

Luke 12:1 - 12 Pt. 1 *To fear, or not to fear*

1 Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 "But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. 3 "Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. 4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! 6 "Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 "Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows. 8 "And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man shall confess him also before the angels of God; 9 but he who denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. 10 "And everyone who will speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him. 11 "And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not become anxious about how or what you should speak in your defense, or what you should say; 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

Here in this new chapter we enter into a long teaching, a long discussion, a teaching session.

Luke let's us know it's in the same time period. Jesus has exited the pharisee's house where He pronounced judgement on the entire false religion that was the pre-eminent religion of the land of Israel.

In fact, this sermon, in 3 movements, 3 points, is going on with some questions and interruptions all the way through Luke 12 and into the beginning of Luke 13. It's a long sermon. A long teaching. Sort of an

interactive sermon or teaching where Jesus responds to questions as He goes.

But over-all, the theme is that people who belong to a false religion, do not honor God, they do not honor the Son, and they do not honor the Holy Spirit. And as such, God will reject them and cast them into hell.

It's a trinitarian sermon. By the time we get to vs. 12 next week, He will have talked about honor, worship, fear, dependence, life influence and ownership as regards God the Father, the Son of man, and the Holy Spirit. All within a few sentences of each other.

The other common denominator is leaven. And before we dive in, I want to talk about this idea of leaven. Leaven. Yeast. The greek word is zymo, and it's still with us today. We get our word enzyme from this greek word for leaven. That guy in the My Big Fat Greek Wedding movie was right. He's always telling you about how your words came from his homeland. Many do.

An enzyme is a foreign thing that attaches to something else and changes the properties. Like a virus for instance. Also the same idea. It attaches to something else and reproduces bad stuff like a little factory until the bad stuff can overcome the good and you die from it. We're all sort of freaked out right now about the dangers of a virus.

In this case, Jesus uses the common to everyone property of yeast. It's a separate thing that reproduces and spreads throughout the dough. In this case it's a good function. It blows up our bread dough with a million little air pockets and makes beautiful fluffy bread. And you don't put the whole thing in the oven, you keep a piece for "starter" for the next loaf, and the next and the next. Leaven permeates the pure lump of dough until it's all leavened and it rises.

The idea Jesus is talking about is the characteristic of permeation. Cancer cells also have that same function. They reproduce and permeate until the entire body is rotten and death follows.

Jesus uses the same figure of speech three times in three different places. We only have one of the three in our passage this morning. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisee's.

In Mark 8 He says Beware of the leaven of Herod. And in Matthew 16 Jesus says Beware of the leaven of the Saducee's.

Pharisee's, Saducee's, Herod. What He has done is in those three warnings, He has warned about every possible world view in that land that people attach themselves to.

So think about this with me. If I walk up and down my street and knock on every door and have meaningful conversations with the different folks in my neighborhood, or your neighborhood, I'm going to eventually get to a worldview that each person holds that encompasses an ideal of what is the best way to live your life to the fullest.

Everybody has some kind of worldview that they are attached to and it influences everything they do. Even the guys who don't think much beyond a *2 six packs of beer every day and be a good ole boy* worldview. Or perhaps it's a get high and stay high as often and as long as possible escapism worldview. We've got them all.

And in Jesus day it was the same as now, although with more stringent morality since the prevailing religion was judaism. Pharisee's, Saducee's and Herodians.

The pharisee worldview was one of uber religious law keeping in order to placate Jehovah. A very constrained works based religion that was a daily ritual of mumblings and bobbings up and down and rules galore and arguing daily with your other religious homies about the rules.

And it was not only all-consuming, it gave you a false sense of security that God was up in heaven just tickled pink at the pleasure of having someone like you to call his own.

Their false idea of God was that He was only slightly better and higher than what they had achieved through all their religious mumbo jumbo. The key to life and success was doing religious stuff. Traditions of men. Removed from the revealed word of God.

The stuff, the traditions of the elders and the volumes of rules that the scribes, the lawyers and experts had piled on was the leaven that had permeated the original chosen people of God until they were unrecognizable from their beginnings. Leavened.

Beware of the leaven of the Saducee's. The saducee's were the skeptics. They had jettisoned all the phony baloney of the Pharisee's because it was clearly empty, but they threw the baby out with the bathwater.

In their skepticism, they had moved to a secularism that abandoned God almost totally. They accepted the pentateuch alone. The five books of Moses. They did not believe in anything spiritual. Like our secularists today they were only interested in the physical. No angels. No miracles. No relationship with God. No resurrection. This is all you get, so get as rich as you can by any means possible.

They were the religious liberals. Skeptic of anything beyond what their 5 senses could see and understand. And since they were the wealthiest, they were also the most powerful men in the land. The chief priests and his family and their business ventures around money changing and animal sacrifices in the temple they controlled had made them filthy rich.

They were too busy getting rich and conducting business to be bothered with religion beyond taking advantage of the religious. And why not. Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. That ideal, that worldview had permeated everything they were, and did, and lived for. It was their driving force.

Beware of the leaven of Herod. The Herodians. Since the pharisee club was a lot of bother and sort of invitation only, and the saducee's likewise not really

an open club, and since Rome was actually in the drivers seat, they were the occupiers, there was a group of jews who said, the quickest way to a secure and stable life is to join the team that's winning, right?

These are the folks who are willing to leave their countrymen behind in order to align themselves with Rome and go with the flow instead of against it. Politics. Align yourself with the political party that's clearly in charge and make your life better by political gain.

Politics in all of it's forms is an engaging life force. Another group in Israel, the zealots, were on this same dead end street of politics, but they were the terrorists working against Rome. One of the apostles was a former zealot. Simon the zealot. Same gig. Politics as a life force. Very engaging mob think dead end street.

So if you think about it, within those three groups that Jesus warned were leaven that permeated and influenced until they were the driving force of your life, we find false religion. Actually we could say all three are false religions.

Pharisaism represents people counting on false religion and building a life style around religion. Saducees represents people only interested in physical gratifications without bothering with any sort of God. And Herodians are the political climbers. Politics is going to make my life worth living.

That about encompasses it, doesn't it. If I go from door to door and find out every driving worldview behind every person up and down my street I'm going to find people in those three places. Religion drives me. Gratification drives me. Politics drives me. And of course what we'll find is mixtures of all three drivers. Some combination is the leaven that has permeated and drives the person. We're talking about over-arching motivation.

What are you living for? What is it that drives your life force? What is the underlying motivation for your life?

For true christians, the answer should be easy. The glory of God. The

christian world view is that I'm a slave who has been purchased out of this world by a Lord and Master who loves me, and whom I love and serve. My motivation is His Kingdom. His authority to reign in this world. His fellowship and friendship. I want more of Him and I want His purposes in this world.

By the time we get to vs. 12, hopefully next week, we'll see all of these ideas in play. So let's dive in and unpack this first part of Jesus teaching. And He's addressing the single most pervasive of the worldviews. False religion. Most people within the sound of His voice are attached to the pervading false religion of the nation.

And it's also false religion that is the most opposed to Jesus. The money grubbers and the politico's don't really care much about Jesus. It's false religion that is the most violent enemy of Jesus. They are the ones who will combine with Rome and also the temple authorities to have Jesus murdered.

I Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all,

The introduction to our next phase of teaching tells us, it was the same time frame, could have even been the same day, but He's left the pharisee's house and has re-joined the crowd which by this time is massive.

The largest word for any number these folks had was 10,000. Myrion. And here the word is plural. So we have a multitude of multiple 10,000's. Too many to count.

And I'm sure Jesus had some lungs. The multitude that he fed both times was plurals of 10,000 because the number given is just for the men. Add wives and kiddo's and you can get to 20000 real quick. It takes a big voice to reach out to that number without our modern public address systems.

And Luke tells us they were stepping on one another, probably trying to get

within hearing range. And Luke also is careful to tell us, He's speaking first, or His priority is to his disciples. His math-e-tes. Learners.

This word doesn't necessarily just mean the 12. Disciples are a core group of serious learners that are following Jesus everywhere in order to learn. In verse 32 He addresses these same "math-e-tes" as *little flock*. So the number of serious learners may have been small compared to the curious multitude.

In John chapter 6 the disciples, or math-e-tes, left Him and went away because of His difficult teaching. You must eat my body and drink my blood, and it says they all left. All the serious learners packed it in. And Jesus asks Peter and the 12 if they're going to also leave. Remember? And Peter says; *Where would we go?*

So Jesus is preaching to the folks who are serious about listening and learning. And He's going to tell them, basically, if you're with me, you're NOT with them. To have Jesus means to walk away from false religious systems.

“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

The world view of the pharisees is the hypocrisy of false religion. Worthless religion. It isn't real. It looks like something that it is not. That's literally what the word means. The appearance of religion, but it's phony. It's empty.

That single statement is true of every single false religion. It's all for show. It's all very impressive until the little dog pulls back the black curtain and you find out it's fake.

Lots of ceremony and pomp and people marching around and prayer rugs and pots full of holy water and long impressive vestitures and bizarre hats and experts that know the un-knowable, and that's just the good ones.

Then you graduate to really satanic ones where people are physically harmed and babies are mutilated and death is virtuous.

But every false religion has in common that it looks like something that it is not. They make big promises and deliver nothing. But somewhere in the journey to nothing you get so caught up in all the stuff for stuff's sake that you forget about the emptiness.

False religion stops short of a real connection with God the Creator through the forgiveness of sin purchased by His Son, the Lord Jesus, implemented in us by the very real and personal presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

These folks who are crowding around Jesus have a choice to make, and it's not a particularly easy one. All of the various leavens around them, in this case and the one Jesus just immediately had walked away from, the leaven of the false religion of the pharisees, all of the different leavens don't accomplish an acceptance with God.

The choice they have to make is to leave the old empty solution, the empty lifestyle, whatever dead end street they happened to be on in order to have Jesus.

You can't have Jesus and stay in the Pharisee club. You can't have Jesus and be a card carrying member of the Zealot's who live every day to over-throw Rome. You can't have Jesus and be married to the politics of Rome. The Herodians. Rome will save us. Rome will give us life.

You can't have Jesus and be a greedy godless Saducee. Jesus plus power. That doesn't work. Everybody within the sound of His voice has a choice to make. Walk away from whatever it is that you were counting on in order to have life, so that Jesus can give you real life.

That's a tough choice. People don't just walk away from whatever their thing they've been working on, whatever dead end street they've invested years of their life in, to have Jesus instead. Most people won't do that.

Jesus said "follow me" to Peter and James and John and Andrew and the rest who belonged to Him, and they did. They turned their backs on not just their

national religion, but also their very social standing in society.

Everything was connected to the national religion. Social structure and family was intricately interconnected to the false religion in place. To leave that is to be separated, removed from society and family. Jesus is calling for something costly and difficult. Leave the false religion behind. Follow me.

You begin to understand why, in vs. 32, He calls the real committed believers a "little flock". After the resurrection and ascension into heaven we find a little group of about 120 people huddled together, who belong to Him. Don't be impressed by the myriads plural crowd that's stepping on each other to see the Jesus vs. the pharisee's spectacle.

“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 “But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. 3 “Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

Jesus says all the fake and phony baloney religion will be disrobed. Everything hidden and done in secret will be made evident. False religion looks so good, but a day is coming when the reality of its emptiness will be made known.

Oscar Wilde, the Irish playwright was disgraced and sent to prison in 1897 for sodomy. He has a quote that outlived him. He said; *“I forgot that little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and therefore what one has done in the secret chamber one has someday to cry aloud on the housetops.”*

Nowadays of course, he'd be a folk hero. But the words of Jesus haunted him at the end of his life. And they should haunt us. We don't get a pass.

Jesus doesn't mince words. The religion of the pharisees is fake. It's phony. It has no value. And at the last, all their hypocrisy will be shouted from the

roof tops.

False religion along with all the other various different leavens that people are counting on is all wood hay and stubble, and a fire is coming that will burn all of it up. Politics is not going to save you. Money and power is not going to save you. Empty false religion is not going to save you. It all goes up in flames. And if that's all you've got . . . then comes ultimate judgement.

4 “And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

Fear, and cost are motivators. Ultimately if you go against the flow, you cause friction. Conflict is caused by going a different direction than those who surround you.

Conflict from going a different direction than mob think can get heated really quick. There is danger for politically conservative kids on college campuses these days. Danger to tell a drug cartel that they cannot harm people by selling drugs. Danger to be a christian or a jew in moslem countries.

Jesus says, don't let the cost of conflict with men because you believe what I'm saying stop you from following. You will recall the man born blind, I think from John 9, who the authorities were questioning heatedly about his sudden ability to see.

His own parents were afraid of the authorities who were questioning him because to say that Jesus caused the man born blind to see would get them un-synagogued. Thrown out of the religion. Shunned. Societal and religious shunning to just say the Jesus had caused the miracle. They didn't want to pay the cost, so they wouldn't answer. Fear of men.

Multiply that by a crowd of multiple 10,000's. The men in power hate Jesus. The men in power will cast you out of society at best, and perhaps kill you at worst, if you follow Jesus.

You say, isn't Jesus overstating things a bit. Don't fear them who can kill the body alone. Is He inflating the danger here beyond what was reasonable?

Within weeks of Him stating this, they killed Him. All of the apostles except John were executed. And christians have been summarily executed from that day until this day.

200 years of religious freedom in America was the exception, not the rule. And even as we speak, we are waiting to see how much freedom we have relinquished because of the coronavirus scare that we may not re-gain. We have allowed a Governor who is not friendly to christians to regulate when and how we can meet to worship.

American exceptionalism and pluralism is under serious duress. We may quickly be ostracized from society at large. During the worst phase of the pandemic in New York City, Samaritans Purse, Franklin Graham's evangelical organization was setting up a field hospital and they were asked to leave because evangelical christians are bigots. Grahams clear biblical stand on biblical sexuality means evangelicals are bigots and we do not want bigots offering free services to us. Please leave, and they left.

How many lives were compromised and / or lost because of the intolerance of the tolerant? Go away bigots. We don't want your help. This is America, 2020 folks.

Real christians who believe the words of this book are at this point in time, in America, entering into a situation that is new to us, but old to Jesus and those who will separate from this world in order to belong to Him.

Conflict. Fear. Death? Unlikely for now. Ostracization from culture and society? Closer than you think. Your voice silenced in a free speech society? Closer than you think. Real harm to your pocketbook? Much closer than you think.

In Greenville Mississippi a local Mayor ordered churches not to have

congregational gathering in cars with windows rolled up listening to a preacher being broadcast on close range FM to them in their cars.

Attendees were fined \$500 for gathering at a church event, even though their windows were up and they were staying confined to their cars.

They were forced to expose themselves to increased danger by having to roll down their car windows to receive their violations from a police officer wearing no protective mask. A block away there were 25 cars at a Sonic Drive in that were not treated equally.

That's a pretty blatant singling out of Christians for unequal punishment. I expect to see little spot fires like that all over our land. America is changing.

Jesus clearly tells us here, fear, cost, is to be born by those who will separate from this world in order to follow Him. Nothing is more important than having Jesus. Nothing is more important than knowing God and having your sins removed. Nothing is more important than having the righteousness of Christ credited to your account for eternity. No cost is too high, even death.

4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"

The cost defined. God will cast into hell any who have filthy garments soiled with sin.

Let's talk about this verse 5. Does God kill people? It's an odd way to put it. Actually we killed ourselves with sin. The wages of sin is death. We did that. We chose our parents poorly. Adam did that and we were born into his family where death reigns because all have sinned.

Death is a fact of life. But there is also the truth that God is sovereign owner of all things in creation. God grants us each heart beat and each breath. So in

a sence, the sovereign God has appointed a time and place for that final breath, final heart beat. That belongs to Him because He is sovereign Creator and Lord over what belongs to Him.

But God also has sovereign control over hell. He can declare my last breath on this earth, and He has declared already who will enter the joy of His presence in the next life or who will be removed to hell. He has the power over His creation to do that.

Jesus warning to thousands of listeners is stated exactly right. Men can kill you. But men can't send you to hell. God can do both. So if the cost of avoiding hell later, is death here, that's what you need to do. If following Jesus is going to cause men to kill you; it's better than being friends with men at the cost of being an enemy of God.

Friendship with the world is what class? Enmity with God. It's black and white. Satan is ruler of this world. Friendship with this world and it's ruler is enmity with God. Jesus couldn't state it any plainer. Count the cost.

Friendship with this world is the easy road. The wide road. And you can be friendly with this world and very religious. Very religious. False religion is not at war with this world. False religion can't embrace this world fast enough. But the cost of the easy road is high. God will cast His enemies into hell.

I'm a horse trader. Just wired that way. I love to buy something cheap and fix it up, wax it up and make it work and sell it for a profit. To me that's fun. So I know a good deal when I see it. Value weighed in the balance. Cost / value ratio. My brain works that way. This is a good deal;

4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

Not being cast into hell is a good deal at any price. Nothing is too much to give in order to not be cast into hell. Any deal, is a good deal. Whatever this world levies against you for being friend of God, enemy of this world, it's a good deal. Take it. Joyfully! You gain Christ. You gain eternity in heaven, with Him. Whatever the cost is now, it's a good deal. Even death. It's an excellent deal. Take it.

Almost nobody took the deal. And today it's the same. Almost no one is interested in Jesus deal.

Someone has said christianity in America is 3000 miles wide and an inch deep. The depth problem we face isn't because the cost is high. The shallowness of christianity, evangelicalism in America, is because the cost is nothing.

Pressure against the church, if it comes, won't hurt the church in America. It might actually define it. All of a sudden the mega-churches might have 100 people instead of 10,000.

But then Jesus puts a qualifier in place. The world may hate you and want to kill you, but God has the final say. Not a hair of your head will perish He says in Matthew. God is sovereign over hairs. Jesus says the same thing here;

6 "Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 "Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows.

The world may hate you and spit you out. No value, you christians. Take your field hospital and get out of our city. Worthless bigots. But God doesn't see it that way.

God is sovereign over sparrows. Not one sparrow falls from the sky that God is not aware of it. And God is sovereign over you. And you are of more value to Him than sparrows.

Notice the word plays. Don't be afraid of the false religionists who will hate you and punish you when you leave their company. But do leave them behind because God hates hypocritical false religion and casts those enemies into hell. Fear God and being at enmity with God.

But when you have left the world behind in order to belong to God, do not fear because you are of great value to Him. And the same God who counts the sparrows and knows the number of hairs on your head, is sovereign over every valuable hair.

The world can't touch one hair on your head, outside of the will of your loving Father who values you and owns you.

What this passage defines is the value differential of those who are God's possessions and those who are Satan's possessions.

Before Jesus came to town, we were all just blithely going along with whatever leaven we happened to fit best with. False religion. Love of power and money. Political ambitions to change the world (to our point of view).

We were all just duped into whatever thing we were chasing, living in this world, friends with the world, enemies of God. The duping of false religion is particularly despicable. Because you're duped into thinking you're in good standing with God, you think you're His friend but you're twice His enemy.

A good time charlie or a greed monger is actually easier to reach because deep down they know they are living against God. But false religionists think God is happy with them.

And then a Man comes to town speaking authoritative truth, doing miracles, calling you out of this world and into God's authority to reign and rule. God's kingdom.

To leave the world behind and follow Him will cost you. He's asking you to come out of this world behind and follow Him. He's asking you to become an

enemy with this world that you were friends with and got along fine with.

Why would anyone do that? It's a cost : value equation. You can stay in this world and not fear the cost of being at odds with the men of this world. But if you do that, you need to fear God who will require your final breath while you are His enemy and then cast you into hell.

Or you can come out of this world and be God's own possession, and this world will become your enemy, but God will be your Father and owner and Sovereign.

You say, that sounds like a pick the least of two evils argument. Either God is angry with you or the world is angry with you.

Well, yes, in a sense, that's completely right. There is a massive war going on that you can't see. Satan and his angels have stolen this world and infected it's people with sin and death. And God is in the process of judging this condemned world with it's condemned ruler and all of it's condemned, duped men who hate God and love their evil.

What the man who walked into town doing miracles is offering is an opportunity to come out of this condemned world and join with the God who is the victor in the war.

Enemy of this world, perhaps, but peace with God. Peace with God! And that my friends is worth any cost that this world can levy against you. Inner peace. My sins are forgiven and removed. The wrath of God no longer hovers over me. Peace with God, and joy in the Holy Spirit are what is gained when you come out of this world and belong to God.

And then Jesus adds, and don't forget who owns the hairs of your head, and values you greatly. This world can't touch you without His sovereign will allowing it.