

The Benefits of Fearing God

Luke 12:4-9

August 16, 2020

Grab your bibles, open to Luke 12. The entry into Luke 12 has been pretty hard hitting, I think. Personally, it's been hard hitting to me and I think for a number of us as well, and today we're going to discover the strength and the encouragement that Jesus gives to those who fear God. In all that has happened already during this pivotal year, the year 2020 has revealed an undeniable reality about America's spiritual condition. We're a nation that no longer fears God and that point ought to be obvious, that is to state the obvious, that we are a nation that no longer fears God. But because this nation no longer fears God, God has handed over this nation to judgments. A number of judgments, one of which is that we as a nation are being oppressed by a whole host of fears and worries and anxieties.

Obsessed with physical health, people are enslaved to the fear of catching viruses. Obsessed with physical safety, people

are enslaved to the fear of violence. Whether that's at the hands of the police and they want to defund the police or whether it's at the hands of a lawless mob and every citizen now wants to arm his or her self. Obsessed with personal wealth, people are enslaved with the fear of economic collapse. Gold stock is rising. Obsessed with personal privacy, people are enslaved by the fear of exposure. Obsessed with individual liberty and personal autonomy, people fear whatever threatens that.

And they're getting hostile about these fears. So the year 2020 is lining up to be the year that America's idols have become more defined and at the same time America's fears have been exposed. And the nerve endings are raw and sensitive. These things are related, idolatry and fear are related. Glaringly absent in all of this fear is the fear of God. We know as the church, as biblical bible believing Christians that the solution is quite simple. The answer for America is very easy, return to the fear of the Lord. Return to the fear of God. Remember what got us here, repent and return to the fear of the Lord. If you fear God you will fear nothing else. Do not fear God, you'll fear everything else.

When I hear Christian leaders pandering to America's fears, in talking about things that people are afraid of as if they are valid reasons to worry and be anxious about these things before God, fear of contracting a virus, fear of police brutality, fear of racial prejudice, fear of mob violence, or fill in the blank. I am really puzzled as to why these Christian leaders do not use this occasion to point people to the fear of God and faith in Jesus Christ. Because that is the only safe harbor from any other fear.

Why not call the ungodly fear exactly what it is? Anxious unbelief. Why not confront the underlying idolatry? Why not compassionately preach Christ, the balm of Christ, to a fearful soul? Fear God, you'd fear nothing else. Refuse to fear God and you'll be handed over to fear everything else. If you belong to God in Christ then I can say without any fear of contradiction that you have nothing to fear.

If you belong to Christ you are set, and I'm not just talking in the sweet by and by where nothing, trouble, sin, temptation, nothing can touch you there. I'm talking about here and now. You have nothing to fear from anything, nothing to fear from anyone. That was Paul's point to the Roman Christians. The Roman Christians, the church in Rome where they lived underneath the fearful reign of the tyrant Nero. And he asks the, a series of rhetorical questions in Romans chapter 8, "If God is for us who can be against us? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" Roman courts have nothing to say to us. "Who is there to condemn?" Some proconsul? Some governor? Some emperor?

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword? Paul answers all those rhetorical questions with one powerful and beautiful sentence of Christian conviction. He says I am sure, I am certain, I am under deep conviction, I have certainty that "neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able," that is they are not able, "to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our lord."

He wrote those lines to people who were living under threat. He wrote those lines to people who were living under hostility and opposition against the church. We tend to read those lines, memorize them, as we should. Stitch them on pillows, put them up on nice hangings on our wall, and that's a good thing to do. But let's never forget that these are, these lines are written to real people at a real time and a real place in history, who were undergoing significant reason, challenges, to their security and, and peace in God and his care for them.

So fellow God fearer, this is the theme for this morning's message, this morning's sermon. Because in this text we find Jesus preparing us, because he prepared his disciples, he's preparing us to stand firm in the midst of a hostile culture. He's preparing us to stand up in the midst of a hostile population of people. To stand firm in the face of anti-Christian leaders, whether they are religious authorities, or civil authorities, or what's becoming apparent to all of us it's a blend of the two these days. This is a text, Josh mentioned



this earlier in his opening, this is a text that could be timelier for us.

This isn't, this couldn't be any more relevant for us living today that prepare us for the world that we have entered. To prepare us to face the challenges that are coming at us and by God's wise providence the heat is being turned up to refine the church of Jesus Christ. And as we're going to see that is not something for Christians to be afraid of. This is something for us to rejoice in. Because with one hand the father turns up the heat and stokes the fire, but with the other hand he strengthens the metal.

This is what Jesus has been preparing his disciples to face. The inevitable, eventual persecution that these men, these disciples would face at the hands of the leaders that they were all raised to respect and honor and obey. It was in their DNA and their instinct culturally, socially, politically, religiously, to respect the Pharisees and the scribes, the Sanhedrin. And Jesus is preparing them for a time when they must stand firm.

So take a look at the text, starting in verse 1 and we'll read through verse 12. Luke tells us that, "in the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But 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! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

“And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And 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, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

From a socio-cultural perspective, our situation today is very much like the setting in Luke chapter 12. Same sentiments are animating the people of our time, same deference to authorities that are hostile to God and to Christ. And so the same danger faces the church today, with masses of fearful people who are easily weaponized by hypocritical leaders to persecute the church. This is why the Lord wants us to hear these words of strength and encouragement, he wants us to hear them now, today, for our time, in our place.

I'm going to give you three encouraging words for those who fear God. Three encouraging words, and we're going to get to two of them today and one of them next time. Jesus is giving us, here in our text before us, he's giving us reasons to fear God but he is also conveying these reasons to fear God in terms of benefit, in terms of blessing. And that's how we need to read these lines before us so we're going to go through today we need to read these in terms of benefits and blessing because when we fear God benefit and blessing accrues to us. Fear God, and blessing follows.

And as we've, we just sung about, we also see in this text the blessing is by the hands of a triune God, Father, Son and Spirit all involved in bringing blessing to those who fear the Lord. So like I've said I'll cover two of them today, just give you those points, and then we'll wait on the next one for next week. So first encouragement, you can write this in your notes, the word comfort. First encouragement is the word comfort, that the father cares for you. The first encouragement is the word comfort, you could write consolation, if you prefer it's that the father cares for you.

We find this in verse 4 and following. The father's care for those who fear him is evident in what Jesus says here to his friends. "I tell you my friends do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more they can do. I'll warn you whom to fear, fear him who after he's killed has authority to cast into hell, yes I tell you fear him." And if you think cower before that statement, remember he called you friends.

And he says to his friends, "are not five sparrows sold for two pennies, not one of them is forgotten before God. Why even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not you are worth more than many sparrows." Five times in just four verses Jesus uses that verb *phobeo*, to fear, to be afraid. Once in verse 4, three times in verse 5, and then once again in verse 7. And if you look at the text you'll notice that in the first instance in verse 4 and in the last instance in verse 7, Jesus commands his friends, his disciples, against fearing. He tells them not to fear. Do not fear verse 4, fear not verse 7.

Different verb tenses, we'll come back to that. In the three uses of *phobeo* in the middle of this in verse 5, Jesus encourages his friends and about what they should fear. What they ought to fear, rather whom they should fear. Fear the God who has all power and all authority. That makes sense. Fear him.

Notice further down in these two prohibitions, do not fear verse 4, fear not verse 7. In the first instance in verse 4 Jesus prohibits us from fearing anyone with just the power to kill the body. That's all the power that they have, is to kill the body. That would include men, angels, demonic angels, any intelligent beings that can do us harm, do harm to our bodies, "do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do."

In the second instance in verse 7, both because of the tense of the verb that's there and the immediate context of the verb Jesus has expanded the prohibition, forbidding us from fearing anything, not just that kills the body, but anything that makes us fear, or worry, or be anxious about anything that pertains to our creaturely life.

So for anybody who's prone to say, Yeah I don't fear my death but, I fear everything in between. That person is caught up in this second prohibition. He's expanded the list of things not to fear in verse 7, by the context and by the command, the tense of the verb. So whether this, these things to fear at the hands of human actors like penalizing reactions from authorities, or hostile censures from the public, family, friends, or whether they are things to fear from inanimate, unintelligent, causes like viruses or diseases or climate change or hurricanes. Jesus commands us not to fear, any of it.

Do not fear man, do not fear circumstances. Do not fear about health, do not fear about provision, do not fear about protection, there is no created thing that Jesus says that we are allowed to fear. Fear not, why, the logic? If God cares for small insignificant sparrows, well he certainly cares for you. That means to fear anything then is in essence a slander against God. It's a slander against his character because when he promises to care for us and we fear in spite of that promise what are we saying? Don't believe your promise. Either that

you're not faithful, and you won't keep your word, or that you're not able to keep your word because you don't have the power to deal with my day-to-day fears, anxieties, and worries.

When it is God who promises to care for us, he who is our great creator, our sustainer, our protector, our provider, our redeemer, that we would shrink back from, in fear from anything at all, that is an expression of unbelief. It's very subtle isn't it. We tend to justify our fears and worries and anxieties as valid. Well after all, don't you know that... It's really an insult against his promise to care. It's a slander against his faithfulness. It's a denial maybe of his power. Denial of his attention, concern.

Again, that may not be how we see it but that is how it is. That is how it is, that's how God sees it. Which means we do not have a right to coddle our fears or anyone else's. We don't have a right to excuse our fears or defend our fears. And I'll say this to all of the leaders, you don't have a right to coddle other people's fears. You don't have a right to make them feel secure and okay with being afraid of things.

You don't have a right to foment their fears or pacify them and mollify them for feeling afraid and anxious and worried. We've got to treat our fears and worries and anxieties as temptations to sin against God. As temptations to defy commands like this from our Lord Jesus Christ who says over and over "don't fear." We've got to treat this like any other temptation to sin. Now I have tried here to speak very precisely that we are not allowed to fear any created thing.

No fear of man or angel. Whether sinner, sinful man or sinful angel, a demon. No fear of uprising, of violent political activists. No fear of civil unrest, even a civil war. No fear of government control, oppression, tyranny and all the rest. No fear of demons though they be released from the pit of hell itself and hell coughs up demons onto the earth to torment the people of the earth. Listen if they are created things we do not fear.

No fears at the cosmic level. Contracting and expanding Sun that would alternately freeze or else barbecue us. No fear of rogue comets, asteroids hurdling throughout, through space to smash into our little world. No fear of climate change, polar ice caps, melting down to drown us all, well here in Colorado we're good. No fear of earthquakes. No fear of hurricanes, tornadoes, even sharknadoes, nothing, we don't fear.

No fears of the microscopic level. No fears of viruses passing through the air by rogue coughs or maskless strangers or by Christians who are singing songs of praise to God. No fear of bacteria in our food, living in our stomachs, poisoning our bloodstreams. Whatever falls into the category of created, we're not allowed to fear it.

What about that which is not created, but has been from the beginning? What about that which is from everlasting, Jesus says yes. He is the one whom you must fear, that's verse 5. There are two aorist imperative verbs which are very, very strong. The sense is fear God and make fearing God your highest priority. It's a matter of your constant concern and daily attention that

you must fear God. The stress in those verb tenses is on the solemnity of the command. It is a solemn duty that we fear God. It is, it is, there's a gravity in this command.

Fear God, do it now and make that a constant habit of your life a top shelf priority. Now the disciples and most of the crowd that's listening to Jesus say all of this, primarily Jewish people raised in the Synagogue, most of them if not all of them hearing readings from the Law and the Prophets every single week and throughout the week. For them this language from Jesus is not at all strange or unfamiliar. Even though many in their day, as many in our day in our evangelical circles, many had drifted in their day from the practice of fearing God the language itself was not unfamiliar.

Same thing with us in our churches. The language about fearing God, fearing, fearing Christ, fearing the Lord, that's all common to us but what about the practice of it. Same condition these hearers are in as well. So what Jesus commands here that's familiar language to them, for the crowd, this harkens back to Moses. I mean they will remember, in the reading

of the Torah they remember, Moses bringing the people out of Egypt, the Exodus, and the time at Sinai. When Moses stood between the people of Israel and the God of Sinai. The mountain, mount Sinai was back lit by flashes of lightning. The mountain was engulfed in smoke. It was the place of God's visitation and the people were afraid. It says in the text that they trembled, they stood far away from the mountain and they said to Moses, "you speak to us. You speak to us and we'll listen but let not God speak to us lest we die."

They were fearful. And Moses said to them, in Exodus 20:20, "do not fear for God has come to test you." And then this, which may seem at first like a contradiction, he says "do not fear for God has come to test you that the fear of him," that is the fear of God, "may be before you." So don't fear, so that you may fear him.

To what purpose? In order that you may not sin. Jesus is sounding remarkably similar to Moses. He's saying the same thing. His teaching is in perfect harmony with Moses, with the law, with the prophets. Fear God, make it a top priority, why?

So that you may not sin. Sinful fear, anxiety, worry, most of the time these are expressions of some subtle form of unbelief. Which leads us to even greater displays of sin which eventually makes us transgress against God. And most often these lead to very subtle sins, sins of omission. Failing to do our duty, failing to do what we ought to do.

Sinful fear, worry, sinful anxiety, causes us not to love God but to love ourselves. Not to truly love man, but to love ourselves because we're catering to self-centered fears. Sinful fear causes us to shrink back when we should lean forward. It causes us to sit down when we ought to stand up. Sinful fear causes us to remain silent when we should speak up and speak out. To affirm when we should be rebuking. Sinful fear of man wanting the approval of fellow human beings, it is the idolatry of preferring man over God. The creature over the creator. It's about sympathizing with the creaturely feelings of some other sinful person over clearly revealed truth in the fixed firm, character of a holy God.

Now, remember the point. We started by calling this a reason for comfort, that God the Father cares for those who fear him and fear nothing else. So how does this comfort? Remember, Jesus' audience as I mentioned, whether we're talking about his disciples, or the crowds of people they are Jewish people. They have got a Jewish upbringing. They're raised in synagogues, raised to visit the Temple. And so as they listen to Jesus say this they are reminded of these words of Moses. They're reminded also of other verses in their bibles as we ought to be. About benefits that accrue to people who fear the Lord. I've put together a little list, this one comes from the Psalms. It's by no means comprehensive because I'm just going to one source but it's all over the Old and New Testaments.

Benefits that accrue to those who fear the Lord. But just sticking with some verses from the Psalms, those who fear God, Psalm 25:14, those who fear God have the friendship of the Lord it says there. He makes known to them his covenant. Those who fear God enjoy the abundance of his goodness, Psalm 31:19, "stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you." God's goodness, Psalm 33:18-19, "Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope on his

steadfast love that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive during famine."

Very practical stuff, benefits of fearing the Lord. Psalm 34:7, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and he delivers them." An encampment around us means safety, means protection. "Oh fear the Lord you his saints," Psalm 34:9, "for those who fear him have no lack. The young lions suffer want and hunger but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing." Psalm 85:9, "Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him." God provides food for those who fear him, Psalm 111 verse 5, "He remembers his covenant forever and he provides them food." Daily bread. Psalm 111 verse 10 "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. All those who practice it have a good understanding."

"God will bless those who fear the Lord," Psalm 115 verse 13, "both the small and the great." "He fulfills the desire of those who fear him," Psalm 145 verse 19, "he also hears their cry and saves them." And one more this one is so precious, Psalm 147 verse 11, "The Lord takes pleasure," takes pleasure, "in those who fear him." He takes pleasure, "in those who hope in

his steadfast love." The pleasure of God is bound up in those who fear the Lord.

This is the care of the father Jesus speaks of. This is the care of the father for those who fear him when you fear God, in return he grants you friendship and joy and goodness and refuge and favor and protection and provision and deliverance and salvation, and food. Covenant faithfulness, wisdom, understanding, blessing, fulfilled desire, answered prayer, rescue and the very pleasure of God. And to that list, scripture can fill in so much more. We heard this early in our service but I would like you to turn there if you can, Psalm 103.

Psalm 103, David lists the benefits there. Benefits directly from God, from the Lord, for those who fear him. We read that list, he forgives all your iniquity, heals all your diseases. He redeems your life, crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. Satisfy your soul with good, renews your youth, and then Psalm 103 verses 10-14 say this, "He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities." And isn't that good news? "For as high as the heavens are above

the earth so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west so far does he remove our transgressions from us."

Remember what we're talking about in Luke 12? The things that are spoken in secret are going to be shouted the things done in the dark are going to be seen in the light. And we talk about for Christians we go, seek forgiveness, and God forgives our sin and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. He separates those sins from us as far as the east is from the west. Christian if you fear God, if you're regularly confessing and repenting, you're among the people who do have nothing to fear from God's bringing things out for, for public exposure.

He cares for you that's the promise here, he cares for you so much. Look at verse 13, "as a father shows compassion to his children so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him." For he knows our frame. He remembers that we're just dust. What powerful encouragement isn't it? Such everlasting comfort for those who fear the Lord. Down in verse 17 "the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear

him." You think it's going to change? No! God is eternal and from everlasting to everlasting he changeth not. He is the same yesterday and today and forever. When he makes a promise like this, you may believe it.

No wonder the Lord tells Isaiah in Isaiah 35:4, "Say to those who have an anxious heart, 'be strong, fear not.'" God speaks so tenderly to the fearful. He assures them of his strength and his protection. We just talked about sinful fear, worry, anxiety. Being sinful before God. Being an offense, an affront to his promises. But God is tender toward you in your fear and your weakness. He understands you're just dust. He understands you struggle with things that make you afraid. He doesn't shout at you for that. He doesn't excuse it, he doesn't say, oh no, there, there, it's okay, you have a right to be afraid. Those are bad things. He doesn't say that at all.

He tells you "There, there, take refuge in me. Take refuge in me, you'll never be afraid." Because anything that makes you afraid, Isaiah continues there, and speaking comfort to those with an anxious heart he says, "Behold, you who are weak, you

who are fearful, you who are anxious, you who are worried. Don't fear, be strong, behold your God will come with vengeance. And with the recompense of God he will come and save you."

Words of strength to a fearful soul. We need to hear that don't we? We need to be lifted up and strengthened, every single one of us. There's some strong men in this church. Strong men of deep conviction. Strong in body, strong in soul. They need to hear this as well.

Back to Luke 12. Tucked as we are safely in the hands of a powerful almighty God, just consider what security and comfort that there is for you who fear him. Jesus uses an illustration from the marketplace here to show the level of detail in God's care for those who fear him. He says in verse 6, "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?"

Tiny birds like sparrows were caught, killed, skinned, roasted, eaten as a snack. You put enough of those little tiny birds together you can make an actual meal out of them. I realize that caught some of you off guard. If you're feeling any

sympathy for these poor little birds I understand but consider where your snacks come from. All your chicken nuggets and tenders and buffalo hot wings. Meat of slightly larger birds right? Quite tasty, meat from small birds it's like a fast food snack for those who've got a lot of money in the marketplace.

And in Matthew 10:29 Jesus quotes the going rate in the market, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny." So two for a penny is the price, but what he says here is that they'll throw in another one for free if you buy twice the number. So, sparrows two for a penny or five for two pennies. This is just, he's just talking about a marketing thing here. So everyone in the crowd is going to consider sparrow life rather cheap. It's purchased for very little money, it's quickly eaten and easily forgotten.

But not by God. Notice, not one of them, even the free one thrown in in the purchase, not one of them is forgotten before God. Even those things that we consider to be small and insignificant, things that we don't mind, killing, skinning, roasting, eating, consuming, digesting, and forgotten about.

Even those things God sees them, he counts them, he considers them, he cares for them.

Look ahead at verse 24, Luke 12, "consider the ravens. They neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn and yet God feeds them." Of, "of how much more value are you than the birds?" He's making the same point here in verse 7, "why even the hairs of your head are all numbered." God is so detailed in his care that he knows each one of the hairs on your head? I looked it up, there are somewhere between ninety thousand to a hundred and fifty thousand hairs on every human head and God knows each one of them individually, he has them all numbered.

The tense of the verb Jesus uses here means that not one hair has been missed in God's count. The number is never forgotten. They remain numbered, once for all. It's normal to lose between fifty to one hundred hairs from our head each day. God knows exactly which ones. Since God has ordained all things that means he's ordained the number of the hairs that you lose each day. He's ordained which ones you lose. Today Bob loses

hair number eight fifty one, hair number ten thousand six hundred fifty three, hair number fifty seven thousand one hundred eighty two. And so on, and so forth.

Listen, Jesus is just showing us that the father knows so much more about you than you know about yourself. The father cares for you more than you can possibly know or understand. And so Jesus says there at the end of verse 7, "Fear not, you are of more value than many sparrows." I know some of you are thinking, well how many? What's, what's my sparrow quotient? That's irrelevant really. Because the point here is that with the backing of a father like this, a father who is so detailed in his attention to us and his care for us, why would we ever, ever, doubt him?

Why would we ever fear, be anxious, worry? Is there any good reason for having an anxiety attack? Is there any good reason to fear what people think about us? None whatsoever. The father's care is cause for such profound comfort for us that we must never fear anyone, or anything else, ever. And when we do,

we visit the Lord for more care, more comfort in his forgiveness.

Let's consider a second encouragement. Encouragement number two, the word courage. So we've talked about comfort, now let's talk about courage. And the courage is found in this, that the son confesses you. Of course I'm speaking to those who fear the Lord, I'm speaking to those who are following and obeying these commands, fear him, fear God, fear nothing else, fear God. Those whom Jesus calls friends, you can have courage because the son confesses you.

What Jesus says in verses 8 and 9 to the God fearers is meant to instill great courage in us. Unashamed boldness in us knowing that Christ, Christ himself will vouch for us when and where it matters the most. Look at those verses, "I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. But the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God." What is greater than the temporal courts of human judgment or the fickle courts of human opinion? The eternal verdict of a heavenly

court. That's really all that counts in the end. That's really all that matters.

Let me give you several observations on this section here. I think I've got five of them, yeah five. First observation, the English Standard Version translation of the word here, *homologeō*, the ESV translated as acknowledge, rather than the more usual translation which is, to confess. I understand the choice that they made, I realize why they did it, but to acknowledge someone doesn't seem strong enough here and especially when you consider the context.

I'll come back to that in just a moment, I'll give a second observation. Jesus makes a distinction, the way he speaks of himself notice that. He uses the first person pronoun, *me*, as the one that we must confess or acknowledge before men. But then he uses a third person title, the Son of Man, to refer to himself at a future time and before the angels of God which refers to that heavenly courtroom. So he talks about confessing *me* and then the Son of Man will, so he's talking about himself but different in two different contexts.

Third thing, since Jesus is speaking here about our, how our choices on earth count in heaven and since the scene that he pictures for us is a heavenly courtroom setting the test that he is preparing us for now, as his disciples, is a judicial test. It's the court of public opinion, one that can execute, enforce social penalties upon us or a court with more legal jurisdiction, formal jurisdiction. A court that can enforce formal legal penalties, or like civil penalties, or even criminal penalties.

The context supports this view he tells his disciples in verse 11, what to do, how to think, quote, "when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities." So, the community and the courts were confessing and denying Jesus as the Christ, as the Son of Man. These are the places where courage counts.

So fourth observation, back to that matter of how we translate the verb *homologeō* here. The literal meaning of

homologeo, it combines the word *homoias* which means same. Think about homo and how it's used today, it's the word same and then the verb *logeō*, to say or to speak. So the literal meaning of this verb *homologeo* is to say the same thing as. To say the same thing, it's actually not a bad way in this text to think about the meaning of *homologeo*, especially when we count God's view of all things to be the only legitimate standard of comparison. So to confess something means to say the same thing about something that God says about that thing.

To acknowledge, to confess, is to say the same thing as God says about it. So when we confess our sins we're saying the same thing about our sins that God says about our sins. When we confess Jesus it's not enough just to say his name, to add him to your list of religious leaders that you respect. It's not enough just to acknowledge him, say he's a great historical figure, great truth teacher, great moral example.

No, we need to say the same thing about Jesus that God says about him. Namely that Jesus is the Christ, that he is the Son of Man, that he is the incarnate Son of God, that he is the

savior of the world, that he is Lord of all, yes it means he's Lord of me and you right now, right here, in everything I think and say and do. He's Lord, that's what God says about him.

To confess Jesus then means to say the same thing that God says about him. And one final observation, just adding a proper nuance to this word *homologeō* so we understand how Jesus is using it here to strengthen us. When *homologeō* is used in a judicial context it means to make a binding statement, to testify in a courtroom, it means to bear witness to something. And so it can have a similar sense also when it comes to less formal settings, which is how we commonly experience this test.

The meaning of *homologeō* in an informal setting means to confess something in public. To stand up for and show allegiance to, and loyalty to, in front of other people, whether in a classroom for students, whether in the workplace for adults, whether with your neighbors, your friends, your family; to stand in the court of public opinion, so to confess in that setting, setting is to make a public acknowledgement of allegiance, to

declare your loyalty to confess your allegiance and your loyalty.

Now, let's take those five observations and kind of put those things together and see how this aspect of fearing God is meant to invoke courage in our hearts, moral courage, boldness in our speech. Look back at verse 8, Jesus says, "I tell you everyone who acknowledges me before men." That is, before the community or before the courts, informally, or formally, standing at the bar of human judgment or human opinion.

Each and every one of us who acknowledges Jesus, that is in the fear of the Lord, we are to refuse to be intimidated. Refuse to be silenced by human opinion or human judgment. We confess Jesus first in that greater sense by saying the same thing about Jesus that God says about him and then second in that more immediate sense of professing our allegiance to that one, declaring our loyalty to that one.

When that's the stand that we take, and especially when it costs us, especially when it counts, Jesus says, "I tell you the Son of Man will acknowledge that one before the angels of God." For every God fearer who has felt the scorn, taken the abuse, experienced the hostility of the unbelieving world, this is cause for such immense courage.

We look forward to that day of visitation, don't we, as Christians, 1 Peter 2:12. That day, Romans 14:11, "when every knee will bow to me says the Lord and every tongue shall confess to God." What do they confess? Paul gets even more specific in Philippians 2:9-11, "God has highly exalted Christ Jesus and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow before him. In heaven and on earth and under the earth."

It's comprehensive, it's all inclusive, everyone bowing before Jesus whom we are to confess. Every tongue will confess on that day. What are they going to confess? That Jesus Christ is Lord. Not my government. Not my school system. Not the administration. Not my friends. Not the workplace. Not my family

members. Not my neighbors. Not the Rec center, the community, the community things I'm a part of. They're not going to be there to bow before and profess lordship.

No, every tongue is going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the father. We long for that day don't we? When everybody sees our savior like we see our savior, and we see our savior in such fullness of his glory. To see him in all of his glory and strength, and power and honor and majesty, that is what I long for, that's what you long for. Groan inwardly, Romans 8:23, waiting eagerly for the consummation of our hope in Christ. Because we know Jesus is Lord. Because we, we know that he will confess us when we stand one day in his father's court room. In the presence of the holy angels who execute the will of God.

This infuses us with courage to know that the Son of Man will confess us. That he will acknowledge on that day our allegiance to him in his court. And that really counts for all eternity, that is for keeps. Turn to John 5, and just quickly, just to illustrate this a bit, just want you to appreciate the gravity of Jesus' judgment and what it means.

John 5 and starting in verse 22, John 5:22 and following, Jesus tells us that "the father judges no one but he has given all judgment to the Son." Hmm, that's interesting I thought God the father is the judge, no, the father is the judge but he's given all judgment to the son. The son is going to execute judgment. Why, verse 23, "so that all may honor the son just as they honor the father." Equal weight of honor and glory to the father and the son.

If there's any better argument for the Trinity, there it is right there. "Whoever does not honor the son does not honor the father who sent him." Think about the implications of that. "Truly, truly I say to you whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has," that's present tense, abiding possession, "has eternal life. He does not come into judgment," he, "has passed from death to life."

The author of that gospel, John the apostle, he makes the meaning of verse 23 even crystal clear. In case there is any

doubt, he makes it crystal clear in 1 John 2:23, "That no one who denies the son has the father. And whoever confesses the son has the father also." Again, 1 John 4:13-15, "by this we know that we abide in him and he in us because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the father has sent his son to be the savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God." Spirit, Father, Son, all wrapped up in a Trinitarian passage, telling us, confess the son.

If you confess the son, you confess the father, the Spirit bears witness to that confession, he confesses the son. So to confess the son is to honor the son. To honor the Son is to honor the father also, to abide in God, to have eternal life. Now go back to Luke 12 and notice that the opposite is also true. That "the one who denies me before men," verse 9, "he who refuses to confess me," which means either he refuses to say the same thing as the father says about Jesus and, or, refuses to confess allegiance to him, "that one will be denied before the angels of God."

Obviously that, that excludes all those religions, doesn't it, that deny Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. Judaism, Islam, Mormonism, the Jehovah's witnesses, the United Pentecostal Church. Like the one that was struck by lightning over here on Highway 34, sends its children all around our neighborhoods to raise money. They are anti-Trinitarian. All those religions that do not, that deny the Trinity they overtly deny the son.

That goes for all the Hindus, and the Buddhists, all the Bahis and all the eastern religions. They claim to honor Jesus but they do not say the same thing that the father says about him. They make Jesus out to be just another religious teacher. They add him to their pantheon of Gods, put him on the shelf, lining him up as just another idol. What about the other sense of confessing Jesus, that is taking a public stand.

Maybe you say the same thing about Jesus as the father says about Jesus but do you take a public stand? Verbally testify before the community, or before the court of public opinion. Before the courts themselves. Those who refuse to do that, who

shrink back in fear and in shame, the warning is clear in verse 9, that "the one who denies me before men will be denies before the angels of God." Strong statement, isn't it?

There's strength and confidence, conviction, coming as we see the Spirit is going to strengthen us on that day. Unless you doubt, as we all ought to, doubt our own strength in that time. We don't rely on our own strength, never did. Our own salvation isn't up to us, so our preservation isn't either. Our confession is Spirit generated. So we'll come to that in a minute, I just wanted to relieve your minds for, why this reference here to the angels of God?

When Jesus said, this, this passage by the way sounds very similar to something he said in, in Matthew chapter 10. He said similar things during his Galilean ministry, that's before this time right here. He spoke of confessing and denying, and then he spoke of doing that "before my father who is in heaven." He says that twice. Here it's before the angels of God, seems like a step down doesn't it? Before the father, before the angels? What's the significance of this?

Quite simply as we've seen in Jesus referring to himself in these eschatological terms as the Son of Man, he's overtly setting the scene and even picturing in his mind and speaking from that picture in his mind about the day, the scene, of the Great White Throne Judgment. With the angels pictured here as the bailiffs in the courtroom, as the deputies from the sheriff's office who were there ready to execute his judgment. In Federal courts I guess they'd be the U.S. Marshals. It's not a scene I'd like to imagine, being on the wrong end of this. I don't like to imagine it for myself or any of you.

John looks ahead to that great day of judgment he writes this in Revelation 20 verse 12, he says "I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne and the books were opened and then another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged by what was written in the books according to what they had done. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them." That is there's a general resurrection of all people, believer

unbeliever all of them there, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

Casting this in the terms Jesus uses in Luke 12, the judgment is based on what they did. Did they confess, or did they deny. Where they God fearers or where they man fearers? What did their behavior manifest? And Jesus as the exalted Son of Man on that day, the one to whom God has handed all judgment, the father has put all judgment into his hands. He calls each one forward by name, he works through the evidence line by line of the things recorded in the books. Each item having been insidiously, impeccably, recorded in the book by an impartial omniscient recorder.

Surrounding the courtroom are the angels of God awaiting the verdict. Ready to execute judgment. And you can picture Jesus there, in his role as the Son of Man, the exalted Son of Man, and he's taking note of the angels looking around the room, he's created each one of them. He knows each of those angels by name, he remembers their deeds, he knows the roles that they played in the redemption, the history of redemption here on

earth. Ah, there's the one that he deployed in the beginning, to guard the way to the tree of life with a fiery sword. I remember him.

There's the one who accompanied him to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, to rain fire and brimstone upon the cities. There's the one that he sent to strike down the first born of Egypt. And there's the one that he sent to strike down a hundred and eighty five thousand Assyrian soldiers in their sleep in one night. There's Michael, the archangel who contended with the devil over the body of Moses. There's his second in command Gabriel. The two of them did battle against the demonic forces of Persia according to Daniel. Many of them, led by archangel Michael, they fought valiantly against the Dragon, against his forces when they were cast out of heaven.

And all those angels are there, and they await the verdict of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. And they are ready at that moment to do his bidding in the execution of his justice. And when the word comes, Revelation 20 verse 14, "then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second

death, the lake of fire. And if any one's name was not found written in the book of life he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Who's doing the throwing? It's the angels. They're ready and zealous to do the will of the Son of Man. And they will cast, according to Revelation 21:8, they will cast the cowardly, that is those who fear man and do not fear God. They'll cast the cowardly along with all faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars. Listen, the cowardly, those who denied the son, they will join all of those in "the lake that burns with fire and sulfur which is the second death."

That's what Jesus means in Luke 12:9 when he says that they will be denied before the angels of God. Now, the good news, the courage for us God fearers, means you see escaping that before the angels of God who act as the marshals, who act as the sheriff deputies to take us and cast us in. We don't fear them. They're on our side. We're on their side. This infuses us with such courage that Jesus would tell us, the Son of Man will

confess us before those angels of God. That guy with the flaming sword, well put it away Travis is one of mine.

If we'll stand for him now, no matter what the situation he'll stand for us then. We'll not only escape the dreaded judgment of eternity in hell; we enter into the joy of the triune God who is our eternal reward. This gives us such great courage beloved, such boldness before others. We're going to join those saints of old whose courage is exemplified, wrapped up in the apostles. Acts 4:13 describes the reaction of the rulers of the Sanhedrin and they're shocked by what they witnessed in these guys in their own courtroom. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they perceived that they were uneducated common men and they were astonished, they recognized, "Wait, they've been with Jesus, they were there to hear this message from him." May the same be said of us beloved. And not by men either, not by the pages of history, but by our Lord when he confesses us to be allied with him. When he confesses us before his father and before all the angels of God, amen? We have one more point to cover which we're going to come to next time, for now let's pray.

Our Father we thank you so much for sending the Lord Jesus Christ, the divine truth teacher, truth teller, our Savior and our God, our Lord, our salvation. Father we just ask that you would make our church, make us as believers, make us a pocket of God fearers here in northern Colorado. A refuge from the vile and violent world. Father let us be a place where your loving care is manifest among us. Let us be a place where the confession of your beloved son is welcomed and rejoiced in and celebrated; may that be our only boast. let us be a place where the Holy Spirit teaches our hearts, giving us all assurance before you and confidence before the world. Father may you work powerfully among us your people. Christ's church, by your Spirit and all of this redounding to your glory in the name of Jesus Christ our savior, amen.