

Don't Be Afraid (Luke 12:1-21)

We're studying the Gospel of Luke together. Today we'll look at the first part of cp. 12.

First, let's look at two verses.

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell." (v.4-5) "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (v.15)

For Christians, these make sense. There is nothing really difficult for us to understand. However, in real life, it is not always easy to do what we understand. Sometimes, we find a gap between what we understand and what we live. How does this happen?

The point is neither what we talk and do on the surface, nor whether we look like Christians or not. Those things don't matter. What matters is what is inside us.

Who do we fear? That reveals whose eyes and authorities we are really conscious of. What do we seek? That reveals where we really put the basis or foundation of our lives.

The problem is sometimes what we understand to be true in our head and what we seek in our heart are different. In order to fix it, we need to understand what we are seeking actually.

Today, we will study "Don't be afraid" from Luke 12:1-21.

1. Don't be hypocrisy

1

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 told his disciples to be on their guard against the Pharisees' hypocrisy. That was because the Pharisees were trying to trick Jesus while they pretend to be good toward him.

What was written just before this part? Jesus publicly disapproved the

Pharisees, saying they are “woeful”. So the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely. (Luke 11:53) They waited to catch him in something he might say.

Let's look at an example.

John 8:3-6

³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

That is cunning, isn't it? Whether Jesus answers “Yes” or “No”, they can accuse him anyway.

2-3

² There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ³ What 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 Pharisees not only oppose Jesus, but they would also oppose his disciples. No matter how hard they try to hide the fact that they are Jesus' disciples, they cannot. No matter how carefully they try not to let the Pharisees know they are praying, they cannot make it a secret. No matter how carefully they try not to let the Pharisees know they are sharing the gospel, they cannot make it a secret. In the end, everything will be disclosed and brought to light.

There is no way to be a hidden Christian, nor a silent witness. And if they pretend that they were not disciples of Christ so that they would not be criticized by the Pharisees, they would end up becoming hypocrites. Jesus warned them to be on their guard against hypocrisy.

2. Don't fear men

4-5

⁴ "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. ⁵ But 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.

The Pharisees would try to arrest the disciple. They would be handed over to the local councils and be flogged. (Matt. 10:17) But the Lord told them not to be afraid.

The disciples had already heard that Jesus must suffer many things and be rejected by religious leaders, and he must be killed. And, they heard him say, "If you want to follow me, you must deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:22-23) At that time, the disciples wouldn't take the expression "taking up the cross" as a theological term. To them, "taking up the cross" would literally mean "being prepared to be crucified".

If we fear men, we might fall into a trap. So we must be careful not to be led astray by the fear of men. In other words, we must remember to fear God more than men.

6-9

⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. ⁷ Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. ⁸ "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. ⁹ But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.

Don't be afraid of what? Don't be afraid that God might forget you, abandon you. He won't. He can't. You are beloved by God and he can no more forget you than cut off part of himself.

God is interested in every small detail about us. That is because God loves us, because we are precious in his sight.

What can be the worst News? It would be to lose our relationship with God and our status as God's children by our own choice, although we are created to be loved by God as his precious children. The worst thing that can happen is that we choose to be isolated from God (by ourselves), and ended up being said by God, "I don't know you."

Men can shorten our lives on earth, but they cannot change where and how we would spend the eternity. It is God who decides where and how we

would spend the eternity. And that will be determined by what kind of relationship we had with God on this earth.

If we forget that, we will be easily moved by the fear of men.

What makes you afraid that God might forget you? Take heart from the Word of God that assures you that he will never leave you nor forsake you. He always has you in mind. He values you much more than sparrows.

Luke 8:13

¹³ Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

We must be careful not to let our heart become like the rock. We can prevent that to happen, by remembering we should fear God, not men. It is suggested that the fear for men is not characterize believers, but rather awe and respect toward God, which are always wise and appropriate.

10

¹⁰ And 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.

In Mark's Gospel, the saying is placed in the context of Jesus being accused of casting out demons by Beelzebub (Mark 3:22-30). The scribes accuse him of being possessed by Beelzebub, by an "evil spirit" (Mark 3:22, 30).

Jesus says: " 'I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.' He said this because they were saying, 'He has an evil spirit.' " (Mark 3:28-30)

In other words, when men attribute to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit they blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

If someone mistakes the work of the Holy Spirit to him for the work of an evil spirit, he will never accept Jesus as his God, Savior and Lord. Then, there is no way for him to be saved. If someone mistakes the work of the Holy Spirit to him for the work of an evil spirit, he will never accept what the Holy Spirit shows him, confess his sin, nor repent, coming back to the Holy God. Then, there is no

way for him to be forgiven.

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, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."

If we think about that kind of situation, we start to worry about what we should do. But the Holy Spirit will teach us at that time what we should say before the authorities. So do not think or worry about their defense ahead of time. And we don't have to be afraid of men, because we are doing good before God. Moreover, God never forsakes us. Never. The Spirit is with us always. So don't be afraid.

This promise was not designed to encourage indolence or lack of possible preparation, but to assure the Christian witness that a divine Presence would ever give him needed wisdom and strength and grace.

If we try to defend ourselves by our human effort before men's judgment, we might fall into a trap. We should just calm down and speak as the Holy Spirit leads us to speak. For this to happen, we should be daily in tune with the Holy Spirit, and become familiar with His voice.

The boldness in the faithful proclamation of the truth, cannot come from within us, from our own strength, but comes from the Holy Spirit. Let us cease to worry about the consequences of our boldness and focus our attention on the source of it, that is the Spirit of God.

3. Don't rely on the earthly possessions

13-15

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴ Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" ¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

This man had disagreement with his brother over the division of an

inheritance. When do you divide an inheritance? Probably when the father passed away and the funeral has finished.

These two brothers were quarreling over how to divide their father's inheritance. The man was not really missing his late father, nor was he concerned with what would happen after death, nor with eternity. His matter of concern was money.

It may be that his brother unjustly took all the inheritance and wouldn't give him any of it. It looks as if he was asking Jesus to do justice. But the motivation here is more than a call for justice. The man seems consumed with the inheritance. He is looking for a judge who sees it his way. He cut in while Jesus was speaking to his disciples. He is trying to make Jesus a judge over the case. For his request, all Jesus would have had to do was to pronounce in this man's favor. Jesus labels his motivation "greed" and warns his disciples against it with a saying, and then with a memorable parable.

16-21

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' ¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." ' ²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' ²¹ "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

As soon as Jesus heard the man's request, he told the crowd to be on their guard against "greed", and he told them the parable of the rich man.

In verse 20, he calls him "fool". Why is he called fool? Is it because he just focused on his work? Is it because he passed away before marriage? It is because he thought he had done good preparation for his soul for many years by storing up food and goods.

If we apply this story to our modern time, it would be like this: Now we have enough saving to enjoy life, good food every day and occasional holiday trips without working for the rest of life. So, we don't have any worries in our lives. We have peace for our souls. Is it true? We know it is not true.

The rich fool lived his life in the light of the future, but that future did not include the kingdom of God, death, the eternity or the judgment to come.

Life, to the rich fool, seems to be more a qualitative matter—living life in luxury. For some, life consists in the abundance of things. Some view life as being successful, or as being esteemed or treated as we think we should be, or as having power or position.

No matter how rich we become, we cannot earn peace for our souls by that. We all know money cannot guarantee our future. And it is also not true that we cannot have a life in peace if we don't have money or the abundance of things. That is a lie from Satan. Life does not consist in things. It does not even consist in many things. Life consists in the sovereignty of God. By knowing this, we can prevent Satan's lie from taking root in our heart.

Let's put ourselves in disciple's shoes. Imagine that we were listening to Jesus there.

They were listening to Jesus say that they would be persecuted because they were his disciples. Rulers had authority to not only put them into jail and whip them, but also confiscate their possessions. Disciples might lose their possessions, positions and honors because of their faith in Jesus. They might even have difficulty to get enough food, clothes and daily necessities.

When we think about that kind of situation, we might start to fear men. We might think we need to curry favor with them, so that they wouldn't do such mean things to us. We might think we need to do something to prevent these bad things from happening.

Luke 8:14

¹⁴ The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

The seed that fell among thorns will not bear fruit. It tells that the word of God wouldn't bear fruit in the life of those who let life's worries, riches and pleasures prevent their growth.

Luke 9:24-25

²⁴ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me

will save it. ²⁵ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

When we fall into the trap of relying on the riches of this world, we will end up losing ourselves. The Bible is crystal clear on this point, not leaving it to chance. Jesus came to bring life. Indeed, Jesus came, teaching men that He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” He is our life. If we leave him, we will lose our lives.

4. Don't be afraid because he is with us

Today we have been studying the first half of Luke 12, with the theme of “Don't be afraid.”

The main point of today's message starts from here.

There is a battle when we try to live as Christians. We may be attacked because of our faith in Jesus. On top of that, we have other trials and troubles in our daily life. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor.

Surely God will give us wisdom. He will provide a way out. It doesn't mean that we believe in Jesus to get wisdom or to know how to solve the problems. If so, it is as if God had become our reference website, or a trouble shooting help.

The main point is that we used to be slaves of sin, enemies of God, but now our relationship with Jesus, who is almighty God, is recovered. So, even when things go against us because of our faith in Jesus, we would still say, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You are the way, truth and life.” And we will continue to walk with the Lord, listening to his voice, “Don't be afraid. I'm with you. I'm on your side.” In our fellowship with Jesus, we will experience Jesus' protection, wisdom and guidance. The main point is our relationship with Jesus, not about wisdom or solution for troubles.

Surely the Bible says God is a provider, he knows our daily needs, and gives us what we need. For example, God made Job wealthy in the end because of his faith. I also believe God doesn't want human beings to live in poverty. But it is not the same as believing in Jesus in order to become wealthy and receive material blessings. If so, then God will be our servant to meet our needs and

means to get rich.

The main point is that God knows us and we know it through our experience. In our fellowship with him, we have experienced his care and faithfulness. So, in the situation where things get tough, we hear his voice, "Don't be afraid." And, we can go forward because we know "Lord, you are with me, and I shall not be in want." The main point is our relationship with Jesus, not about our material blessings or comfortable life.

In our heart, there are hypocritical thoughts, desire to make ourselves look great. Or there is also temptation to make ourselves look weak, or under hardship in order to draw sympathy from others. By doing this, we try to fill the emptiness in our heart.

Some people might say, "If you want peace, satisfaction and courage in life, believe in Jesus." Then Jesus is just like stabilizer to resolve your anxiety, aspirin to relieve headache, or coffee or chocolate to give you a time of relaxation.

The main point is God sees you and me and says, "You are precious in my sight. I love you." We know that through our own experience. Jesus knows who we really are, even to the deepest level, which we ourselves are not aware of. And Jesus loves us at the risk of his own life. In our fellowship with Jesus, we will experience God's love, we will notice that we are still wearing our mask, we are disappointed about ourselves, and we are judging ourselves. When we hear his voice, "Don't be afraid," we can come out from there with courage, because we know we are loved, we are accepted. We can bring peace in our relationship with others because we have peace with God and peace with ourselves. The main point is our relationship with Jesus, not about our feelings or self-improvement.

Don't be afraid. Why? Because Jesus is with us.