

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (August 7, 2022)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

My dear Mother-in-Law was not a fan of edges. When you combined edges with speed, height, or both, things got interesting.

When Kathaleen and I were first married we lived in New Jersey. I was in graduate school. Kathaleen's mom, from Las Vegas, flew out to take a training course at Harvard and she extended her visit to stop by and see us. Kathaleen was working and so I drove the hour south to Philly International to pick her up. It was summer, the sun was out, and so before I left for the airport, I took the doors and the top off the Jeep. It was a glorious drive down I-95. I arrived at the terminal, found her, loaded her stuff into the back of the Jeep, she climbed in. We were 15 minutes into our return journey, driving 65 on the freeway, my left leg dangling out the driver's side door, when I realized, she had stopped talking. I looked over and it was clear she was petrified. Both of her hands were clamped onto the grab bar in front of her. She was not enjoying the wind through her hair, or the sun on her face. For the next 30 minutes she didn't say much, did not laugh at my jokes, her expression did not change. Things got better when I slowed down and turned onto surface roads. But honestly, it wasn't until we stopped, she pried her fingers from the grab bar, and she exited the Jeep, that she began to breathe again. I learned then and there that she was no fan of edges. I'm pretty sure, being the good and loving Son-in-Law I am, that I put the doors and top back on before our return trip to the airport (actually I'm hoping that's what I did ... not completely sure).

Our passage from Luke this morning is terrifying. It is the one place where we come right to the edge of unforgiveness. We are warned here not to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. How horrible to be eternally beyond the forgiveness of God. That is a place no one who understands what lies on the other side of death wants to be. Is this something that I could do by accident, one moment unintentionally saying something, doing something, blaspheming, and falling off the edge into eternal unforgiveness? Much better to put the doors back on and stay well clear of the edge.

But then again, even with this dire warning, we need to hear the expanse of God's grace and mercy. He is warning us here because He loves us. Stand clear of the edge!

The Depth of Grace, the Edge of Unforgiveness (Luke 12:4-12)

Jesus said, ⁴"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority

to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

⁸And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, ⁹but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. ¹⁰And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. ¹¹And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, ¹²for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. Who are we told "not to fear"? Who are we warned "to fear"?
2. What does this passage tell us about how much God values us? How much is our life worth ... in sparrows?
3. What does this passage say about God's kindness & grace? What can a person be forgiven of? Not forgiven of?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4. Who has the authority to cast us into hell?
5. What does, "speaks a word against the Son of Man" mean?
6. What does it mean to acknowledge Jesus before others?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

7. Who or what do you fear? Why do you fear them/it? What is the worst they/it can do to you?
8. What is "hell"? Is it a real place? How is it described? Do you want to go there? Why or why not? What happens after we die? How do you know what will happen to you after you die?
9. What is blaspheming against the Holy Spirit?
10. How can you live confidently that you have not blasphemed the Holy Spirit, crossed over the edge, into unforgiveness?

As you spend time praying remember that prayer is meant to be the most natural, easy, and empowering, part of your day. Prayer is talking to God and hearing Him talk to you. In your prayers thank God for how much He loves you. Pray for courage to lovingly acknowledge Him to others. Ask God to help you love Him and not live-in fear. Ask God to give you the right words when others challenge your faith. God will help you; He really loves you.