

INTRO: FEAR... Shapes Behavior! It determines what we say, what we hide, and what we're willing to stand for. – In Luke 12, Jesus speaks to His disciples and confronts a defining issue of discipleship: Will you live fearing people – or fearing God? So, I have entitled this sermon, **WHOM WILL YOU FEAR?** *

I. BEWARE OF HYPOCRISY (1-3) – **READ:** *Jesus had just Exposed the Hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees*, and we learned in (11:53-54) that they constantly sought to trap Him in some way. – As their **Spotlight Moment** began to fade, **attention is now drawn to a different audience.** – Luke tells us that **Myriads of People GATHERED** to hear Jesus (1a), providing the setting for Jesus' next teaching moment. – So, **addressing His Disciples** Jesus Warns of the **RISING PROBLEM of HYPOCRISY.**

- **HYPOCRISY is a Disciple-Level Danger, not Just a Pharisee Problem (1a)** – It is a real threat to genuine followers of Christ when Fear of People replaces Fear of God. *This is why Jesus said...*
- **Beware of the LEAVEN of the Pharisees which is HYPOCRISY.** – In the Bible, **LEAVEN** (*typically yeast or fermented dough*) is a **powerful metaphor for influence**, describing something that starts small but spreads thoroughly to transform whatever it touches.
- **In the GOSPELS**, Jesus uses the word "*leaven*" six times with both **positive and negative implications**, warning against Corrupting Influence or the Expansion of the Kingdom of Heaven. – **Jesus then provided three warnings: HYPOCRISY...**

A. Will Rise like Leaven (1b): When leaven spreads... it is **Quiet, Subtle**, but eventually **Pervasive**. – Jesus told His disciples to **BEWARE**, because the HYPOCRISY of the Pharisees could eventually **"RISE UP"** in their own hearts! – *"Hypocrisy is to the ego what Yeast is to bread... it puffs up"* – W. Wiersbe

- We too must **Be Careful of Yeast** in our own lives: *(1 Cor 5:6-7) Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens a whole lump? Therefore, purge out the old leaven... WHY? Because...*

B. Will Be Seen (2): Jesus **CONNECTS** hypocrisy with Secrecy and Revelation. – Nothing hidden remains hidden! – All sins that are covered up will be **REVEALED!** – All **Secret Sins** will be **disclosed**. – **This speaks of DEEDS!** – Even **King Solomon** knew this: *Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.* (Eccl 12:13-14) – Jesus also included **Hypocritical Words...**

C. Will Be Heard (3): Everything whispered in **Private Rooms** (*secrets, plots, private confessions*) will be **PROCLAIMED** on the **Rooftops** (*publicly known*). – Jesus emphasized the importance of words, *"But I say... for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment."* (Matt 12:36)

1. Why does Jesus say this to His disciples? Because when persecution approaches, disciples may be tempted to Blend In rather than Stand Out, to appear faithful without living faithfully before men, much like the Hypocritical Pharisees. – We must understand that...

- **Hypocrisy Is Rooted in Fear of Exposure!**
- **Hypocrisy Thrives when we Fear Discovery more than we fear God!**
- **Hypocrisy, Fear, Deceit, and Lies will all be revealed one day!** – With a poetic flare **Sir Walter Scott** uttered, *"Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive."*

2. Why go on Pretending? – Hypocrisy HIDES ITSELF before men... but never before God! – True Disciples are called to LIVE **Honestly** and **Authentically** in a world ruled by FEAR. – **BOLDNESS OVERCOMES FEAR** when we live PURE lives before our HOLY GOD! – *Jesus addresses this next...*

II. BE MINDFUL OF GOD (4–7) – READ: *This section explains what causes Hypocrisy... FEAR!*

– In the Bible, fear and hypocrisy are viewed as **deeply interconnected**, often fueling one another through a cycle of **deceit and anxiety**. – Here, Jesus contrasts the Fear of Man with the Fear of God.

A. The Fear of Man (4) – People can harm the body, but their power is limited and temporary. – Yet even disciples can be tempted to **FEAR** and Play the Hypocrite. – Scripture records **Peter playing the Hypocrite** when he withdrew from eating with Gentile believers in Antioch due to **pressure from Jewish "circumcision" groups** (tt. Gal 2:11-13). **Paul called His brother out!**

1. Many people HIDE their true selves because they **FEAR the Opinions or Persecution of others**.
2. Many scriptures are provided to help Counter the Fear of Man; here are a couple...

- God has NOT given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Tim 1:7)
- The fear of man brings a snare. (Prov 29:25)

P/A – Jesus doesn't tell His disciples "**Not to Fear At All**"... He tells them **WHOM NOT to fear** and **WHOM TO fear** instead. – **Fear is inevitable... but REDIRECTION is the issue!**

B. The Fear of God (5) – The disciples needed to know that **God alone has authority over both body and soul!** – This is not terror, but **REVERENT AWE!** – Jesus warned that **since God sees everything**, it is far better to FEAR the ONE who holds eternal authority than to fear temporary human judgment!

1. **F.O.W.O.T.** is the CAUSE of failure in so many lives: Fear Of What Others Think **F.O.W.O.T.**
 - (Psalm 56:11) In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?
 - (Psalm 118:6) The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?
 - (Heb 13:6) So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"
2. **FEARING GOD is the only Healthy Fear that exists!** – WHY? Only He has the **POWER to condemn!**
 - So then, KNOWING this Helps! – (Prov 9:10) "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."
 - So then, LIVING this way Frees Us! – "By the fear of the Lord one departs from evil." (Prov 16:6)

P/A – The fear of God anchors the soul because it rests in both His **POWER** and His **CARE**. Perfect segway...

C. The Father's Care (6–7) – Jesus balances **Reverence with Reassurance**, providing two thoughts:

1. **He Values Us (6):** He pointed out that even though sparrows were in abundance and cheap, God was aware of each one! – (Heb 13:5b), For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."
2. **He Knows Us (7):** Using a Superior Comparison, Jesus emphasizes God's awareness of personal details... "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." – A human scalp has roughly 90,000 to 150,000 hairs, with the exact number varying by hair color, with blondes having the most (around 140,000-150,000) and redheads having the fewest (around 90,000), due to differences in hair thickness and follicle density. On average, people lose about 50-150 hairs daily, which is normal as new hairs constantly replace them. (Google)

P/A – When believers are **MINDFUL OF GOD**, there is **Nothing to Fear!** – God knows and numbers even the hairs on their heads, assuring His intimate, detailed attention to our lives! **He deeply Cares for Us and Values every person!**

Closing Illustration: **FEAR HIM... DON'T DOUBT HIM!** – A child feels safe not because the world is harmless, but because they trust the one holding their hand. – When you truly Fear God, you no longer have to fear any person or any situation. – Such profound truths should prompt believers to...

III. BE BOLD IN YOUR CONFESSION (8–12) – **READ:** Jesus KNEW that **PERSECUTION WOULD SOON COME** for His followers, and at some point would force a **DECISON!** – So, Jesus moves from **FEAR** to **CONFESION** because **what we Fear Most** eventually controls **WHAT WE CONFESS!** – (2 Tim 3:12) tells us, Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus WILL suffer persecution!

A. A Decision MUST Be Made (8–10) – He begins with the phrase “**WHOSOEVER**,” which applies to everyone. – At some point, **everyone MUST DECIDE** to either **CONFESS CHRIST as LORD and SAVIOR** or **DENY Jesus Christ as LORD!** (cf. Phil 2:11) – Jesus says this because after His crucifixion, His followers will soon be publicly identified with Christ. – So, **Silence will no longer be an option!** (*So, Be Bold Then!*)

1. **Results of Confession (8):** *It is Honored* – (Rom 10:9) “*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus... you will be saved.*” – Notice that this confession IS BEFORE MEN... NOW! – The **RESULT** being, **Christ will acknowledge True Believers in Heaven!** – Such a confession helps in Heaven, but **when we confess Christ as Lord NOW, it's easier to Live in Truth and AVOID HYPOCRISY!** (*So, Make your Decision Now!*)

- **Confession before men determines recognition before Angels.** – (Rom 10:13) “*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” (*So, Be Bold Then!*)

2. **Results of Denial (9):** *It is warned against* – **WOW...** This is a direct reference to **ETERNAL SOUL DAMNTION!** – This speaks of **those who reject Christ totally** but also includes **those who Decline in making the Confession, because 'they just never got around to it!'** – Failure to **CONFESS CHRIST** is still **DENIAL!** – (2 Tim 2:12) “*If we deny Him, He also will deny us.*”

- **Silence, Denial, or True Confession all have Eternal Consequences!** (*So, Make your Decision Now!*)

3. **Results of Blasphemy (10) Which is Persistent Rejection** – Jesus presents a sharp contrast between two types of speech: **Speaking against the "Son of Man" (Jesus): This CAN be forgiven!** But **Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit aka the Unpardonable Sin: This will NOT be forgiven.** (*Unbelief*)

- Scripture makes clear that **A Hardened Resistance to the Spirit's Testimony leaves NO ROOM for REPENTANCE!** – This is not 'ignorant sin,' but a **Hostile and Hardened POSITION** against Jesus Christ. – (Heb 3:15) “*Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.*”
- **The NT describes Three Times when Israel received the Divine Witness, but REJECTED it:**
1) They rejected **John the Baptist**, who was SENT by the Father, 2) They rejected **the Son** when they gave Him to Pilate, and 3) in the book of Acts they rejected **the apostles witness** as testified by Stephen in (Acts 7:51), who said “*...You always resist the Holy Spirit!*”
- **Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an attitude of heart that cares nothing for God's forgiveness.** It never has **forgiveness because it never wants forgiveness God's way!**

B. A Direct Answer Provided (11–12) – Jesus moves on to describe the ministry of the Holy Spirit. –

He gives a promise of **Divine Enablement for Witness**, shifting focus from fear of human courts **to faith in God's presence and guidance** during intense trials, because...

1. Persecution would Come (11) – Jesus is primarily speaking to Jews, “*Now when they bring YOU to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities.*” – He knew that the Elders and Rabbis would soon chastise them in their synagogues for being **Christ followers** and for leaving Judaism and Law.

- This promise was demonstrated when **Peter and John** were arrested by the Sanhedrin.
(tt. Acts 4:1-13) – **They spoke with such BOLDNESS** that the council was astonished – They were enabled to do this because **Jesus Christ was their confession!** (Acts 4:10)

2. Preservation was Provided (12) – Jesus promised that *the Holy Spirit will speak through them...* and He did! He saved them and used them mightily!

- Hundreds of Thousands of Christians since then have faced this problem and been helped by God's Spirit.
- It is the role of the Holy Spirit to Teach us, Guide us, Lead us, Warn us, Rebuke us, and even Comfort us. **He longs to FILL us** so that we, too can **BE BOLD IN OUR CONFESSION!**

P/A – True boldness isn't self-confidence; it is **HOLY SPIRIT-Dependence!** And Dependence on the Spirit Replaces Self-Preservation... We see this later in **(Acts 4:31)** “When they had prayed... they spoke the word of God with boldness.”

CLOSING THOUGHTS: *When pressure comes, exposure is near, and opposition is real* – **WHOM WILL YOU FEAR?** – Jesus removes the **EXCUSE OF FEAR** by assuring them they will never stand alone!

FINAL SUMMARY:

- **Fear of Man leads to Hypocrisy**
- **Fear of God leads to Confidence**
- **Healthy Fear produces A Bold Confession**