

## Message #59

## Luke 12:1-7

Years ago, when I worked for Kregel Publications, I had to fly to Chicago to do a book show. My original plan was to get my luggage, get a taxi and have it take me to Pheasant Run, which was a convention center located about 30 miles from O'Hare. When I got my luggage and walked out of the terminal, there was a man with a limousine who asked me where I was going. I told him and he said that his pickup did not arrive, so he had an empty limo and he said he would take me to Pheasant Run \$10 cheaper than a cab. I said, "Let's go." As he was driving out of the airport, I noticed that people apparently thought I was someone rich and famous because they kept trying to look in to see who was inside. Even when we were on the expressway, people would stare. For 45 minutes, people thought I was something I wasn't. Just by being in the limo, the impression others had of me wasn't reality.

There is a noun that shows up in the Bible that is scary. It is the noun "hypocrisy" or "hypocrite" (υποκρισις). It is a word that means play actor. In fact, it was used of an actor who went on stage and played a part (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p.461).

When it comes to spiritual things, God does not want us riding through life being some phony play actor. He does not want us riding through life pretending to be something we aren't. He does not want us to project ourselves one way, when in fact it isn't reality. God wants people who are real and not phony play actors.

God wants His people to be "blunt honest" about themselves before Him, knowing they are on full display. He would rather have a person be totally honest about his sin than to put on some act.

Hypocrites are people who play act. They are people who act as if they really love God and His word. They are people who act as though they are very spiritually-minded, but behind the scenes it isn't reality.

As Jesus Christ was getting closer to the cross, He found Himself in the presence of thousands of people, all of whom had the potential of play acting when it came to spiritual things. The religious leaders who were pretending to be right with God, wanted to catch Christ (Luke 11:53-54). But this is not just for phony religious leaders.

In fact, **verse 1** begins by making this address "to His disciples." What that means is that becoming a play acting, pharisaical hypocrite is a potential and possibility for even those who, at one time, had been close to Him. **Notice that Luke says he said this "first."** This is of the utmost importance. This is of first importance. Hypocritical Phariseeism is not the way of truth.

These disciples were destined, as Heinrich Meyer said, for great publicity. They would be given great power and their teaching would influence the world. Christ knew there was a danger lurking and it was the danger of becoming Pharisaical hypocrites. He decided to warn His own disciples about this. He never wanted His disciples to be play actors.

When Christ uses the analogy of “leaven” (12:1), He is using an analogy of something that starts small and then grows and grows until it contaminates. It is often used as a metaphor for sin.

**Religious hypocrisy and Phariseeism is sin.**

Once a person begins to play act, when it comes to his relationship with God, it can grow and spread to the point that eventually the whole life is that of a Pharisaical fraud. What Jesus wanted all to know was this:

**GOD SEES, KNOWS AND HEARS EVERYTHING AND SERIOUS JUDGMENT WILL COME TO ONE WHO PLAY ACTS AS A PHARISAICAL HYPOCRITE.**

Pharisees are phony play actors in their relationship with God. They pretend they are right with God and they put on a good show in front of people, but they know and God knows it isn't real.

In this passage, Luke presents two reasons for never being a Pharisaical, religious, play acting hypocrite:

**REASON #1** – Because everything is seen and heard by God and it will eventually be fully exposed. **12:2-3**

These verses should cause every person to shudder. Everything about us is on full display before God and when we pretend something that isn't real, He sees it and He will expose it. Frankly, I talk to God daily knowing this. I plead with Him to let me finish pleasing to Him and unashamed because I know this reality. Everything about me and everything about you is on full display before God.

There are three very sober realities Jesus brings out here:

**Reality #1** - There is nothing covered that will not be revealed. **12:2a**

In your own life before God, you do not want to try to cover up anything because if you do your cover will eventually be pulled off by God.

There are two very interesting words that are used here. The word “cover,” which is a word that refers to something that is veiled or covered completely. The word “reveal,” which is the antithesis which means to completely uncover, unveil or lay bare.

Christ is warning His people to never become play actors because God will completely uncover and expose the charade. A person who pretends he is real spiritual in front of people, but isn't really in his private world, will be completely unveiled and uncovered.

God will fully expose hypocrites. He will eventually uncover and show everyone just exactly what they really are.

Back when I was in school, there would always be students who would give the impression they were really getting it. They projected themselves to be learned students who were well on their way to become a scholar. But then exam day would come. Exam day exposed the truth about everyone. There was no hiding, there was no more projection; exam day told the truth.

Christ says you need to know there will be an eternal exam day. Jesus says do not play act and pretend to be what you are not. Because there will come a day when God will judge, and what one really was will be fully revealed.

**Reality #2** - There is nothing hidden that will not be known. **12:2b**

You never want to try to hide something from God because you can't do it. Eventually what you are trying to hide will be known.

That word "known" is one that means to see, perceive and to understand. The point is that there is nothing about us that is not and will not be fully seen. God sees and perceives everything about us. Everything is clearly understood, including thoughts, motives and actions.

When it comes to spiritual things, a person may hide what he really is from other people, but never from God. The person who is projecting himself to be really right with God, but isn't, will one day be fully exposed.

We have all heard appeals to make sure we let the Lord into the closet areas of our life. Fact is, He is already there, assessing and seeing and knowing.

**Reality #3** - There is nothing spoken that will not be heard. **12:3**

Pharisees have a big speech problem. We know from the book of James that speech will be a major part of judgment.

Behind the scenes Pharisees do a lot of talking. They lash out at the truth and they rip those who proclaim it to verbal shreds. Jesus wanted His disciples to know that what a person said in private would by God be made public.

During the time Jesus said these words, there was no TV or radio or daily newspapers. The ultimate form of communication was verbal. Often people would stand on one of the slate roofs of a home and cry out to people. This was a typical form of communication. This was how people got the latest news.

Christ's point is that whatever has been hypocritically proclaimed in private will eventually be fully proclaimed in public. One may have whispered his phariseeism in a closet, but God will see to it that it becomes public.

The Bible is filled with passages that warn us that our speech will be a major factor of our judgment (Matt. 12:36; James 3:1-2). If a person is giving the verbal impression that he was one way, when behind the scenes he is another way, it will be publicly displayed. God will ultimately judge a verbal viper (Proverbs 6:12-15).

Before we open our mouths, we had better examine our hearts and minds:

If we are using our mouths to challenge others to be godly, we better be ourselves.

If we are using our mouths to challenge others to be controlled, we better be ourselves.

If we are using our mouths to challenge others to be sacrificial, we better be ourselves.

If we are using our mouths to challenge others to be faithful, we better be ourselves.

**REASON #2** – Because everyone should fear God and His coming judgment. **12:4-7**

**The real fear we should have is the fear that one day our real and true self is going to be totally revealed by God.**

We may observe that the word “fear” shows up five times in these four verses (12:4, 5, 5, 5, 7). The word comes from a verb (φοβέω), which speaks of a very reverential fear that is actually a terrifying fear (*Ibid.*, pp. 471-472).

Jesus Christ wanted His own disciples to have a very reverent fear of the pending judgment of God to the point that they stay away from religious hypocrisy. There ought to be somewhat of a terrifying fear of the judgment of God.

Now there are three sober realities that Jesus brings out about fearing God and His judgment:

**Reality #1** - We should not fear people who can only hurt us in this life. **12:4**

The absolute worst thing that one man may do to another is to destroy his physical life; but he cannot touch a man’s soul.

This verse explains why some people become hypocrites: peer pressure. Some people are intimidated and afraid of people in power, who are able to do something negative to them in this life. Peer pressure has always been a reason people give in to ungodly things.

In Jesus’ day, the Pharisees and Scribes were powerful people. They could and did use their authority to execute people. So the potential of losing life was a very real threat if you crossed them. As a result, these Pharisees and Scribes intimidated many people to follow them and their ways.

There is a place for proper respect and reverence and obedience and even submission to God-ordained leadership. Christ even taught that concerning these very Scribes and Pharisees (i.e. Matt. 23:2).

However, never should a person become a hypocrite or turn from the truth because of fear. We should never become play actors in our relationship with God. Or with Jesus Christ, because we are afraid of what people may say or think.

I knew a man in Pocatello who was part of the Mormon church. He told me he did not believe in what they taught but he stayed in it because he said if he didn't he would lose his business.

He would be much better fearing God than the Mormon church because when he gets before God, he will be condemned forever.

The absolute worst thing that one may do to us in this life is to kill the body. But the moment that happens, it sends one into eternity forever. The one to fear is not the one who can destroy this life, but the one who pronounces a sentence in eternal life.

**Reality #2** - We should fear God, who will sentence us in the next life. **12:5**

Christ warns His disciples that the one to fear is the one who has the authority to judge and condemn one to hell. It isn't physical death that people need to fear, it is spiritual and eternal death that should cause them to shudder.

**Now there are a bunch of people who don't believe in hell today. Here is what these people need to know; Jesus Christ believed in it and you either believe in hell or you don't believe Him.** He is the One who taught on the subject.

The word "hell" (γεεννα) originally referred to a valley located S.W. of Jerusalem, which was used for burning refuse and garbage. At the time of Christ, this area was a place well-known and it was a place to be avoided. The term eventually was used to refer to the burning place of future punishment (*Ibid.*, p. 89).

Christ is warning people not to become hypocrites because there will come a day when each person will face Jesus Christ, who has the power and authority to sentence one to eternal fire and burning.

Some people tragically fear men more than God, but wise people are those who fear God more than men. God will judge a person after death. There will be a very personal, very real end time judgment of God and that is what we need to fear.

**Reality #3**- We should know that God closely watches us in this life. **12:6**

Christ wanted His people to realize that God closely watches them in this life and He cares for His people. He watches everything and He does this specifically in the context of judgment.

There are three key facts that are brought out:

**(Fact #1)** - God will not forget anything or any one of His people. **12:6**

God remembers everything, right down to the price of a sparrow. Not even one sparrow is forgotten by God. When His judgment comes, nothing will be forgotten. He knows who paid what price.

**(Fact #2)** - God does intimately know every one of His people. **12:7a**

God sees and knows things about us that no one else sees or knows. He knows the very hairs on our head and we don't even know that. He is the one to be feared and revered because He knows things about us we don't even know.

**(Fact #3)** - God does eternally value every one of His people. **12:7b**

If God keeps an accurate account of what happened to sparrows, He will most definitely keep an accurate account of what happened in our lives, for we are far more valuable.

William Van Doren said in this world there are four types of hypocrites:

- 1) The worldly hypocrite - one who promotes godliness but is really worldly.
- 2) The legal hypocrite - one who promotes rigid rules, but doesn't really abide by them.
- 3) The evangelistic hypocrite - one who preaches to others outwardly, but is unholy inwardly.
- 4) The enthusiastic hypocrite - one who is emotional about truth, but still clings to evil.

How about us? Where are we in this?

God wants you to be "blunt honest" about your sin and cast your faith on Jesus Christ to save you.