

Candle Light

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[0 : 0 0] i hope to begin this morning a little mini series on what we'll call shining lights different means and aspects of light that we'll read of in scripture of course and that can be applied to our situation and to our seeking to follow the lord so this will be as i say a mini series of shining lights of which the first today will be not surprisingly you'll have gathered already candle power candle light that we read in verse 8 of chapter 15 in luke that we read either what woman having 10 pieces of silver if she lose one piece doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently until she find it yeah excuse me the first thing we see in this brief parable that jesus uh teaches you it's just uh just two verses directly concerning the woman and her missing piece of uh piece of silver and the search for it and so on the first thing we see in this brief period is that the candle is not an end in itself what woman having 10 pieces of silver if she lose one piece doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it and once she had found it that is the missing piece of silver not the candle she called her friends and her neighbors together saying rejoice with me and i found the piece which i had lost the candle is not an end in itself it may be a great help it may be a great benefit but it is a means to an end now this is partly what um lucifer's mistake was we might say uh if we think of him uh uh created as a an angel of light and yet we read in isaiah 14 you know uh in verse 12 he said how art thou fallen from heaven o lucifer son of the morning how art thou cut down to the ground which did weaken the nations the name lucifer means light bearer one who was created as an angel of light and was still able to transform himself into the appearance of an angel of light but having been created with this splendor and majesty and yet yet yet he himself thought this is me in myself i am worthy i am great and so sought to be greater than god we bowed it had said in thy heart i will ascend into heaven i will exalt my throne above the stars of god i will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north i will ascend above the heights of the clouds i will be like the most high yet thou shall be brought down to hell to the sides of the pit now we'll look uh no doubt uh more at lucifer when we look at starlight which will be one one of our shining lights that we'll look at in in future of this series but if we think about that's his mistake is to believe that the the light bearing or that the power of bringing the light is an end in itself it's not an end in itself it's a means to an end the candle in this parable is necessary because something is lost that ought not to be lost and the owner is not content that it should remain lost she doesn't say oh well still got nine other pieces it's okay it doesn't matter no she's going searching for the one missing piece that's where the candle comes into play and also it is necessary it's a means to an end because of the comparative darkness in the home darkness in the sphere where the desired object has gone missing there is darkness in the home physical darkness of course which is why she can't find it why should people's houses would be a lot more simple in those days probably a one room house not a huge amount of furniture might be stuck in a corner under some of the dust of the floor or whatever there wouldn't be much in the way of carpeting there wouldn't be an awful lot of clutter in the way so it should be a more straightforward business finding missing coin but she's sweeping the whole house she's taking the candle she's looking everywhere for it because the house itself is dark there is darkness in the sphere where the object has gone missing now jesus tells us of course in john 3 we read at verse 19 this is the condemnation that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil for everyone that doeth evil hated the light neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved that he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in god there are plenty of people in this world who are content with the fact that they dwell in darkness that their very homes are spheres of darkness they are not bothered of what may be lost in terms of their relationship to the lord or in terms of something precious that they once had it's gone it doesn't matter because the darkness suits them this is part of the condemnation jesus said light is come

into the world but they'd rather not have the light because the light exposes everything that is wrong and rather than have what is wrong put right they'd rather just have the darkness and have the illusion that yeah it's okay it's no worse than anybody else and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil for everyone that doeth evil hateth the light neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved but he that doeth truth cometh to the light and his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in god darkness will never help us to find something which is missing darkness will never help you to find anything people talk about who wanted to find themselves and i i want to just sort of find who i am who i meant to be and where i meant to be going and it's like darkness the absence of the lord and his light will never help you find anything it will only help us to hide it it will certainly help you to lose it in the first place but it will never help you find it it will only help you lose it it will only help you hide it if it is intentional there is darkness in this woman's home of a physical kind so she brings the light of the candle there may be darkness in our own homes of a spiritual kind for which we need the light of christ and the light of christ that comes into our lives or if he plants his love in our heart it is not an end in itself it is a means to an end there is a greater end in view there is a greater end in view in the parable the end the object in view is to find the missing piece for men it's not simply to like the candle and say oh doesn't it look nice doesn't it look pretty look at how it lights up the house the candle is not an end in itself there is a means to an end there there's darkness and something is lost the second thing we should notice is that the candle although created for light has no light in and of itself and this is something we did that briefly with the children i could have sat the candle there on the table and just stared at it really hard and wanted it to ignite and it wouldn't do it it's not going to be able to do it itself although it is created for like everybody who makes candles and of course people used to make them buying a million in days when there wasn't electricity but everybody who makes candles makes them for the intention of being lit they are created for light even if you can say yes they're just ornamental candles but even ornamental candles are intended to be lit they are created for light but although the candle is created for light it has no light in and of itself but rather light must first be ignited you saw me strike the match not very successfully the first time you saw me strike the match i like the candle for the children there a few moments ago light must first be ignited from a completely separate external source and then applied to the candle which has not been designed or intended to give a sudden sparkly you know the right color infusion and explosion of light and then to fade away that candle which is designed for light although there's no light in itself is designed once lit to provide a small but steady ongoing light it has nothing in and of itself it cannot do it of itself you and i cannot light ourselves up we cannot make ourselves receive the light of christ you cannot compel heaven to give you that which is in heaven's gift to heaven's gift to give or to withhold we may be created for god and for his glory but we cannot compel the light god must give the light of his love into our hearts he must ignite it he must give it he must apply it we are just that empty piece of wax with a little wick in the air which if it is not lit will stay totally useless in a power countering darkness you've got the candle but it's not lit and sometimes i think well does that mean all of our lives are useless if they're not given to christ well they're not serving the purpose for which they are designed we are lit in the darkness and we may be the equivalent of a candle we're designed to be lit we're designed for light but we haven't done any light ourselves unless christ applies his light to us we are not fulfilling the purpose for which we are designed and we are not designed to be a spectacular firework we're not designed for two seconds of excitement like some things would in this world seem to be older and all sort of dazzling and they're all exciting and they're all brilliant for under a while you know sometimes of course you get to the end of the year and edinburgh and other places that have these spectacular firework displays at midnight on the first of january and they look pretty ooh and ah and say how brilliant it is but then by the time daylight dawns on new year's day everybody's busy sweeping up all the goblins and the denry and princess street will probably look like a bumsite and all the bits of fire won't have to be gathered it doesn't last it needs darkness to be spectacular but it doesn't last a candle on the other hand is designed once lit to provide a small little we looked at that also with a children a little light a small flame but steady ongoing light to keep burning if need be for hours on end as long as it is needed you have a power cut and you light all your candles and then the power comes back on well if you're sensible you'll wait a few minutes to see if it lasts when it comes back on but assuming it stays on and you put your candles out you don't keep them forever burning away while you've got loads of electricity and plenty of light you keep them for as long as you need it and then you put them out the candle burns as long as it is needed for hours of need be giving out the steady

unblinking tongue of flame and in its doing so what does it do it's gradually using up all its wax using up all the body of the candle itself if i had left that candle on the table lit went in front of the children there and we come back later in the afternoon it would still have been there but it would be much much smaller but using up all its wax

using up all the body of the candle itself burning down the wick burning up the wax using up and giving out eventually of course eventually using all of its light giving ability using up all its light giving ability because that's how a candle lives that's what it's designed to do until it flickers and dies if it was if it was designed for anything else then we all have sad or terrible but that's what it's for it's meant to burn as long as it's got strength as long as it's got a body as long as it's got its wax it's meant to burn all the way down if it uses up everything it has to give out the light then its purpose and design has been fulfilled and a candle that is burned all the way down to the wick we do not say oh what a waste we say rather well we've got some good things out of it it was used for what it was meant for it gave out light for as long as it was meant to it's done its work it's fulfilled its task that's what it was meant for now if we give a lifetime to the lord or as much of a lifetime as as he enables us to when he gives us his life then burning up for him is what we're meant to do burning down all the body of the wax burning up all the way giving out the light that's what we're intended for that is the purpose of why we are designed is to live for the lord and shine for the lord and eventually we will have used up everything that we have in this world eventually our body and breath and our heart's ability to keep beating will be spent in this world but what will it have been used for it will have been used for exactly what it was designed for it will have had a purpose it will have been worth living a candle will have been worth worth burning its purpose will have been fulfilled it is created all right but it has no light in itself unless that light is ignited by an external source and applied to it and unless the lord applies the light of his truth to our hearts although we are designed for it we haven't got any of it in ourselves but our purpose once we have it is to keep on burn to keep on giving out the light yes and whatever little heat it might give out that's what we're designed for and it is fulfilled if we do it right to the end also as we mentioned with the children of course a candle is for indoors it's only any use if it's protected by the walls and roof of a building take it outside it will blow out within seconds and of course ironically the darkness may be greater inside than it is outside perhaps the woman who lost her coin if she got out in the daylight and were able to take everything out in the daylight it would have been clearer and sometimes as you know when the sun's beginning to fade or go down you can be inside the house you look out and it looks pitch dark outside but you go outside it's not actually quite so bad there's still a wee bit of light and so on it can sometimes look worse when you're inside than it does actually is outside there is sometimes greater darkness inside the house than there is outside and ironically although that's true in a physical sense in the parable um contrasting indoors with outside you know um sadly it may also be true in a spiritual sense inside the shelter of the church of jesus christ is sometimes sometimes to be fun the greatest spiritual resistance and the hardest of hearts toward the graces of christ because if

we've heard it all since we were young and we've been exposed all the the sounds of the words and the truth and so on there's nothing new for it to say to us it still hasn't penetrated in our hearts and of course the words won't do that themselves there has to be the spirit of the lord he has to apply it to our our hearts he has to as it were indeed our hearts he has to has to to give us that grace of conversion and of his mercy we can't do it we can't ignite that light ourselves but sometimes the resistance is harder from within the church of jesus christ than it is sometimes for outsiders outsiders whose lives may have been wrecked by crime or addiction or vice and who have previously known nothing of the good news of the grace of god amongst these the gospel is often not always of course but often more openly listened to and responded to you know not unlike what jesus says to to the chief priests that we see in matthew 21 verse 31 and he says you know verily i said to you the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of god before you and that was the chief priests who lived and worked in and around the temple and they were surrounded by the things of god but their hearts were hard towards him says the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of god before you for john came unto you in the way of righteousness and you believed him not but the publicans and the harlots believed him and ye when you had seen it repentant not afterward that ye might believe him you see the lord knows that sometimes those who have never ever heard his truth when they hear it it's like it's fresh and it's new and exactly what they need sometimes outside of the walls there is more light than inside and sometimes in that spiritual sense there is greater darkness inside and greater resistance inside the church of jesus christ in the in the

spiritual sense than outside of that the shelter of the house ought to provide ideal conditions for the candle to illuminate what is in there but it is not always so and this is something we need to recognize that whilst the light of the candle is designed for inside sometimes even that light will not penetrate all the corners of the darkness and sometimes the darkness is deeper inside the walls than it is outside and sometimes likewise those who may have been exposed for years to the things of grace may be harder against it than those who are coming to it for the first time so a candle is for indoors yes and sometimes the darkness can be greater there also staying with the parable and the woman's searching of the house there will be many places where the light of the candle will be brought to where the missing silver piece is not to be found you know we do not read back there she looked at the candle as soon as she did oh there it is right away on the table i didn't see it of course i should have there is the search is over rather she does not like a candle sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it that means she has to go on and on looking in every nook and cranny in every possible place where it could be that means there are many places where she goes with the candle many places she takes the light of the candle where the silver piece is not to be found is that then a waste do we say what a waste of the light of the candle might go in this corner and that nook and cranny up that shelf and it wasn't there after all i mean if i'd only known exactly where it was i could have gone straight there

[20 : 17] with the candle that would have been so much better then i could blow out and then i wouldn't waste all that wax and all that burning and all that light and so do we say what a waste it wasn't there in that corner it wasn't under that table it wasn't up on that shelf it wasn't behind that particular piece of furniture after all do we say it's always no we rather is that not part of the search is is that part of the search for nothing well no because just as the purpose we think just the purpose of you know what's used as a parable elsewhere in the scripture the purpose of a vine is fruit you think of something like you know ezekiel chapter 15 when he talks about the the vine he says you know what what use is the vine is the wood any good for anything you think of a bunch of grapes and then when you picked off the grapes you look at the little twiggy bit of wood you're left with and you know you can't you can't make any furniture out of that you can't even really make kindling or anything out of it it's just useless as wood the vine is useless it's too twiggy it's too thin and spindly the only thing the vine is any good boy is bearing fruit and if it bears fruit then that's good and that's great and that's what it's meant to do so likewise we read in john 15 and verse 5 i am the vine he are the branches he that abideth in me and i in him the same way afford much fruit for without me you can do nothing and the verse 8 here is my father glorified that you bear much fruit so shall you be my disciples now does nobody says you know afterwards or ask ah yes but what gets done with the fruit afterwards i mean this this bunch of grapes got squashed under somebody's fruit this went into yeah was made into wine or this was just eating this fruit but oh that bit the waste of that bit was giving the soul so they didn't bother to eat it and they just got all wrinkled up like proof what a waste that would be is that going to be a problem for the vine is anybody going to say to the fire oh what a useless vine you are because you know that bunch of your grapes that got drawn under fruit okay that got used but this one just withered away because nobody ate it and that one goodness knows what happened to it is that the vine's problem no the vine is just meant to chow out the fruit the vine is meant to produce the fruit whatever gets done with the fruit afterwards that's somebody else's problem that's whoever picked it whoever used it whoever gave it away whatever the case may be that is not the vine's problem its job is just to bear fruit so likewise it's not the candle's problem if it goes here or there or to the shelf or behind the table or or in that corner and the silver piece isn't there the woman is not going to say what a useless candle you are come on i look here and the silver piece wasn't there i looked on the shelf the silver piece wasn't there i lifted that particular piece of furniture furniture or that cushion and my goodness the silver piece wasn't there either what a useless candle you are that's not the candle's problem the candle's purpose is simply to give light it's not the candle that lost the missing piece a candle's purpose is simply to give light nobody can criticize the candle at nine places out of ten where the woman seeks with it or shines it the silver piece is not found its purpose is just to give the light to make the search and recovery more possible that's its purpose to give out the light but of course and this is the thing we have to remember the parable is not about about ultimately the candle it's about the woman and her missing silver piece and its ultimate recovery and the joy this causes the candle is just the means to that recovery or part of it it is not an end in itself

it has been created it has been created to help accomplish something it's been created for a purpose to give light where there is darkness it's been created so that it can be lit so it can burn down all its wax it can use up all its resources it can shine but the parable is not about the candle it's about the woman it's about the missing silver piece it's about its ultimate recovery it's about the joy this causes and ultimately of course it's about the lord and he's seeking for lost selves the story of salvation the work of god's great grace is wonderful whether it's looking for the lost sheep or finding the silver the silver piece of a piece of a little screw missing and so on it's wonderful the story of god's great grace and if we are willing and prepared to do so you and i and each have a unique part to play in it but the story and the part we play and the calling itself is not about us the story is about christ we're invited not to bring christ into our life and so be all that you can be and so be the person that you should be so that you and i can be bigger and better and brighter and get the most out of life all these things will in fact happen but they will be side effects they will not be the main purpose the purpose in having christ in your life is to live for him to shine for him to be part of him and to glorify him and his name the story is about christ and it is about how he by his coming and by his death on the cross and his resurrection on the third day how he has restored to completeness what was broken and damaged and by its very incompleteness have produced a sense of shame now the silver piece in question people speculate about it a lot it might have been in coin form it might not have been you know when judas was painted 30 pieces of silver it wasn't just all different chunks and bits it was kind probably so this this quite possibly may have been coins it doesn't say it's kind of pieces of silver and the likelihood is in the cultural context that it was uh that which was part of our sort of uh wedding decoration of so many silver coins tens of a person a woman would have as part of a kind of headdress wedding headdress and they'd all be put on a string and they would be pierced and strung together and she will around her forehead like a sort of headdress there and as i could mention on previous occasions this the monetary value of these these silver coins that was hers it was hers to keep it didn't become her husband's property on her marriage it couldn't be sort of used as part of the family estate it belonged exclusively to her and to her alone and yet if on special occasions you know she would be dressed up and wearing this again you know and uh and this particular sort of uh embroidered uh this kind of uh uh beautification as it were over on a special occasion if you've got your special headdress and look oh there's a gap tooth bit there missing and we can see that there's the other nine there where's the other one then suddenly the shame of having a piece missing that draws more attention to itself this which is meant to be a a ceremonial sort of a beautiful beautifying uh a piece of jewelry as it were the gap tooth appearance of the the missing piece would be emphasizing what is missing rather than what may still be right

what might still be there nobody's going to see the woman wearing a nine silver coins say oh look what lovely nine silver coins they say what's the other one i think you might have ten there there's there's one missing it's like if somebody has a tooth missing at the front of the mouth and we smile and all you can look at all you can focus on is the gap is the missing tooth that's what you don't say oh a lovely set of pearly whites just one missing all the rest of there isn't that fantastic the very fact of the one missing emphasizes what is lost rather than causing people to dwell on ah but how much more is still there look at all the rest of it you know the gentleman was to come into church this morning saying with his jacket and his suit but there was a sleeve missing and one sleeve had been ripped off you wouldn't say oh lovely suit there trousers a waistcoat and a tie and a shirt it all really works okay there's a sleeve missing but never mind the rest of it's beautiful all you would see is change there's a guy in church this morning in a sleeve ripped off his jacket i believe that i've never seen anything like that before you wouldn't look at the rest of his suit you wouldn't see anything else you'd only see that the sleeve was missing or they came hobbling in with just one shoe on say well the rest of his outfit was fine but that shoe missing you probably wouldn't even notice the rest of his outfit to say it was all very smart it was beautifully pressed and so on just there's a guy in church this month with a shoe missing that's all you would see is that something was missing that should have been there and this fact of what is missing this incompleteness is the shame the embarrassment it is the shock the desperate need is to put right the thing that is no longer there the incompleteness is itself a source of shame a source of sorrow a source of you know that which cannot give any rest to the soul until it is put right the shepherd is not content say i've got 99 alone it doesn't really matter and the woman does not say i'm at night i'm over some of the pieces it doesn't really matter because they go after the one that is missing because that very incompleteness is part of the problem it is the problem itself and so likewise we who are created for fellowship with god we

who are intended to be as it were in communion with the lord in relationship with the lord when that relationship is broken when that gap is there in your life when that is missing you can tell yourself as much as you like oh but look at all the other things you know i'm like oh look at the house and a car and a job and a job and money and and all the relationships and so everything's fine and nice clothes and everything else in my life that's there but you know there's something missing and that gap tooth sense of emptiness that incompleteness doesn't just cause a sense of restlessness it causes a sense of embarrassment it causes a sense of shame you don't even know quite why there is this shame but there is this incompleteness which brings with it this sense of shame because that's what adam and eve felt in the garden they were naked before and they didn't know they were naked and they weren't bothered because they were innocent but once they had sinned once there was that separation between them and god what entered in shame entered in shame entered in shame entered in when sin and death came in and we were separated from god and that great big guff that is between us and god by our natural condition that separateness from god which we have inherited from adam and eve and their fallen condition and which we down through all the generations are born and conceived into this sin this separation from god brings this sense of restlessness of incompleteness this god-shaped blank in the human heart which we know no amount of all the world's and its goodies is going to fill it brings with it this sense of shame in being incomplete that nobody is really going to point to the other 99 things that are right and say ah don't worry about it great no problem all they're going to see is the missing piece all they're going to see is what isn't there all you are going to sense is this this unfulfilledness this bitterness of meaninglessness and thinking what was it all for yes i may achieve i may climb to the very top of my profession i may be like solomon and have riches and and power and wealth and all the rest of it and yet conclude at the end of the day all is vanity it's just no use to me at all because there is that separateness that lostness from god that is what this parable is about christ has come to restore to heal to heal to heal to heal to heal to heal those things which are sore to cleanse the lepers to get the recovery of sight of the blind to preach the acceptable need of the lord the time of god's grace christ christ has come to restore to heal to heal to heal to cleanse to make new and to make whole to give back the missing piece of your life the human dignity of being made for relationship with god being being created for god and made for relationship with him being made in his niche that incompleteness christ has come to restore to completeness he has come to heal he has come to bind up he has come to make new and he has given his light to us and before he gives us that light he already surrounds us with the protection the walls of his love so that before ever that life is ignited and lit as it were in the little wick of our hearts we are already surrounded and protected by his love he has already gone before us to protect and shelter us he's already there he can't really use we can see that he can't really use puffed up proud hearts a spectacular firework isn't much use for keeping your house lit in a power plant it's not much use for searching the dark corners when there's something to find it may look brilliant in the night sky but what you actually need to be of any use is the small little flame that'll keep burning it has to be small enough to be of any use and that's what paul says of course isn't it the corinthians look at your calling brother not many high not many mighty not many powerful not many great are called but rather god has taken the small the insignificant the weak why do you think it is that jesus so beloved the little children and said except he becomes little children he shall not enter the kingdom of god we have to be smaller we have to be conscious of our smallness and we have to be conscious that that light the lord has put in us is able to be shared intended to be shared without diminishing what he's given to us he has given his light to us he may have given his light to you and if he does this is what he says in isaiah chapter 60 verses 1 to arise shine for thy light is come and the glory of the lord is risen upon me for behold the darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people but the lord shall arise upon me and his glory shall be seen upon me this is really the question then is that something that we are conscious of needing is that which is missing from our life sufficient to make us want the gap to be plugged a circle to be complete a brokenness to be made whole that avoids i suppose are you willing to be small enough to let him light that candle that it may shine full bright let us pray