



Jesus Gives Warnings to His Disciples Luke 12

Introduction

After Jesus confronted the Pharisees concerning hypocrisy, He turned to the disciples and warned them to *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which was hypocrisy*. He then proceeded to teach them other pitfalls to avoid. It was important for them to live consistently as faithful and wise stewards. His teaching is also meant for us today.

Outline of Luke 12

- I. Warning to Avoid Three Major Traps - Luke 12:1-34
- II. Warning Regarding Christ's Return - Luke 12:35-53
- III. Warning to Discern the Signs of the Times - Luke 12:54-59

I. Warning to Avoid Three Major Traps - Luke 12:1-34

Jesus concentrated on teaching His disciples as the crowd gathered and grew to an innumerable multitude, so large that they trampled one another. The attraction to Jesus as a gifted teacher was great even when He was not actually speaking to the crowd. Many came hoping for miracles and healings. But Jesus' attention was now on His disciples who had much to learn in a short time.

A. Hypocrisy - Luke 12:1-12; Matthew 16:6-12

1. Pharisees' teaching called leaven - Luke 12:1

At first the disciples did not understand what Jesus meant when He said, *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy*. They reasoned among themselves saying, *It is because we brought no bread* (Matthew 16:7). Then they understood that He was not talking about yeast, but about the doctrine, or teaching, of the Pharisees who were hypocrites because they concealed an unsanctified life behind an exterior of complicated holiness (Matthew 16:12). It is good to be cautious of anyone's teaching until you are sure it agrees with the Bible. Teaching is effective when it is believed. Once you believe something it becomes part of you. Unfortunately, most people accept uncritically whatever they hear or read unless they have been warned to do otherwise. Bad teaching can best be recognized, refuted, and countered by good teaching which is always found in the Bible.

2. Hypocrisy defined

"A hypocrite is an actor. The Greek word 'hupokrisis' primarily denotes an answer, as in dialogue or acting, hence, pretense." (Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W.E. Vine). In Greek drama, "hypocrites" were actors who spoke from behind large masks. The word is found only in the synoptic gospels, and is used only by Jesus, fifteen times in Matthew; Mark 7:6; Luke 6:42, 11:44, 12:56, 13:15.

3. Five reasons to avoid hypocrisy - Luke 12:2-12

- a. Everything hidden will be known - verses 2-3

Some day everything will be revealed and all hypocrisy will be discovered, so it is useless to deliberately deceive. The truth will always come out, if only partially in this life, then completely in the end.

- b. Fear behind hypocrisy - verses 4-5

Hypocrisy is born out of the fear of man. Sometimes people are uncomfortable with who they are, or afraid of what others will think of them, so they wear a mask of respectability or religion, deceiving others and even themselves. Jesus warned against fearing those who can hurt you, at the most by causing death, but who cannot touch your soul. God alone is to be feared and honored, for He alone has supreme power over every person. Do you fear the power of other people and the devil or do you fear the power of God?

- c. Self worth - verses 6-7

A true evaluation of oneself would make hypocrisy unnecessary. Each individual is so important to God that He even numbers every hair. There is no need to fabricate one's importance before God or others.

- d. Affirmed by Jesus - verses 8-9

Whoever confesses Me before men...the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. Jesus Christ will honor those in glory who honor Him on earth. How do you honor Him in your daily life?

- e. Holy Spirit as Helper - verses 10-12

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against

the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. This verse has given rise to the expression "The Unpardonable Sin". To speak against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable because the speaker excludes the only means of forgiveness, which is the Holy Spirit's witness to Christ. "It is obvious that this must mean ultimate, deliberate, and final rejection of Christ as Savior, the self-willed and conscious repression of the movement of God's convicting Spirit in the heart and conscience, willfully imputing to the workings of Satan that which is manifestly of the grace of God. Denying God can end in such disaster" (Daily Devotional Bible Commentary, E.M.Blaiklock).

No one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). He is your Helper to forgiveness and salvation, and He will help you when you are tempted to be a hypocrite.

The apostles needed to know that when they were brought before authorities, the Holy Spirit would give them the right words to say.

B. Greed - Luke 12:13-21

One from the crowd spoke up, *Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.* Which brother was greedier? Jesus did not take sides but answered with a warning, a parable, and an application to His disciples.

1. Warning concerning abundance - 12:14-15

Jesus said (paraphrased), "Listen, and look out for greed (covetousness) because your life is not defined by how much you have." Do you need "things" beyond basic needs in order to feel that you are valuable? Does a large bank account or many possessions account for the quality of your life? What is your life really if your home were to burn and everything be gone in a few moments? Some day you will know, for Paul says we will all see our life go through the fire, and the one who receives a reward will not be the one with the most worldly goods (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

2. Parable of a rich fool - 12:16-20

Jesus illustrated His point by telling of a rich man whose ambition was to have more. But he had to leave it all when he died. He was a fool because he acquired only for himself and was not rich toward God.

3. Application to disciples - 12:21

So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. Many rich people are wise because they give generously to God in many ways. Many who are not rich can be just as wise or just as foolish. As

J. Norvel Guldenhuys says, "The best remedy for a feverish clinging to one's earthly possessions is the development of true faith in the Heavenly Father's care. When one's riches consist in earthly treasures, whether great or small, his (or her) heart will be earthbound, but when one is rich in God and things eternal, he (or she) will be heavenly-minded, whether they have material possessions or not. It is not the mere fact of possessing this world's goods that makes one materially-minded or worldly, but one's attitude toward them, nor will lack of possessions automatically make one heavenly-minded. Only freedom from selfishness and covetousness, combined with true devotion to the Lord, can produce that effect." (The Biblical Expositor, Carl Henry editor).

C. Anxiety - Luke 12:22-34; Matthew 6:25-34

Anxiety, a modern word for worry, is a general feeling of uneasiness, sometimes without a specified cause. There are five reasons that worry is not logical or helpful.

1. Futility of worry - Luke 12:22-23

Do not worry about your life, what you will eat...what you will put on. If you actually lack the basics, worry will not produce them. If you are not really poor, to worry about the necessities of life is unnecessary and a waste of time. Once the basics are provided, life's higher values deserve attention.

2. Failure of worry - Luke 12:24-26

Ravens, which were considered unclean birds by the Jews, are provided for and they do not worry. God has stocked nature abundantly. The farther away we get from nature, the farther we are from access to God's free provision.

Said the robin to the sparrow,
"I would really like to know
Why those anxious human beings
rush around and worry so."

Said the sparrow to the robin,
"Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no Heavenly Father
such as cares for you and me."

By Elizabeth Cheney

3. Faithlessness of worry - Luke 12:27-28

Most people do not see worry or anxiety as lack of faith, but that is what Jesus calls it. *How much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?* If God cares about the appearance of lilies, He cares about your appearance more. You cannot worry and trust God at the same time. They are mutually exclusive and worry insults God.

4. Frustration of worry - Luke 12:29-31

All these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. Worry is worldly, and the world does it because it has nowhere to turn. We have the greatest resource, the Creator, as our Father. Cast all your care upon Him (1 Peter 5:7).

5. Freedom from worry - Luke 12:32-34

Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Worry binds, but trust in God frees you to give and have treasure in heaven. Money spent is gone, but given it is an heavenly investment of the heart and yours forever. *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* See Matthew 6:29-31; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; James 2:5.

Where is your treasure? Is it in this world or the next? Are your possessions for yourself or for God's use?

II. Warning Regarding Christ's Return - Luke 12:35-53

Jesus teaches about His return for the first time. It is a central teaching of the New Testament. He makes four points in this passage.

A. Be Ready - Luke 12:35

Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning. Be prepared and ready to go at a moment's notice. Are you ready if the Lord should come?

B. Watch - Luke 12:36-38

And you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Do you look for Him daily? Do you wait for Him in prayer and by lingering in His word?

Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. Love delights to serve. Jesus came to earth to minister, He continues to minister from heaven, and He will minister forever. How are you serving and ministering to others as you wait and watch for His return?

C. Be Expectant - Luke 12:39-40

But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an

hour you do not expect. No one knows the time of Christ's return. He expects His own to be ready at any time.

1. Rewards to the faithful servant - Luke 12:41-44

Jesus asked, *Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household?* The answer is, *Blessed is that servant whom the master will find so doing when he comes.* Great reward is promised to those who prepare for the Lord.

2. Retribution to the unfaithful servant - Luke 12:45-48

But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming." The servant's defection began in his heart when he began to doubt the imminent return of his master.

"The Church soon ceased to wait for His coming; and it was that and not the so-called conversion of the Emperor Constantine, which opened the door to unconverted ministers, corrupt doctrines, and persecution of those who were faithful to the Scriptures" (The Student's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, George Williams).

The servant who knew but was not prepared for the master was beaten with many stripes. He who did not know, yet did the same things, was beaten with few stripes. This helps answer the question about the fate of those who have never heard the gospel. God is fair and will judge on the basis of what people could have known not what they could not have known. (See Romans 1:20 with Psalm 19:1-4.)

D. Prophecy of Jesus' Death and Division - Luke 12:49-53

Jesus said He came to send fire on earth, not peace, as long as people reject Him. Faith in Christ can result in division in a family.

III. Warning to Discern the Signs of the Times - Luke 12:54-59; Matthew 16:2-4

A. Discern the Time - Luke 12:54-56

We think we are sophisticated in predicting the weather with advanced technology and means of reporting, yet even in Jesus' day the weather was predictable. *You say a shower (storm) is coming, and so it is.*

Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? If they were smart enough to predict the weather, should have been able to understand the signs of the times.

They should have known who He was and that it was time to get right with God, and to make basic moral judgments!

Why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? Why do people ask the wrong questions and omit the right ones? Questions of who we are, who created us, and why we are here? Why are so many people more interested in the weather and the things of this world than in Jesus Christ and eternal life? Where do your interests lie?

B. Settle Disputes - Luke 12:58-59; Matthew 5:25-26

When you are on your way to court with your opponent, take the utmost pains to get entirely rid of (settle with) him, so that he may not rush you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the sheriff, and the sheriff put you in prison. I tell you, you will never get out of it until you have paid the last penny (The New Testament: A Translation in the Language of the People, Charles B. Williams). In Matthew, these words of our Lord appear in the Sermon on the Mount in the section on anger and forgiveness where they seem to fit better. However, the point is the same: doing the truly wise thing. Just as it is wise to settle out of court, if at all possible, it is wise to get over anger and forgive and make up with the other person before it becomes virtually impossible to do so.

Applications

1. How wise a servant of Christ are you? Are you prepared today for His return? In what ways could you be more prepared?
2. How wise are your relationships? Are you in good standing with family members, fellow employees, merchants, business associates, acquaintances, and government? In what ways do you show wisdom in doing whatever it takes to have good relationships?
3. Will you confess hypocrisy, greed, or anxiety as sins and rely upon the blood of Jesus to cleanse you? What sins do you need to confess now (1 John 1:9).