Fear Him

Luke 12:1-12

Key Verse 5

“But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”

Good morning! How are you? The title of my message today is “Fear Him”. We know that “fear” is the sign of unbelief and opposite of faith, so we should not fear anything or anyone except God. That is true and that is today’s topic; whom should we fear and why? The key verse is 12:5. Let’s read it together. “But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”

Last week, we learn that Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Because they clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside them are full of greed and wickedness. Jesus repeatedly told them, “ Woe to you Pharisees…” pointing out their hypocrisy. Jesus sounds very harsh to anyone in the politically correct term, but Jesus loved even the Pharisees and wanted to give them the opportunity to repent. When we receive God’s discipline, we have two choices; either we acknowledge our sins and repent, which makes us grow and become a great man of God or we resent and become rebellious, which makes us fall and become enemies of God. What was their response to Jesus’ rebuke? Look at 11:53-54. “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.” Instead of repenting, they gnashed their teeth and became very rebellious and tried to catch Jesus. They became fierce enemies of Jesus.

Today’s passage is a continuum of the last week’s passage. Jesus saw their wickedness and unrepentant heart and He wanted to raise new spiritual leaders. Anyone who wants to be spiritual leaders must be on guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Jesus wants to teach how to overcome the yeast of Pharisees, which is poisonous and whom we should fear. Let’s review what status our faith is.

My message consists of three parts; I. Be on your guard (12:1-3), II. Fear Him (12:4-7), III. Whoever publicly acknowledges me (12:8-12)

1. Be on your guard (12:1-3)

Look at verse 1. “Meanwhile, 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.” Jesus left the Pharisees and the teachers of the laws and went outside (53). Although the Pharisees and the teachers of the laws look like holy and very spiritual, their hypocrisy and pretention were so disgusting to Jesus. The disciples saw Jesus crashed with the Pharisees and the teachers of the laws and they felt uncomfortable and apprehensive. However, many ordinary people liked Jesus and Jesus was like a superstar to them. They were spiritually thirsty and physically sick and hungry. A crowd of many, many thousands wanted to see and listen to him. Because so many people came, standing room only, so they were trampling on one another to come near Jesus. When his popularity was soaring, the disciples probably were relieved and proud to be Jesus’ disciples. They thought they became somebody. They dreamed to be leaders and celebrities soon. Then, what did Jesus say? He focused on his disciples first, saying “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” Jesus saw this was the great opportunity for discipleship training. What should we do when our popularity is soaring and many people follow us?

First, be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees.

Here the yeast means a bad influence (Ex 12:14-20; 1 Cor 5:6, 7). Moses warned the Israelites the yeast of the Egyptians, so when they celebrated the Passover, they must get rid of all the yeast from the house and they had to eat the unleavened bread for 7 days. Look at Ex 12:14-15. 14“This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—a lasting ordinance. 15For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel.“

In the New Testament, Apostle Paul also warned. Look at 1 Corinthians 5:6, 7. “6Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? 7Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” The yeast spreads quickly and contaminates the whole batch of dough.

Then, why did Jesus warn the Pharisee’s yeast so much? As we know, the Pharisee was one of the main religious sects at Jesus’ time. At that time, there were two main religious sects in Israel; Sadducees and Pharisees. Sadducees were Helenized, religious group consisting of the priestly class. They were generally wealthy, well-educated and secularly powerful because they collaborated with the Roman rule and controlled the Temple interest. However, they did not believe the resurrection of the dead and they were just like modern day secular humanists. So they were far apart from the ordinary people. However, the Pharisees were different. In fact, the Pharisee means “to be separated”. They claimed they were separated from the unholy people or secular Sadducees. They believed the resurrection of the dead. They tried hard to observe all the laws and regulations. They were indeed popular to many people and much influential to the ordinary Israelites. Many of them were rabies, who were the authority how to interpret the laws. They were well disciplined people, so many of them were well recognized and well respected by the ordinary people. However, we see in the Bible they collided more often with Jesus and Jesus warned his disciples the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

What is hypocrisy? According to the dictionary, ‘hypocrisy’ means “a pretense of having a virtuous character, moral or religious beliefs or principles that one does not really possess.” Nobody wants to be a hypocrite from the beginning, I guess. Then, why does anyone become a hypocrite?

First, when we live in the eyes of men, we become hypocrites. We must live in the eyes of God instead of in the eyes of men. We have all expectation and peer pressure, such as for the title of shepherds, missionaries, teachers or messengers. In order to grow spiritually, we need self-discipline, devotion and continual study of the word of God with daily bread and internalization of the word, pray, repentance, etc. It is hard to grow continuously, so cheating starts because expectation and peer pressure are intense.

Second, when we stop growing spiritually, we become hypocrites. At the beginning, we are all full of spirit and passionate for Jesus. We are so thankful that we think we can even die for Jesus. But as the time goes, we have to grow spiritually day by day even up to the point of the holiness of Jesus. We want to remain as sheep forever, but we can’t. Otherwise, we remain spiritual babies though our head becomes so big, which is monstrous. I am one of the oldest wineskins, but sometime in the past, I became lazy and stopped growing spiritually with many, many excuses, so I pretend to be a missionary or a Bible teacher, so I am the full of the yeast of the Pharisees. I need mercy and grace of God.

Will hypocrisy work? Maybe temporarily, however hypocrisy will not work, because everything is revealed before God. Look at verses 2-3. “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.”

The secrets of people's hearts will be revealed (Rom 2:15; 1 Cor 4:5). God's omnipresence means that there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. This includes words said in the dark or whispered in the closet. So even things said deep within one's home are known to God. Even these things will be proclaimed from the housetops one day. What is done in the basement closet will be revealed on the mountaintops or Youtube so all over the world will see it.

1. Fear Him (12:4-7)

Look at verses 4-7. 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 your body has been killed, has authority 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.”

Most of the religious leaders at that time became hostile to Jesus who taught the truth. Especially, the Pharisees and the teachers of the laws became fierce enemies of Jesus. So the disciples were probably fearful and apprehensive. They may have worried about their future and impending persecution. However, Jesus reminds them that they should fear God instead of fearing the men. They should fear not those who kill the body but the one who has power to throw them into hell. Human beings' power over life is limited. We should not fear rejection or persecution.

In a dire circumstance, we pray and pray to God, but sometimes, there is no immediate answer from God. He seems not to care for us. He seems too busy. However, we can be assured that God is aware of our situation no matter how bad it gets. God is watching over and cares for even *five sparrows* that sell for just two pennies. God cares for those birds, and He cares for the disciple even more. Nobody knows how many hairs he or she has. However, He knows the number of hairs on each of our heads, and he knows that people are more valuable than sparrows. So we need not fear even the dire circumstances, because God knows what is taking place.

What is our fundamental faith? We believe the Almighty God exists and He controls this world and the next world. We believe He is merciful and He will take care of anyone who comes to Him. Fearing God is the basis of our faith. Look at Proverb 1:7. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Fear of God is the beginning and the end of our faith.

# We know God called the 65-year old Abraham and trained him for more than 40 years. During that time, Abraham had had many ups and downs, but he had steadily grown spiritually. Finally, one day, God tested him by commanding him to sacrifice his one and only son, Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham believed God and did not hesitate to obey his command, though he did not completely understand why. When Abraham was ready to slaughter Isaac, what did God say to him? Look at Genesis 22:12. 12“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” All these years, God wanted to train him the fear of God.

# Then, what does fearing God mean? To fear God means we worship Him with awesome respect and trembling heart. It means we put Him the first priority in our lives and obeying him more than anything else. To fear God means we love God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength.

The problem is we live in the visible, secular world and God is invisible. Sometimes, we can’t see Him and He seems far away and doesn’t care us. It is said “Seeing is believing”, and we want to see and touch God. It is our struggle to believe the invisible God by believing his word in this secular world. Although the disciples had followed Jesus three years and experienced many miracles, one of the disciples, Philip demanded Jesus to show him God. Look at John 14:8. “8Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” That is not our faith Jesus wants us to have. Look at Hebrews 11:1. “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” According to Hebrews 11:1, hope and faith are same and interchangeable. We know that this world is not the end, but there is the next world. Our faith is an assurance about what we do not see. It is to see the invisible and believe the invisible God with confidence.

Most Christians hope and believe the kingdom of God and we all want to be there someday. But nobody wants to be there right away. Yesterday, we had a Pastor John’s mother’s home coming memorial service. I was deeply moved by Pastor John and his message. He did not show any sadness. Not only that, he even showed a gleam of joy because he confidently believed his mother was righteous and the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of Heaven. He could see with confidence that his mother is with God in his beautiful house. Amen

# On the other hand, the pagans made idols so they can see their gods and touch them. But God absolutely prohibits this to the Israelites. Look at Exodus 20:4. 4“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.”

However, so many people often try to rely on the visible one as their God such as money or material things because it is easy to believe just like idol worship. When Moses who went to Mt. Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments for 40 days, the Israelites were so anxious and fearful, so they completely ignored Moses’ warning and forgot about God. They made a golden cow and worshiped it.

Look at Ex 32:1-4. When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “Come, make us gods[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ex%2032:1-4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-2440a)] who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.”2Aaron answered them, “Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.” 3So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 4He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, “These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.”

# The invisible God demands us an absolute faith in Him and his Words, so we have to worship him with a pure heart. Then, He will take care of us and lead us to his place. If we believe, and try hard, eventually we even can see Him. How can we see Him or Who can see God? Look at Matthew 5:8. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” Yes, if your heart is pure, you can see God. The reason that we can’t see Him is that our hearts are full of greed, wickedness, or double minds or triple minds.

1. Whoever publicly acknowledges me (12:8-12)

Look at verses 8-9. 8“I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. 9But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God.” To fear God means that we acknowledge Jesus as our Lord in our daily lives. Nowadays, publicly declaring that we are Christian may not be a big deal and sometimes it would be beneficial because even the worldly people give us Christian a benefit of doubt. However, it was completely different story in the early days of Christian era. Publicly acknowledging Jesus as the Lord and Savior means immediate persecution from family, being fired from the job or expelled from the community, even torture or horrible death. However, whom should we fear? We should fear God instead of fearing anyone or anything else, which is an idol worship. When we overcome this fear of peer pressure, what will happen? The Son of Man will call us one by one in front of many angels in Heaven and says “Good job, my faithful servant, Peter, well done!” Do you believe this, Peter? On the other hand, if we are ashamed of being Christian due to the peer pressure and pretend not to know Jesus before friends, what will happen? When we stand before Him later, He will say, I don’t know you, go away, you evil doers! before the all the angels in Heaven. What a shame! It would be too late to regret it. Then, is there any hope to this guy who disowns Jesus? Yes and No. Look at verse 10. “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.” Our God is merciful, so almost any sins against Him or anyone else will be forgiven if we repent. You know Peter who denied Jesus three times was forgiven. However, anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. We know Judas the Iscariot, who sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver was not forgiven. What was the difference? It seems like little tricky. What are the forgivable sins and what are the unforgivable sins? I don’t know them and you don’t have to try to know what are the sins against Jesus and what are the sins against the Holy Spirit. But we do know all sins make us be separated from God. So avoid any sins as possible as you can and if you commit to any sins, promptly repent and believe in the merciful God in Heaven, who is the Sovereign Lord, who can forgive.

Look at verses 11-12. “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.”

Now, there was real possibility for Jesus’ disciples to stand before synagogues, rulers and authorities when they stand firm on faith. Then, fear and worry may penetrate into their hearts. But only whom should we fear? We should fear God only, then, we can overcome our inner fear for any human beings. In addition, Jesus guarantees us that the Holy Spirit will teach us how to defend ourselves or what to say at that time. We know this happened in Apostle Paul’s life when we study the Book of Acts. He was brought before rulers, governors or kings, but he was never fearful and he boldly testified about Jesus to them.

In conclusion, we learn from this passage how to overcome the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy and whom we should fear most. We should fear the invisible God only, then we can overcome fear against anything or anyone.

One word: Fear God only