

Our Lamps Of Gold.

Text: Exo 25:31-37

Suggested Hymns:

40, 45, 224, 840, 47

- 1) The lamp of Christian fellowship
- 2) The lamp of reverence
- 3) The lamp of the Law of God
- 4) The lamp of the Gospel of Christ
- 5) The lamp of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism
- 6) The lamp of the Sacrament of the Lords Supper
- 7) The lamp of eternity

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Exodus 25:31-37, ³¹ *You shall also make a lampstand of pure gold; the lampstand shall be of hammered work. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and flowers shall be of one piece.*

³² *“And six branches shall come out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side. ³³ “Three bowls shall be made like almond blossoms on one branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower, and three bowls made like almond blossoms on the other branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower -- and so for the six branches that come out of the lampstand.*

³⁴ *“On the lampstand itself four bowls shall be made like almond blossoms, each with its ornamental knob and flower. ³⁵ “And there shall be a knob under the first two branches of the same, a knob under the second two branches of the same, and a knob under the third two branches of the same, according to the six branches that extend from the lampstand.*

³⁶ *“Their knobs and their branches shall be of one piece; all of it shall be one hammered piece of pure gold. ³⁷ “You shall make seven lamps for it, and they shall arrange its lamps so that they give light in front of it. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The words of our text are a command spoken by the Lord God to Moses, directing him to make the seven-armed candlestick which was to

adorn the sanctuary of the Tabernacle and later the sanctuary of the majestic Temple.

The historian Josephus tells us that the arms of this candlestick stood about five feet high (1.5m) and that it weighed about 120 pounds (54.5 kg). To have a mental picture of this beautiful piece of furniture in the sanctuary of the Temple, you must imagine a strong, massive, upright, tall, tapering shaft made of pure gold with a lamp on the top.

From this shaft came three arms branching out opposite each other and curved upward to a level with the center lamp, each one of these arms having a lamp on its top. There was, then, a row of seven lamps, on seven different branches, and all supported by the one central shaft.

To feed these lamps the Children of Israel were commanded by the Lord to bring pure oil beaten from olives; and the priest was commanded to fill and trim them night and morning so that they should never cease to burn and illuminate the sanctuary and from there to cast cheering light out upon the courtyards of the Temple.

We do not know how well the people of Israel understood this construction or its typical significance. There cannot be any doubt about its symbolical meaning for us.

Today we celebrate the oldest festival of the Christian Church, the Festival of the Epiphany, when we remember with grateful hearts that the Lord, our God, did not leave us to spiritual darkness, but gave us the light of the knowledge of salvation.

On this festival we read and meditate on the words of the Lord which direct us to stir up our own zeal to let our light, the light of our faith, shine before men, that they may see our good works and the basis of our faith and may with us be brought into the light of the knowledge of salvation.

The name of this festival, Epiphany, comes from a Greek word which means "*shining forth.*" Accordingly, we give grateful praise to our Lord, "***God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***"¹

Epiphany always occurs on January 6th. It is sometimes called “*the Gentiles’ Christmas,*” so we are very thankful for the true message of the herald angel, *I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.*² Our hearts beat in glad gratitude for having been brought into the light of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the church of the New Testament also there is a candlestick, seven-armed, which burns brightly and continually for us and illuminates our lives.

To deepen our appreciation of the grace of God, who brought the light of the Gospel to us, and to stir up our zeal to keep the light of that candlestick burning brightly for ourselves and for others, let us consider on this Festival of the Epiphany *Our Lamps of Gold.*

There are lights that burn brightly for us in the church to drive away the darkness of spiritual ignorance and superstition and to make it possible for us to see the beauty of the great salvation which God has prepared for us. Let us imagine these to be the lights of that seven-armed candlestick and describe them one by one. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Our Lamps Of Gold

The Lamp Of Christian Fellowship

One lamp that burns brightly for us in the New Testament church, for which we give thanks to God, especially this day, is the lamp of Christian fellowship.

It is most certainly true that man is a worshiping being. It is not only his duty but also his nature and his native instinct to worship. His very position in the universe, that of a dependent creature, helpless and needy, the recipient of many blessings, calls for worship of a Higher Being.

Yet it is true that isolated worship, without association with others, soon dwindles, flags, and degenerates. Isolated worship never reaches that majesty and intense inspiration which comes upon us in a congregation of worshipers all engaged in the same great act of worship.

There is something in a congregation to impress, move, and invigorate; and when the congregation pulsates with the same thought and feeling and aim, the emotion that comes over the individual is profound and overwhelming.

In such a gathering differences are all forgotten, the hearts of all classes mingle into one, and the diversities of rank and station melt away before the warmth of the worship which pervades every heart.

However, there are many people who say that they are Christians and yet do not and will not worship together with others. They say that they can worship God better alone. I know also that if there had been no benefit of worshipping together in Christian fellowship, God would not have asked the chosen people of old to come together as a great congregation.

The Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts these people to *“let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.”*³ God knows the benefit of example, and the power which a good example exerts on those who see and hear. The power of influence is great; and we encourage and strengthen one another by Christian fellowship.

It is for this reason that God tell us not to forsake *the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*⁴ We thank God for the lamp of Christian fellowship.

2. Our Lamps Of Gold The Lamp Of Reverence

The second lamp that gleams for us on the seven-armed candlestick is the lamp of reverence. As we rub shoulders day after day with people who live only for this life, we are likely to forget that we are God’s children.

Hearing, seeing, and reading of the widespread disrespect in this world of ours for the sanctity of the church and the name of the Lord and His institutions, we are in danger of being carried along with the floodtide of irreverence which sweeps over our world.

But here in the sanctuary of God there burns the lamp of reverence for us, driving the darkness from our hearts, permitting us to see clearly the Commandments of God’s holy Law, *“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain”; “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”; “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”*

It reminds us to stand in awe and reverence before God, as if it called out to us, ***“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!”***⁵ As Moses was directed to take off the shoes from his feet as he stood in the presence of the Lord in the burning bush, even so we are to be filled with awe before Him who is Lord over all. There is deepened in us here the sense of reverence which was implanted early into the hearts of the Hebrews of old, who would not pronounce the name Jehovah lest they use it irreverently and who would not consciously step on a piece of paper lest there be written there the name of the Lord.

The sense of God and deep reverence for His name is needful to us who are surrounded by examples of irreverence; and here burns the lamp of reverence. Thank God for its light!

3. Our Lamps Of Gold The Lamp Of The Law Of The Lord

The third candlestick, the second from the center, is the lamp of the Law of the Lord. This light we need greatly. By nature we are selfish, vain, and arrogant. We like to exaggerate the faults and shortcomings of others, but we are always quick to excuse ourselves.

We like to look upon ourselves as being better than others. We can always find someone who is worse than we are; and in our comparison with him, we see ourselves practically without fault or spot or blemish.

But here stands the light of the Law of the Lord as if to echo to us from smoking Mount Sinai, ***“You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”***⁶ ***“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”***⁷

It reminds us of the word of God spoken by the Apostle Paul, ***“Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”***⁸ In the light of that Law we see sins on our record, sins of which we are ashamed, sins of commission and sins of omission, sins of weakness, and wilful sins, sins against the Lord, sins against our neighbour, sins against our family, sins against the government, sins against the church.

In the light of that Law we would cast ourselves down into the dust before God and cry out, ***“God be merciful to me, the sinner!”***⁹ In the light of that Law

of the Lord we see our wretched condition. Thank God for that light, for it shows us how we look in God's eyes. That is the judgment that counts.

4. Our Lamps Of Gold

The Lamp Of The Gospel Of Jesus Christ

We come now to the very central lamp, the lamp that burns more brightly than all the rest, the lamp that casts its cheering rays upon us and gives us hope and joy. It is the lamp of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What darkness would be over us, what spiritual stupidity would cover us were it not for the light of the Gospel, which gives us to see the comprehensive and yet simple plan of God for our eternal salvation. ¹⁶ ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”***¹⁰ This Gospel shows us Jesus, our beautiful Saviour, and tells us that God made Him ***“to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”***¹¹

Here is the joy of salvation. Here is the support of every other lamp on this candlestick. Here is the light of life, the source of spiritual light and life. In this light we see the open arms of Jesus inviting us to come with our burdens and our cares.

In this light we see His friendly smiling face as we hear His words: ***“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”***¹² In the light of this lamp we see heaven itself opened and the mansions of the Father's house fully prepared for us when we shall be called from time into eternity.

Standing in this light, we can evaluate the sorrows of this present time and call out with the Apostle, ¹⁸ ***For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.***¹³ In this light we can see the positive guarantee of the heavenly Father's love for us. In this light we can see the crimson satisfaction which our Redeemer handed up to His Father for us.

Here we see the hand of God writing over our record of iniquities the words, ***“Paid in full by the blood of Jesus Christ.”*** In this light we can have the peace

which comes with the knowledge of sins forgiven, with the assurance that *“the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*¹⁴

Throughout all time and eternity we could never thank God enough for the light of this central lamp, the lamp of the Gospel, for it is *“for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”*¹⁵

5. Our Lamps Of Gold

The Lamp Of The Sacrament Of Holy Baptism

Next to that lamp there stands another which burns brightly for us. It is the lamp of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Though we are not able to understand with our limited minds how God in Baptism grants us the forgiveness of sins, we accept it fully as a fact, because our Redeemer has given it to us with the assurance that it is *“for the forgiveness of sins.”*

As water cleanses our hands and bodies and clothing, so the water of Baptism, connected with the Word of God and used by His direct command, cleanses our souls. Here at the font of Baptism we are made the children of God. When this rite was performed upon us, our names were inscribed not only in the record of the congregation but also in the book of the Lord in heaven.

Here we pledged our allegiance to the Lord and made a vow which has supported and strengthened us on life's pathways. Thank God for the light of Baptism!

6. Our Lamps Of Gold

The Lamp Of The Sacrament Of The Lord's Supper

Beside this, there glows the lamp in whose holy light we see the greatest demonstration of divine love which the eye of man or of angel has ever seen. The eternal Son of God standing ready to take upon His holy soul the foul burden of all the transgressions of mankind, yet forgetting Himself and remembering us, to grant us the positive and unwavering assurance of our forgiveness.

It is the light of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In the light of this lamp there is visible the sharp contrast of our black sins and the perfect purity of God's holiness.

Here in, with, and under the consecrated bread and wine is the sacred body of Christ, sacrificed on the cross of Calvary, and the holy blood which He shed there from His holy wounds to atone for our transgressions.

Here, in the words of the Saviour Himself, is the full and positive assurance of pardon, for He says, *“This is given and shed for you for the remission of your sins.”*¹⁶ Here the forgiveness is personalised and individualised.

When we have approached the altar reverently and repentingly, and when we have received this body and blood of Christ, we know that we are numbered with those for whom Jesus gave His body and blood. We can be certain that we who have received the body and blood of Jesus have the remission which Jesus gained.

Here, as we eat and drink of that bread and of that cup, we can know without the shadow of any doubt that our forgiveness is complete; and we can have strength for a future life of devotion to the Lord and to His great work. Appreciate and use the light of this blessed Sacrament — the lamp of the Sacrament of the Altar.

7. Our Lamps Of Gold

The Lamp Of Eternity

The seventh and last light upon the seven-armed candlestick is the lamp of eternity. In the light of this brightly burning lamp we are able to see all things in their proper perspective. Here we are able to evaluate treasures and pleasures and to differentiate between those that are lasting and those that are fleeting.

Here we see that honour and glory and popularity among people is nothing, and that our simple Christian faith, which brings eternal honour and glory in heaven, means everything. Here we see plainly that we are only strangers and pilgrims on earth and that heaven is our true home. Without this light we would put the wrong price tags on many things; but with it we can rightly estimate values. Thank God for the lamp of eternity!

Yes, thank God for the lamp of gold that He has set before us in the church to drive away the darkness. More than that, show your thanks to God by doing everything you can to bring others into the light which you have received.

The Festival of Epiphany not only reminds us to be grateful for the light which has shined upon our hearts. It also challenges us to *“arise and shine.”*

Through the corridors of the centuries there comes the Lord's voice to us to tell us in Matthew 5:16, ¹⁶ *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*

Reflect that light in your speech and actions as much as possible, for much of the world still lies in darkness. Help the church by your continued interest, attendance, and support, and keep it growing by bringing others into the light which you enjoy.

Ask yourself today and every day, in the words of the hymnist,¹⁷

*Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation, O salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till each remotest nation
Has learned Messiah's name.*

God help us and strengthen us to this end, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 2 Corinthians 4:6

² Luke 2:10

³ Hebrews 10:24

⁴ Hebrews 10:25

⁵ Isaiah 6:3

⁶ Leviticus 19:2

⁷ Matthew 5:48

⁸ Galatians 3:10

⁹ Luke 18:13

¹⁰ John 3:16

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 5:21

¹² Matthew 11:28

¹³ Romans 8:18

¹⁴ 1 John 1:7

¹⁵ Romans 1:16

¹⁶ Matthew 26:26-28

¹⁷ Hymn 224