

Sermon: Whose Side Are You On?

Text: Luke 12:1-12

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Introduction: Following the end of [Luke 11](#), Jesus continues his instruction to his disciples and ultimately the Church. He wants his followers to realize the intensity of the events that are coming. “Increasing crowds ([12:1](#)) can turn the head and rob one of the powers of discernment” (Craddock, *Luke*, p. 159). To become a true disciple of Jesus Christ a person needs to fear God not human beings. There can be no pretense for those set apart and devoted to God.

Hypocrisy is deadly business and we need to be ever on guard. Because this man-pleasing disease is so dangerous to the witness of the Church:

I. Jesus Provides a Warning ([vv. 1-3](#))

[Luke 12:1-3 \(NIV\)](#) 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.

A. Hypocrisy cannot be hidden.

When pressure comes that’s when character is revealed. Fairly soon now - under threat of death, Jesus’ disciples will need to declare their allegiance. From our perspective we are disappointed when Peter ends up denying Jesus when asked directly if he is one of Jesus’ disciples. Judas betrays Jesus, maybe trying to force Jesus to fit the culture’s idea of savior-king. I wonder, would we have fared better when put in similar situations?

Hypocrisy is this kind of mask we put on for others. We allow them to see a portrayal of the person we think they want to see. There is great danger in acting a part. Some religious people will behave like a righteous, holy person, but privately they are *not* godly in their relationships. There is a great peril in that lifestyle for the individual involved as well as those who see that kind of witness. That’s one kind of hypocrisy.

It may be, though, that Jesus is instructing his disciples about a “reverse hypocrisy.” Later Jesus’ disciples, when push comes to shove, will act as if they are *not* one of his followers.

Right now it is easy to be a “Christ-follower” in America. There is no overt persecution as such, but what if you lived in a Moslem country where you might be killed for your faith?

Joke: The Lone Ranger and Tonto are riding through one of the many canyons when suddenly rising from the hill on their right are hundreds of Indians. They start to spur their horses forward when they realize that there are hundreds of Indians ahead of them. Wheeling to the left, they once again see hundreds of Indians rising from the hill. They begin to back away in the direction from which they had come and they realize they are surrounded. The Indians had spread out. They are trapped.

The Lone Ranger turns to Tonto, his life-long friend, and says “Tonto, my friend, I think I must say that I have treasured our times together but now I think we are doomed.”

“We?” replied Tonto “What’s all this ‘we’, Paleface?”

B. All your words will be revealed.

Can you imagine being able to hear what people were thinking or saying behind your back? God hears every word and its intent.

Joke: Following a great sermon on lifestyle evangelism one family thought they had better do something to witness to Jesus. So they invited their neighbors to dinner the following Friday night.

When it came to the meal, the hostess was keen to show their neighbors that they upheld Christian standards in their home.

So she asked little 5 year old Johnny to say grace.

Little Johnny was a bit shy. “I don’t know what to say” There was an awkward pause, followed by a reassuring smile from the boy’s mother.

”Well darling,” she said, “ just say what Daddy said at breakfast this morning.”

Obediently, the boy repeated, “Oh God, we’ve got those awful people coming to dinner tonight”

Our words become a sermon for others to hear. Everyday, we proclaim what is in our heart, and God hears *every* word.

“A being who knows all our secrets should be feared” (Bock, *Luke*, p. 337).

That is true because:

II. Jesus Provides Differently for People (vv. 4-7)

Luke 12:4-7 (NIV) ⁴“I 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.

Not everyone goes to heaven. Not everyone is saved. If we do not respond to God’s gracious offer of salvation, he will punish us. There is no contradiction here regarding fear. A being who can consign you to hell should be feared!

A. He dispenses judgment.

It is not a very popular idea, but it is biblical. Those who reject or ignore Jesus’ demands on his/her life will be punished eternally in hell. The word translated “hell” in our text is the word *gehenna*. It comes from the Hebrew for the “Valley of Hinnom.” It was there that idolatrous Jews sacrificed their own children in fires to the pagan god, Molech. Later it had become a garbage dump where even criminals’ bodies were discarded to be burned. It became synonymous with eternal torment and torture (**Mark 9:48**).

Whether you believe in hell or not will make no difference - when its reality becomes clear.

Those that take Jesus’ demands seriously and obey him will become his children.

B. He cares for his children.

God will never forget us or count us as unimportant. We are God’s most valuable creation. The Lord cares about the condition of small birds and notices our hairs.

So, friends in Christ, like the song we sang earlier: let us sing because we're happy. Let us sing because we're free. For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

You may not think of yourself as valuable, but God does! Others may not hold you in high regard, but God does. Jesus willingly offered up his own life to show you your worth to God, the Father.

Illus. There was a man who loved old books. He met an acquaintance who had just thrown away a Bible that had been stored in the attic of his ancestral home for generations. "I couldn't read it," the friend explained. "Somebody named Guten-something had printed it." "Not Gutenberg!" the book lover exclaimed in horror. "That Bible was one of the first books ever printed. Why, a copy just sold for over two million dollars!" His friend was unimpressed. "Mine wouldn't have brought a dollar. Some fellow named Martin Luther had scribbled all over it in German."

Today, we know the cost of everything and the value of nothing! Thomas Paine said, "What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: 'Tis dearness only that gives everything its value."

I Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV) ¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

To help us understand the value of what God offers:

III. Jesus Provides a Choice (vv. 8-10)

Luke 12:8-10 (NIV) ⁸"I 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.

A. You can confess Jesus.

The best possible choice for anyone is to acknowledge/confess Jesus as Lord. When we confess our faith in Jesus as our Savior we are stating what we know to be true.

“Disciples are not to be intimidated into silence” (Craddock, *Luke*, p. 161). There is a desperate need for the Church to speak a word of faith into our sometimes crazy world. People are looking for heroes and role models in all the wrong places. Jesus is the only one who will stand up under close examination. He is the Savior of the world. There is no Other!

Because God has given us free-will, the other option, of course, is:

B. You can disown Jesus.

Every decision you make holds consequences and yields, sometimes never-intended results. God promises that if you deny Him, you seal your own fate and future. There are many mistakes you can make in life and recover, but disowning Jesus is not one of them.

Jesus instructs his disciples that those who continually reject the Holy Spirit’s offer of life will by default choose death. The more a person tells God he is not interested and ignores God’s gracious offer of salvation, the easier it becomes to grow deaf and blind to his future offers. At some point a person *cannot* repent and be saved because of a hard heart. What a sad day when a person knows his mistake only to realize he has missed the deadline.

IV. Jesus Provides Assurance (vv. 11-12)

Luke 12:11-12 (NIV) ¹¹“When 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.”

A. You will receive an apology.

It is the person who is prepared that need not worry what tomorrow may bring. As Christians we are to be able to give an *apologia* (Greek word) in other words a defense of the faith. There is a whole field of theology called “apologetics.” It is that knowledge we have and develop that can be offered in support of our beliefs.

I Peter 3:13-15 (NIV) ¹³Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” ¹⁵But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer (*apologia*) to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

B. You will receive instruction.

God will always help us with his words and his business. Members of the early Church were persecuted many times. It was how they suffered for Christ and their beliefs that convinced others to follow Jesus.

A question I have heard posed before: “If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?”

Fred Craddock correctly says: The Spirit of God is the hallmark of the church; by God’s Spirit the church lives, worships, and witnesses. If therefore, the church capitulates to pressure and persecution to the point of blaspheming its own life-giving Spirit, no alternative for life is available.” (*Luke*, p. 162)

The bottom line is we need to value God’s will above man’s opinion. It is God we must please and obey. Beware of hypocrisy; follow God.

Conclusion: (a word about Dietrich Bonhoeffer) As Christians become more and more a minority, it becomes increasingly important that hypocrisy does not creep into our lives. More than ever before we need to be able to defend our faith with words AND deeds. This is no time to stand idly by or to be found mute when there is a call to witness. At the end of days it will be too late to correct your relationship with Jesus Christ. Why not live for him with the same courage as he lived for us? God will help you come to faith, repent, and be baptized, and then He will live in your life - if you will only let him.

Whose Side Are You On?