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you are the One whom the wind and waves obey. Thank you that you are with me in the midst of the storms of life. Jesus, I turn to you with faith and trust today and ask for your help. I ask that I would know your peace in the midst of the things I am facing right now. Thank you that you are with me! Amen



Day 4 - The good kind of fear

Read: Mark 4:40-41; Job 38-39

What are the things that you fear in your life? There are all manner of things we can fear or be afraid of aren't there? One of my fears, which is slightly irrational I know, is the fear that when preaching I would take a sip of water and have some of it go down the wrong way resulting in a big coughing fit and spitting water all over those in the front 2 rows!

When we hear or think about 'fear' we think of it with negative connotations - that it is a bad thing. And certainly the wrong kind of fear is something we don't need to have in our lives - time and time again in the Bible we read the phrase 'fear not' or 'don't be afraid'. Did you know there is a good kind of fear though? It's the fear of the Lord - or we could say - living with reverence for, and in awe of, God.

In Mark 4:41 as Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples are amazed and it says they were 'filled with great fear'. The Greek word for 'fear' here is best translated as 'reverence'. It was a moment for the disciples of recognising the greatness of Jesus - that He was and is God!

The fear of God (living with reverence for God) drives out all other fears, because when we truly grab a hold of HIS greatness and respond in awe, all those other things seem a lot smaller in light of who He is. It's so important we live with right perspective, and having reverence for God (respect, honour, awe, recognising and submitting to HIS authority) enables us to do that.



Day 4 - The good kind of fear

Sometimes in order to regain right perspective and live with reverence for God, we need to be intentional about it. There are some things we can do to help in this area, including:

- look around at creation and all that God has made
- read His word and remember all the incredible things He's done
- remember what He has done for YOU in your life
- pray to Him with reverence and awe (not just view God as your personal butler!)
- praise Him for who He is

When we do these things we gain right perspective, we remind ourselves that He is Lord of all, and simply being in His presence causes us to be still and have peace - even if we are facing one of life's storms, or when we're feeling afraid about something.

Lord, help me to live my life with right perspective. Lord, would your perfect love cast out any fear that is in my life that is not of you. Help me to live my life with reverence for you. Amen



Day 5 - Breaker of Chains!

Read: Mark 5:1-20

In this passage we see Jesus completely transform this man's life. He goes from living among the tombs, the 'living among the dead', to proclaiming Jesus in multiple cities. Jesus powerfully and compassionately set this man free from demon-possession.

What do you need to be set free from in your life? Is there something that you struggle with over and over again? Maybe it's guilt over things you've done, fear, doubt about your worth or abilities, weight of expectation... whatever it is, we know that Jesus has victory over ALL of these things.

Jesus knows us and knows what we need. He is willing and able to set us free to live completely for Him. If there's something that you feel is keeping you captive or stuck, I encourage you to do a few things:

- Pray about it. Specifically and regularly come before God and present your requests and struggles to Him. We know that He hears our prayers and that when we pray, His peace that is beyond all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7)
- Talk to someone you trust (and ask them to pray for you as well!) It can be really helpful for us to talk through things that we are struggling with with people that we trust and who love and seek Jesus. It's really important to seek support so that you have people who are speaking the truth over you and who are praying for you.

Day 5 - Chain Breaker

- Get really stuck into God's word. The word of the Lord is SO powerful! If you fill your mind with Scripture, you're filling your mind with truth and power. Read it in the morning, in the evening, on the bus, listen to it when you're walking to and from school. Put memory verses in your locker, on your bathroom mirror, your bedroom door, your phone lock/backdrop screen... There are so many places you can put reminders to help yourself memorise scripture and bring it to mind during the day. These things can help us to proactively centre our thoughts on things that are 'true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy' (Philippians 4:4-8) And those are the things we want to be centring our thoughts upon!

Remember that Jesus has defeated the enemy and we do not need to live in fear or bondage!

Heavenly Father, I thank you that because of Jesus' death I do not need to live in fear or bondage. Father, I'm really struggling with _____ at the moment. Please bring your freedom in this area of my life. I trust you, you are good, and you are faithful. Thank you that you are willing and able to transform and set free. Please help me to see how you are working in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

