

31. Lessons for Disciples

Luke 12:1-12

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

We concluded the last chapter with the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law incensed at Jesus after He told them the truth of their sin-sick lives of hypocrisy. Here's the passage: ⁵³When Jesus went outside, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, ⁵⁴waiting to catch him in something he might say (Luke 11:53-54). They were livid with anger, waiting to pounce on the Lord if He said or did anything with which they could accuse Him, looking for an opportunity and excuse to kill him. When the New Testament was written, there were no chapter divisions as we see today, so the word "meanwhile" in chapter twelve, verse one, is a linking word to what was happening from verses 37-54. The argument had brought thousands of people to form a crowd around the house (Luke 12:1). The people were falling over one another to get closer to the house, scrambling to listen to Jesus telling the hypocrites what He saw in their hearts. People love an argument, a fight, or a controversial topic. It attracts people like bees to a honey pot.

¹Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ²There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ³What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs (Luke 12:1-3).

How humiliated the religious leaders must have been to walk outside and see thousands of people listening in and sharing with one another what was being said. It would have angered them even more. This meant war! Totally humiliated, they began to oppose Him fiercely (Luke 11:53).

Question 1) Think of what this must have been like for Jesus to be besieged with their questions and angry words. Have you ever had to stand up to opposition for your faith or for a just cause? If you are able, briefly share what happened.

The words *fierce* and *besiege* are descriptive terms of this new open warfare with no holds barred. They were besieging Him with questions, each of them trying to get the upper hand in the heated debate. Outside the house now, in the midst of all that was going on, Jesus saw it as an opportunity to give four instructional lessons to the disciples. We should not think that this was just the twelve disciples, but it was probably all those who were learners, for that is what the word *disciples* means.

Lesson 1) Avoid Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is deception at its worse. We get the word hypocrite from the Greek word "*hupokrisis*." It was used in the common Greek language of the time to describe an actor on the stage having a mask on his face and acting the part of someone else. A hypocrite is a person who says one thing with his mask on but, in reality, is someone completely different to the image he

or she portrays, i.e. someone who expects from others what they are not willing to do themselves.

Bonaventura, a Franciscan and one of the greatest philosophers of the Middle Ages, said, “A man who does not practice what he preaches destroys what he builds.” When we do not practice what we say we are, it is living a lie, a deception that is like the corrupting influence of yeast. Yeast is a fermenting agent. When a little bit of yeast is added to a lump of dough, it gradually works through the whole lump, changing the size, appearance, and taste. Jesus wants us to be open and honest with Him about who we are inside and out. What is on the inside will always work through to the outside. Any inward deception that we allow to remain in our lives will taint others with its corrupting influence.

You cannot hide who you are. The good news is that God accepts us the way we are. People make the mistake of thinking that they ought to be a better person before they can become a Christian. They work hard at trying to clean up their lives so that God will accept them. However, the Word of God declares that we are accepted not by what we do but by what Christ has done. It is a finished work upon which we cannot improve. It is 100% of what Christ has done that makes us accepted. We are deceiving ourselves if we think that we can be good enough by doing enough good works to please God. ²⁸Then they asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’ ²⁹Jesus answered, The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent” (John 6:28-29).

The Lord encourages His disciples to be God-pleasers and not men-pleasers. Life is short, so we ought to get real with God and man this side of heaven. Jesus warns His disciples that, when eternity starts, there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed. God will bring out into the open things that men have hidden, their motives as well as acts. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. Sometimes, God discloses hidden things this side of eternity, e.g. the whispers that one thinks have been in private places, the inner rooms, will be proclaimed in full view of all humanity. Paul the Apostle, in writing to his protégé, Timothy, said, “The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them” (1 Timothy 5:24). Jesus said, “What you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs” (Luke 12:3). I wonder if those listening on that day will think of King David’s sin with Bathsheba. David had sought to keep his adulterous affair a secret, but when the prophet Nathan confronted him, he spoke God’s heart on the matter:

¹¹This is what the Lord says: “Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. ¹²You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel” (2 Samuel 12:11-12).

It is recorded that during Absalom’s rebellion against his father, King David, Absalom set up a tent on one of the highest points in Jerusalem and slept with his father’s concubines to make himself hated by David (2 Samuel 16:21-22). God has a way of bringing corruption out into the open before all.

Question 2) Can you think of secrets in history that have later been brought into the open? What mysteries remain that you are waiting for to be disclosed?

I'm waiting to find out if President Kennedy was shot from the grassy knoll or by Lee Harvey Oswald. Someday, all will be made known. We must live without any real secrets because all of them are eventually going to become public, maybe now, maybe later, or when Jesus comes. Who we truly are at the core of our being will be on full display when we stand before the Lord.

When we hypocritically sin before the eyes of those who do not know Christ, we strengthen their resolve against Christ; we become part of their excuse. In effect they say, "If that is how a Christian behaves, I want no part of it, for I am more of a moral person than he is." We become a stumbling block to a person still undecided about the Lordship of Christ. It is a healthy thing for us (Christians) to fear that others might not become a believer due to the inconsistency of our lives. Jesus said in another place, "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken" (Matthew 12:36).

Be sure that your sin will find you out! (Numbers 32:23). We may have thought that what we whispered to another was just between us, but God has a way of bringing every careless word that comes from our mouth out into the open. Even Deep Throat, the FBI man that tipped off *The Washington Post* to what President Nixon was doing at Watergate, could not keep his whispering from the rest of the world. What was whispered in secret became a public affair. We should seek to live lives of transparency so that, when the truth comes out, we will have nothing to hide and nothing to fear.

Lesson 2) Do not Fear What Man Can do, but Fear the Lord

⁴I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. ⁵But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. ⁷Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows (Luke 12:4-7).

Jesus was saying these things to His disciples because of the intimidation of the angry Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. We are not to fear those who may even kill us, but we are to fear the Lord. Every disciple of Christ should have a healthy fear and respect for our Father, the Creator of all things, the One before Whom we shall stand in Eternity. It should not be a cowering fear that hinders us from action and paralyzes us. It is a healthy respect that is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge (Proverbs 9:10). We are to consider that we are eternal beings and that there will come a time when we will pass into eternity and stand before the Lord and be held accountable for what we have said and done (2 Corinthians 5:10). "Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe" (Proverbs 29:25). There are those who say that there is no hell, but they have a hard time with Jesus' words in verse 5. If there were no existence after death, then what is the validity of the warning of Jesus, for He says that, after the killing of the body, there is One who has power to throw a person into hell. Satan has no power

to send people to hell; he is the one bound for that destination. No, we are to fear the Lord and get our lives right with Him. He alone has the authority to cast into hell.

Why should we fear God? It is because of His complete knowledge of everything, e.g. “are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God” (v. 6). The price of two sparrows was a penny. Sparrows were caught in nets and eaten by the poor because they were so cheap. It seems that one sparrow was thrown in for free when you bought four, but not even the freebie was forgotten by God. If God feeds the least valuable of His creatures, the sparrows, how much more will He provide and watch over the most valuable of His creation, man. God doesn't miss a thing. If God notices even a sparrow that falls from the sky, how much more is His knowledge of what is happening to each of those who are blood-bought sons of His? He has complete knowledge of everything. We call this attribute of God, His *omniscience*. So, what's the point in trying to hide anything when we know that all will be brought into the open in eternity? It is better to get things right down here on earth and for any fallout of our actions on others to be brought to an end. We should allow God to come and transform our lives to be more honoring to Him.

“Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” (v. 7). God has never had to learn anything, and there is nothing that He does not know from time beginning to when time itself ends. Man can never tell God something that He does not already know. We know now that the average person in his youth has around 100,000 hairs on his head, more if you are blond, less if you have dark or red hair. Think of that, the Lord is saying that, at the time of this writing in 2016, God has intimate knowledge of 7.4 billion people. If He knows how many hairs there are on each of their heads, don't you think He has intimate knowledge of your thoughts, motives, and sins? King David wrote in the Book of Psalms:

¹O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. ²You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD (Psalm 139:1-4).

Not only does He know everything about us, but also the Lord goes on to tell us that we are worth more than many sparrows. Man is the crown of God's creation. How can we place a value on a man? We are told that this world will one day pass away and that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, but you and I will still be around. Man is an eternal creature. God has cherished each life as so precious that He, the Creator, was the only One of so much greater worth that could pay the redemption price to release us from Satan's control.

Every hair of your head is numbered and not one falls out without His knowledge. Not only does He know everything about us, but also He also knows every thought we think before we think it. He knows every time we stand up and sit down. He perceives our thoughts from afar. He knows what we are going to say before we say it. He sees the end from the beginning. God is outside of time and knows all things simultaneously. If you are a Christian, He has worked ahead of time to bring you to Himself, and if you are not yet a believer, he has been working in your past and now in your present as you read these thoughts in order to call you to Himself. He loves you and

values you more highly, I believe, than the value of the whole world. He has also fashioned your future in order to mold your character into the likeness of Christ. David went on to say, “Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Psalm 139:16). Think through those Scriptures—the world is a lot more intricate than we possibly could imagine, and God, who lives outside of time, has intimate knowledge of you before you were born, and He knows all your life before you live it. Your life is already written into His book!

Question 3) What are the implications for us when we realize that God knows everything? How does this make you feel?

Lesson 3) Confess Christ by Your Words and Life

Knowing and understanding that God watches over us and is actively involved in transforming us into His image, should make us consider more who we are on the inside and abandon all false pretenses of hypocrisy. As disciples, we should live for the world to come and fully hold to the Lord Jesus in every action, word, and motive. As said before, we are in an unseen warfare against enemies that seek to corrupt us on the inside, i.e. the area of our mind, will, and emotions, and yes, the decisions of our heart, our inner spirit man. Religious people that are controlled and inspired against us by “the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Ephesians 2:2), will seek to intimidate us to abandon our faith. So, when under attack, we are to hold to a good confession and openly speak about to Whom we belong. There is power in the name of Jesus, and demonic spirits hate to hear that name being spoken on the lips of a God-lover.

⁸I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. ⁹But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God. ¹⁰And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (Luke 12:8-10).

Where are those who will honor Christ before men? The word *acknowledge*, used twice in verse eight, is translated from the Greek word, *homologeó*, which literally means, “to say the same,” i.e. “to assent, agree with, confess, declare, admit” (Vine, Unger, White, *NT*, 120).¹ Jesus is telling His disciples and us that we are not to bow to intimidation from religious people who have their own agenda and not God’s. We are to acknowledge the Lord Jesus in our lives before men. In this life, you may experience opposition from demonically inspired people, such as we see in Luke chapters eleven and twelve, but we are never out of the care of our God. What is intended by the enemy to hurt us can only transform us if we will respond the way Jesus did. We should see any opportunity to speak about the Lord Jesus as an opportunity to lay up treasure in heaven where moth and rust cannot destroy or tarnish it (Matthew 6:19-20).

Concerning the blasphemy of the Spirit in verse ten, the Greek word used means “to curse, slander, treat someone with contempt.” The enemy of our souls will often hold this particular verse against someone who, at some time or another, has disowned or cursed God. However,

¹ <http://biblehub.com/greek/3670.htm>.

God will not hold a single act of blasphemy against us. All sin can and will be forgiven men on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ at the cross. After all, Peter three times denied the Lord Jesus, but He became His greatest leader. There is also the Apostle Paul, who, even though he was fighting against God to resist the growth of the early Church, was won to the Lord when grace and mercy were shown to him. He wrote: “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:13). That which is not forgiven is the continual resistance to the Spirit’s work in showing a person the finished work of Christ to forgive his sin. William Hendrickson writes:

Their sin is unpardonable because they are unwilling to tread the path that leads to pardon. For a thief, and adulterer, and a murderer there is hope. The message of the gospel may cause him to cry out, “O God be merciful to me, the sinner.” But when a man has become hardened, so that he has made up his mind not to pay any attention to the promptings of the Spirit, not even to listen to His pleading and warning voice, he has placed himself on the road that leads to perdition. He has sinned the sin “unto death” (1 John 5:16; see also Hebrews 6:4-8)...The blasphemy against the Spirit is the result of gradual progress in sin. Grieving the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), if unrepented of, leads to resisting the Spirit (Acts 7:51), which, if persisted in, develops into quenching the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19).²

Lesson 4) Don’t be Anxious About Personal Defense, but Trust God

¹¹When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, ¹²for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say (Luke 12:11-12).

Question 4) Have you ever had this experience? Have you been in a situation where the Holy Spirit gave you just the right words for a particular situation when you needed them?

On many occasions, I have sensed the Spirit giving me words and Scripture that I know are inspired by Him to go directly to the situation at hand. In 1981, when I was only four years old as a Christian, God thrust my wife and me into a Church-planting situation with another couple. None of us knew what we were doing, but again and again, we found God giving us wisdom and counsel far beyond the depth of our knowledge or wisdom. God is well able to use you and speak through you if you are a willing tool in His hand. “If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land” (Isaiah 1:19). Never let your youth hinder what you do for Him. He will give you on-the-job training. The key word here is *dependence*. We are to be dependent on Christ even for the words to say when under persecution. We should not worry or be fearful when religious men motivated by Satan attack us. Jesus here is making us a promise that we will receive the right words when we need them.

There is coming a day when everything that is now hidden will be made known. This should not be a surprise to us as we have been told that one day, “We will be like Him.” Everything is laid open and bare before Him (Hebrews 4:13), and He knows all things (1 John 3:20). Therefore, if

² William Hendrickson and Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (New Testament Commentary 9; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953-2001), 529.

we are to be like Him, we must walk in the light as He is in the light. If we are in the light, there will be no room for any darkness at all. That is why we are told to be careful about how we build in our Christian lives. We are not talking about salvation here, but rather about eternal rewards. It is clear that we will be rewarded according to how we have used and managed what we have been given. There are Scriptures that point to this truth (2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 16:27; Romans 14:12). The Apostle Paul, when speaking about his ministry, says that according to the grace given to him, he had taken care to lay a good foundation as a master builder. The foundation that he laid was Christ. There were others at that time who were trying to build on the foundation that Paul laid, but they were not building with the right materials. They were not building with the truth, which points to Christ, but they were building with the wisdom of this world. Paul reminds the believers in Corinth:

¹¹For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

It is clear that only what is genuine will endure the fire. The Pharisees that challenged Jesus had an outward show of religion, but it was a veneer that covered a very different life within.

What fears do you need to be released from? How can we pray for you concerning the fears that occasionally or often bind you? Do you have any worries that are bothering you? Let's take them before the Father.

Prayer: Father, Your Word tells us that we are not to worry about how we are to defend ourselves but that we are to be confident of Your care and omniscience. Please come right now and fill us with that calm assurance that takes away all fear and worry. Amen.

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