

JANUARY 29, 2026 DEACON MIKE WALSH

I heard this story. I'm not sure if it's actually a true story, but it was about these twin brothers.

Now, these twin brothers, they were quite a handful, and their parents had really gotten to the end of the road. They were about 10 years old, and finally they decided to go to the parish priest to see if he would talk to them, to see maybe if he could put the fear of God into these kids.

So, the parish priest agreed, and he said, "But I want to see them one at a time."

So, the first of the young, let's say, 10-year-old twins, Billy, was brought into the priest's office and sat in the chair. And here was the priest, a large figure, and he just looked down at Billy, and he just slammed on the desk, and he said, "Where is God?"

Billy was just shocked. He was terrified, actually. And a few seconds later, the priest leaned over again and said, "Where is God?"

And at that, Billy is up out of his chair. He runs out of the office, down the steps of the church, five blocks home, passes his brother who's playing on the front lawn, up, up the stairs, and he's now hiding under his bed, terrified.

So, his brother finally comes up and he looks under, and he says, "Billy, Billy, what's wrong? What happened?"

And he says, "I don't know, but apparently God is missing, and they think we took Him."

And so, that's the story.

It's, of course, a funny little story, but it asks this great question.

Where is God?

And a related question might be, who is God?

And any time that we see the parables, we get an answer to that. I once heard it said—I wish I could remember where I read this—but it said, “If you want to know how God thinks, read the parables.”

And even in this Gospel reading today, Jesus gives us a little bit of a clue. He says, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen.”

So, listen to these stories, these parables.

Now, one of the things to understand is what’s the context of the parable itself. Yesterday, Father did a beautiful job. You saw the parable that goes just before this, a longer parable, and it’s also taught to the crowds.

We see Jesus is speaking before a large group, but in today’s Gospel, we learn right away he turns from the crowd now, and he goes to talk to the disciples.

So, whenever you see that, you see that this is a different kind of a teaching. It’s not just a proclamation, but it’s now a moment of formation.

Formation for the disciples, and I would argue that we are, in fact, the disciples. It’s important for us to understand what the proclamation is so that we can carry it forward.

The other thing to understand the context of this particular parable is the difference in the time of Christ and where we are today about light and darkness.

If you think of our modern world, almost all of us—I think all of us—were born into a world where if you need it to get light, all you have to

do is go and flip on a switch, and light would appear and the darkness would go away.

And light in our world is plentiful, especially if you live in an urban area. You know, you have light everywhere, and it's so plentiful, we can even leave it on all night. Many of us have night lights.

So, there's always light available, but in the time of Christ, it was completely different, and darkness was a time of great danger and limiting. You had to be home before the sun set, because it was extremely dangerous outside.

It was filled with fear and vulnerability, because it was dark.

Now, a lamp at the time of our Lord was extremely valuable, and it was not only valuable, it was expensive, right? But it was the lamp that was in the home that said, "This home is now a place of safety, a place of community, a place of welcome."

And then there's the lampstand, and they would put it on a lampstand so that the light would now be more visible throughout the entire home.

So, that's the difference. So, we have to put ourselves back into his position where light is very valuable, and here's the story.

This comes—one of my favourite teachers on this particular subject of the parables is Sister Barbara Reed. She's written these beautiful books called *Parables for Preaching*, and in this she has really three key points that come out of this story.

And there's—the one that's an aha moment for me, that really puts the parable into perspective, is the fact that the lamp in the parable, right, that produces this light is God's revelation of Jesus Christ.

It's not about us. We are not in any way the lamp that produces the light. Christ is the lamp that produces that light.

So, it raises the question then: Who are we in the parable?

Well, quite frankly, we're the lampstand.

So, the lampstand is the one that raises this light up so that it can be shone in many more places, so that people can learn to trust in the light and to feel the safety and the warmth of that particular light, right?

So, as the disciples, we are called, right, to carry, support, and to make this light visible, this light of Christ visible in the world, and the true hearing leads to generous living.

So, when we hear these stories told to us as disciples, we want to go and we want to give it away, and we want to live generously in the world.

So, how does that play out in our lives?

Well, in a number of different ways.

You see, if we were very fortunate as children, as young people, we had lampstands in our lives, those who would hold the lamp up, and we could be bathed in that light.

Maybe our parents. It could be our grandparents, our teachers, our parish community. Through simple acts of faith like prayer and Mass, we were shaped.

Many, in our young adulthood, might move away from that light. We might actually think we're the light, or we put our faith in another light.

But only later, maybe through a vocation, whether that be to religious life or to marriage, or to live committed as single—single people centred on Christ, we come back to that light.

And then as we age, and many of us are in my, you know—we're all the same age here, a lot of us—we might think that we just don't have the same ability to raise that light up, or that our own light is getting a little dimmer as we go forward.

But in reality, that's not true.

We have to understand that no matter how old we are, right, we still have this power to be the lampstand, to be the one that the young people can come to and can—can get—can see this light that is in Jesus Christ.

We actually have to believe that the oil in that lamp and the light is not our own, even though our own oil may be getting a little less. Jesus always shines this brightly.

And so, we actually offer ourselves, in our in our final years, as this example of one who believes to the younger people. And we do that through prayer.

I think all of us do—cannot underestimate the power of letting people know that they are in our prayers, and perhaps that's what brings them back to the light.

Because, you see, it is in our trust in God and our faith that Jesus himself is this lamp that sustains us.

In the Mass, we are bathed in his light. We're nourished by the Eucharist, and then we're sent in peace to glorify the Lord by our lives.

And as we go forth as the lampstands, sharing the light of Christ with those closest to us and to the world in great need.

God bless.