

## The Danger of Religious Hypocrisy

Luke 12:1

August 2, 2020

It's a joyful opportunity I have of week by week opening up Luke's Gospel and we are entering into a new chapter in our study. So I'd invite you to turn there, if you haven't already, turn your bibles to Luke chapter 12. Today's sermon is really going to be aimed at setting up this incredibly helpful chapter and so, so timely. Luke 12 is a chapter on discipleship. That is the theme, that's what's modeled here by our Lord. He is training his true disciples, those to, whom he, reflectively, affectionately refers to as friends in this chapter; it's a very unique reference to his disciples as friends. And he is training them to follow him as Lord in an environment of hostility, in an environment of hostility. And this hostility which has always been kind of below the surface, always we've been studying through Jesus, or through Luke's Gospel, this hostility has become more pronounced, more open, more obvious.

As we've seen recently in our study and the immediate context, end of chapter 11, Jesus has just outed the Pharisees

for their hypocrisy. He's exposed and deconstructed the unbelief of their most respected bible scholars, the scribes, the lawyers. And this, Jesus has really in that, in that meal time, he, he's looked past the smoke and the mirrors of pharisaic religion. He's pulled back the veil so that everyone can see pharisaic religion for what it really is. It's a religion of harsh legalism, heavy burdens, and blatant, blatant, hypocrisy.

That's the only thing that can grow out of a soil of unbelief, bad religion, and hypocrisy. Wherever we find bad religion, in whatever form it comes, you can be sure that it will bear the poisonous, noxious fruit of hypocrisy and it is a religious hypocrisy, which is the very worst kind of hypocrisy. Jesus describes hypocrisy here in this chapter as leaven. In 2020 we might make another analogy in these times. Hypocrisy is like a virus, it is contagious and it is deadly. This deadly virus is running through the world right now, a very virulent strain of it and almost wholly unchecked. And while everybody's attention is on the coronavirus, everybody trying to save the world from physical infection.

Keep safe distances, wear a mask, shut everything down, open everything up, no shut everything down, no go back and forth. This virus, far more deadly, far more contagious, the virus of hypocrisy continues its spread unabated and almost unrecognized. But Jesus identifies the virus for us, for all of his disciples, for anybody who has ears to hear, eyes to see.

Verse 1 of chapter 12, look what it says, in the meantime when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, sounds like one of those protests in one of our large cities right? He began to say to the disciples first, his disciples first, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy. He begins with a warning; the section ends with a cure. With a remedy for the insidious and pernicious sin of hypocrisy.

And because it's going to take several weeks to make our way through these verses, I'm going to give you the remedy up front. The remedy for religious hypocrisy is the fear of God. The fear of God is the remedy for religious hypocrisy. Fail to fear God and you will most certainly fall prey to hypocrisy and

you will suffer greatly for it. Fear God and you will not only **not** catch the virus, not only will you refuse to ingest the leaven, but you will enjoy the benefit and the blessing of God.

When you fear God, you are not only inoculated against hypocrisy but you come underneath the loving care of the Father, Luke 12:6-7. You enter into the fellowship of his son, verses 8-9. And you partake of the edifying ministry of the Holy Spirit, verses 10-12. We enjoy great benefit when we refuse to fear man and when we fear God instead. Our fellowship is with the triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Notice, we're going to read this right now, but notice the Trinitarian pattern in these verses as we read.

Starting in verse 1 of chapter 12 again, "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? And 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 who ever 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.”

What promise. All tied to Father, Son and Spirit. What strength in those words. If only we will fear God and not fear man. For today, we need to give our attention to the warning that Jesus gives against religious hypocrisy. As I said, today's sermon is going to setup the whole chapter. It's going to provide the lens through which we're going to see the context of everything that Jesus says in this chapter. So this, it is an important sermon to pay attention to, to listen carefully to. I had developed for this morning a fantastic four point outline to get us all the way through verse 5, but I don't remember, I didn't remember I was out of the pulpit too long, I need to divide this sermon in half.

So, in the first two points which we're going to cover this morning, Jesus here is alerting us to the danger of religious of hypocrisy. The danger of religious hypocrisy. The second two points are about the remedy for hypocrisy, which we're going to cover in detail next week. The danger of religious hypocrisy and its remedy.

And I want to tell you that my hope and prayer for you, for all of us, has been this, it's two fold, throughout this section, verses 1-5 in particular. First and most obviously I've been asking the Lord to guard us, to guard our church, to guard faithful churches, to guard true Christians, to guard us from the sin of hypocrisy in our own lives. There's nothing more blinding, destructive, and for those who are characterized by hypocrisy, hypocrisy is eternally damning.

Those who live as hypocrites on this earth go to hell. Not those who are guilty of a hypocritical moment, here and there, as we are all guilty, right? But those who are characterized by hypocrisy. Beloved we need to be on our guard. The second aspect of what I've been praying, I'm asking the Lord to help us grow in discernment, to guard us from the hypocrisy of liars.

Because, beloved, we have been saturated in a world of hypocrisy. And like a fish swimming in water does not feel wet, so we too have a hard time, sometimes, noticing the hypocrisy of liars all around us. So I'm asking the Lord to give us discernment, and I'm asking the Lord to keep us from the sin of

hypocrisy. To do that we need to start with Jesus' warning about this danger which is stark.

We're going to start with this point, a first point, simply put, religious hypocrisy is dangerous. Religious hypocrisy is dangerous. Just two points for this morning, the first one, religious hypocrisy is dangerous and what I want you to do is go back to Luke 11 verses 53 and 54, we'll start there. Anybody who was paying attention may have noticed when I preached through Luke 11 and ended Luke 11 we just gave short, a short time to those two verses. And if you noticed and you're aching for more, well, here it is, okay?

"As Jesus went away from there," verse 53, "the scribes and Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say." All those terms there, press hard, provoke, lie in wait, catch, or it could be translated entrap, that is blatant hostility. That is, that is opposition that has been, that has come to the surface, and now it's angry hostility



against Christ. The gloves have come off now and they are baying for his blood.

When Luke tells us here, the scribes and the Pharisees begin to press him hard, it almost sounds synonymous with the next statement, that they provoked him to speak; like they're pushing him and provoking him and that's not, that's not quite the sense of that first verb. The verb that the ESV translates, to press, actually, it refers to having hostile feelings towards somebody. We might say, they have it in for Jesus. It's a good translation, they have it in for him.

Herodias, Mark 6:19, says "had it in for John the Baptist." Same word; what was the result? John's head on a platter. This is an attitude of bitter hatred, of rancor and malice, which is the precursor to all murder. These men had murder in their hearts. They were guilty before God of murder. Right here. Setting aside what they did to Jesus on the cross, they were guilty of murder here, at this moment.

The verb is strengthened with an adverb that makes this whole description mean something like to be very hostile to, to harass violently. Look at the second statement in verse 53, Luke tells us what form their violent harassment took, they began to provoke him to speak about many things. That's a, that's a verb that originally came from teachers. When they were instructing a young student in basics, and things that required memory and recitation, they required their young student to speak back and recite back to them precisely. They wanted an exact, repeta, repetition, reciting, of what they just taught their student.

So this is, this is a verb that means an exacting expectation, there is no margin of error allowed whatsoever. Just like a, like a harsh school master. Now when that verb is used in this context, in this sense, it means to question closely or to interrogate. And the purpose of this kind of interrogation, fueled by murderous hostility, it is not to get to the truth. The point is to catch the subject in an unguarded moment. It's to catch somebody making any kind of off handed comment that can be used to further discredit or accuse or malign. That's what these scribes and Pharisees are doing, in this attitude of murderous hatred they're trying to entrap

Jesus. They're putting unanswerable questions to him and hoping to draw out of him some damaging discrediting statement.

The purpose of this false interrogation, this unlawful question, becomes very clear in verse 54. It's a conspiracy. They've all conspired here to ambush Jesus. Look what it says, "They are lying in wait for him to catch him in something he might say." That verb translated to catch him, it's a hunting term, these are hunters, ambushing the prey. Same verb Luke used in Acts 23:21 to describe a conspiracy then to assassinate Paul. More than forty men lying in ambush for Paul, they had "bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor to drink until they had killed him." They went on a hunger fast; they're not going to break until Paul's dead. I wonder if they kept it, because he lived past that incident.

But it's the same verb here. If you want a very recent illustration of what this verb looks like in motion. On July 28<sup>th</sup>, just a few days ago, the house judiciary committee examined the attorney general William Barr. I don't know if anybody caught that on video. Anyone interested can watch almost any

part of nearly five hours of video on the C-Span YouTube channel, and you see the way Democrats interrogated the U.S. Attorney General. Setting aside the shameful way they acted toward him, just look at the fact that they're uninterested in getting his actual answers.

They're interested in gotcha moments, in trying to shut him down, they aren't interested in facts. They just want to shut him down, shout him down, scold him, try to find some way to use his words on himself to entrap him. It is a perfect, relevant, recent illustration of exactly what Jesus experienced here from the scribes and the Pharisees. Listen, none of that questioning is sincere and honest, we all know that. It's the angry malice of religious hypocrisy and, beloved listen, it is dangerous.

It's murder in the heart that's just waiting for the murder at the hand. Why all the hostility here? Because Jesus had just exposed them for what they really are, hypocrites, and hypocrites get real violent when they're exposed as hypocrites. They don't like being exposed, that's why they try so hard to put on and wear the mask. The scribes and the Pharisees resented

Jesus removing their mask. And after that mask has been removed, after their cover has been taken away from them, there is nothing left to veil their evil heart. There is nothing left to mask their corrupt motives and so they go on the offensive and on the attack.

Oh, they could repent, couldn't they? Wouldn't repentance here, in verses 53 and 54, be a beautiful, beautiful way to read the text? Wholesale the Pharisees, the scribes, the lawyers, all the servants around the table, if they bowed before Christ and said sir, what must we do to be saved? Would that be a beautiful and glorious response to what can only be described of Jesus as a loving confrontation? He loved them enough to tell them the truth, but hypocrites, they have been masking an evil heart for so long, they have been practicing a false spirituality for such a long time, that they are blind to their hypocrisy.

They have learned to quiet their accusing conscience by calling evil good and good evil. They can't even recognize their gracious Messiah standing in their midst, they're so blind. There is nothing left in the conscience to respond to. No

accusation coming forth. They are wholly justified, they believe, in condemning Christ. Titus 1:15 describes them as “both their minds and their consciences are defiled.” Listen when you unmask hypocrites, they have nowhere to go but to go on the attack. And now that the mask is off, they are acting like the wolves that they really are. They are on the hunt, and they will not be satisfied until Jesus bleeds.

When we’re making this first point, that religious hypocrisy is dangerous, we mean at this point physically dangerous as in hazardous to your health. Listen this is a point that calls for much needed discernment on our part, beloved, because we are facing right now what can only be judged as the greatest demonstration of hypocrisy that our country has ever seen to date.

We’ve been talking about this for some time now, the advent of woke religion in America. This critical theory narrative, a secular Marxist infused world view that has been taught for several decades to our young people in school. The world view comes with an entirely new creation story, totally new origin

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story, informed by Howard Zinn's book, *A People's History of the United States*, which is described, one source describes it, "as a side of American history that can largely be seen as the exploitation and manipulation of the majority by rigid systems that hugely favor a small aggregate of elite rulers from across orthodox political parties." End Quote.

That, work William or Howard Zinn's, *A People's History of the United States*, is riddled with errors. It has been pilloried by true historical scholars, it is filled with anti-American bias, blatant omission, it is wholly uncritical and yet Zinn's book is being used as a text book in our High Schools, Colleges, and Universities. The effect has been to deconstruct American history, to erode young people's trust of American leadership, to take away their appreciation and gratitude for the country they've been privileged to be born in to. Instead they're being taught to burn it all down.

As I mentioned earlier, Cali and I drove around Canyonland's national park, Bryce Canyon National Park, Zion National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, Yellowstone National

Park, Mount Rushmore. Beautiful, beautiful places in our country. What preserves and maintains those parks, tax dollars, funding from us. I'd like to take some of those people from the urban areas and the academic ivory towers, who are just too stuck together with other people that think just like them and take them and just shove them out there in the wilderness for just some time and let the glory of God saturate their, their, their bitter souls. They just want to burn it all down?

From what I can piece together, here's the new narrative that we're being instructed to believe which forms the worldview of this new woke religion in America. We might call it woke-ism, because it is an ism, it's an ideology. It goes kinda, kinda like this. Once upon a time there was an undiscovered, unmolested land of happy pagans. Nomadic, sensitive, caring people. Their evolutionary development resulted in a symbiosis with nature. A balanced, peaceful, harmonious existence in the world, they always cared for the environment. They lived in harmony with the plants and the animals and primarily subsisted on a plant based diet. And they never sinned.



Yeah, these are the Indians, right? The Fall came when Europeans invaded their happy world. A white skinned war like people who had evolved very badly. They victimized the peaceful pagans. They were assaulted with white thinking, white supremacy, male superiority, cisgender bias, and Christianity. These white crusaders were genocidal maniacs starting with Christopher Columbus. They cruelly subjugated surviving victims of their slaughter in order to erect a new society to protect all of their interests. One that is systematically racist. One that rewards oppression and cruelty for the privileged class.

This is what is called, whiteness, not a skin color per se but a mindset represented by a skin color. And this mindset called whiteness is evil incarnate, it is how the sin is defined in this worldview. Whiteness is original sin. And the transmission of the guilt of this original sin of whiteness is through membership in the oppressor class. Or being a descendent of the oppressor class. Or benefiting in any way from whiteness or what the Europeans set up. Like being born in a hospital, uh, growing up in a house, speaking English, having running water, working hard to gain an education, earn a living.

Even if the person is non-white, female, non-cisgender, other than heterosexual, other than Christian, anybody benefiting from the invasion of whiteness can be guilty of said whiteness. To deny this narrative, to deny participation in this guilt, making any defense or offering any, alternatid, alternative explanation whatsoever, this is called white fragility. Too fragile to admit your guilt and fault. It provides further evidence of guilt. So the inability to admit guilt is proof of guilt.

Anyone stained with whiteness, no matter what skin color, ethnicity, whatever it is, is guilty, and will always be guilty, and can never remove the stain of whiteness. Which means there is no redemption in this system. No redemption, no forgiveness, from the guilt of whiteness. However the stain of whiteness could be hidden a bit, covered over by a bit, by getting on the right side of history. By accepting the narrative. By doing the right thing through penance and through worship.

Negatively, perform acts of penance such as bowing or these days kneeling. Perform acts of penance by staying silent whenever accused, never pointing out, contra, contrary evidence or instances of blatant hypocrisy. Give up, to do penance, give up positions of authority, give up positions of power, give up positions of privilege. Refuse to believe what your eyes are telling you, what your ears are hearing. Refuse to use your Judeo-Christian logic or to expect anyone to reason from that worldview. And then, very importantly, pay monetary reparations to victimized classes of people. It gets down to money, all false religion gets down to money and power doesn't it folks?

That is penance, along with whatever else the victim class prescribes, which is totally arbitrary. But arbitrariness is just fine. Logical consistency is just fine, not necessary, but just fine if the victims say so, if they use it for their benefit. But financial reparations, paying money, is a very good start, so do penance.

On the other hand, positively, here's how you worship. Become an ally of the victim class through acts of worship.



Kneel at sporting events, protest with Marxist groups like Black Lives Matter. Join in burning down the systemically racist system, defund all the racist cops. It's not okay to, pritimize, criticize any protest, but it is okay to light actual fires. To smash police car windows. To topple statues of America's racist past. To destroy government property. To set fire to government buildings. None of that is rioting by the way, it is called, repeat after me, this is peaceful protesting. Say it a lot of times so you believe it.

Overcome what your eyes tell you, your ears hear. Peaceful protesting, not riot, peaceful protesting which is lawful. Even in a pandemic, when everybody else is supposed to do social distancing. Support for this, participating in this, that is worship. That is righteous. That is what justice looks like. None of these rioters are going to be arrested and fined.

Churches can be closed because they can perpetuate the oppressor narrative. But the protestors who are calling for the burning down of the system, and are actually burning things, they're victims. They're simply rising up, they're getting their

just due they are taking back what's been taken from them. And they can gather without hindrance, without penalty.

Folks that's the immerging world view and make no mistake it is religious in nature. It has an origin story, it has a Fall story, it has a prescription for mitigating guilt, even then there is no redemption, that you can mitigate guilt. There is no prescription for what they're going to do after everything's burned to the ground, but they'll trust the righteous innocence of the victim class to shine forth like the noonday Sun, as soon as all this inequity and oppression is removed from the earth. And we'll let them lead.

What does heaven look like? Well heaven is earth for the secularist, for the Marxist, that is why they are fighting so hard. Because this is all they have. This is heaven for them. This physical earthly life, these atoms arranged as they are in this body, that is all they believe exists. Beloved if you think this is only happening out there in the larger cities, then think again.

Read the article from the Greeley Tribune about city council woman Kristin Zasada, dated June 16<sup>th</sup> of 2020. The article is entitled "Greeley City Council hears community response to councilwoman Zasada's comments on race." She had the audacity back then, in June, to post a question on Facebook saying, "What about the black on black violence in the cities?"

Asked a question. She was pilloried. Led in opposition by the one who was defeated by her in the city council election. A lesbian woman who's after her. The people who showed up to harangue her at this council meeting, everything that I just said was coming out of all their comments. You read it for yourself. It's happening here, beloved. Not out there, not just in New York Times firing their editor. All the young, fine young cannibals rising up and eating their liberal fathers and mothers. It's happening here.

Listen folks. Just like the false religion of the Pharisees, growing out of the unbelieving scholarship of the

scribes and the lawyers in the same exact way, the false religion of today's woke leftist rises out of these Marxist unbelieving scholarship and academics of the universities. And the fruit of this false religion, it is anger, it is hatred, and it is death. All hidden behind a mask. Hidden by their virtue signaling hypocrisy.

The government is really, really, concerned about protecting us from death by the coronavirus. Especially when it comes from the, comes to the most vulnerable among us. What about the vulnerable little babies in the wombs of their mothers? It should be the most sacred safest place on earth. Instead the womb is a crime scene. It's where the most violent heart wrenching murder of innocent life takes place, and on a massive, massive scale.

If you estimate there will be three million deaths in the U.S. this year, maybe a bit high maybe a bit low, one fifth of those deaths will be by abortion. Killing little babies in the womb. Do not tell me that government has our best interest, interest of life, in mind. That is hypocrisy. And it's kind of

fitting isn't it that the symbol of state protection these days is a mask.

Protestors can gather in massive crowds, jam packed together, masks or no masks. No fear of fines, arrests, repercussions from the government. Churches however must line up, dutifully submit to public health orders, follow the guidelines. In some states churches are prohibits from meeting altogether, and that is hypocrisy.

May God bless Grace Community Church and John MacArthur's leadership for leading them to stand up against that kind of totalitarianism. What are they protesting out there? Police brutality, because black lives matter. But not all black lives. Just the ones that promote the woke narrative of systemic racism, that America's built on oppression. They make much of the bad actions of a few bad cops, but they rehearse the false narrative of systemic police brutality against black people and they ignore the little black lives who do not survive their mothers' wombs.



According to one source, abortion has reduced the black population of the U.S. by 25% since 1973. Abortion is genocide folks, not police brutality. That's hypocrisy. What's the evidence of the oppression of black people? America's historic participation in the institution of slavery, which is sin. It's truly sin folks, kidnapping people, selling them into bondage, nobody today is defending those kinds of historic sins.

But if slavery is the crime of all crimes, why burn down American cities? When this country has been legislating in the opposite direction. What about the majority of the rest of the world, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, where slavery still exists to the tune of 40 million people in bondage, enslaved, forced labor, debt slavery, sexual exploitation, child slavery, forced marriages, and all the rest. Huh, protest that! March against that if you want to, but don't do it with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Two third of Americans, by the way, support the Black Lives Matter movement. Probably most of them not even knowing what the Black Lives Matter leaders actually believe. They openly admit that they are trained Marxists. Two of them, two of the three main organizers, are lesbians. And they say openly that they exist to abolish the nuclear family, abolish the police, prisons and capitalism.

In the words of Hawk Newsome, one of the Black Lives Matter chapter leaders in New York, Quote, "if this country doesn't give us what we want, then we will burn down this system and replace it. Alright, I want black liberation, I want black sovereignty, by any means necessary." That's a terrorist threat folks. Those who really want to end slavery won't burn down the only country on earth that has declared its independence by saying this "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights." Don't burn down that country. Why not go to Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and protest there? Oh, because protesting there will get you shot dead, imprisoned for life. A lot of courage when there are no consequences right? That is hypocrisy folks.

Now this is where, as we transition into a second point for this morning, this is where we need to pay close attention because point two, religious hypocrisy is contagious. It's not only dangerous, point one, but point two it is contagious. Religious hypocrisy spreads, saturates, it affects the way we think, the way we behave, if we're not careful, if we're not on guard.

Look at Jesus' warning there in Luke 12:1, and it's stark. It starts this way just with Luke setting it up, "In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another," let's stop there for a second. Luke wants, wants to make very sure that we keep this scene connected with the previous one.

Remember Jesus has left the home of the Pharisee now. He's offended his host. He's offended all the guests by exposing their hypocrisy, confronting their false unbelieving religion, and obviously word hard spread about what Jesus said and did in

that setting. The servants who were there to assist the guests with ritual hand washing before the meal, which Jesus intentionally ignored, they were there they spread the word. Servants who served the food, who listened in on the conversation, who refilled the glasses, they were there, heard it, they spread the word. The scribes and the Pharisees themselves, they spread the word. All these people talked, all these people spread the word.

So thousands of people descended on this place to come to see the conflict brewing. It's like gathering around a burning thing in the city or seeing a fight. Everybody wants to come. The place is so jam packed with bodies that it was getting dangerous with people literally trampling one another, dangerous. So we get this multitude of thousands that are gathering now. And now notice the rest of the verse, "he began to say to his disciples first, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.'"

Just a quick contextual note. You see the word there, the verb, began, he began to say. Look back at Luke 11:53, you'll

see the same verb used there, "the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard to provoke him to speak." By these two uses of the same verb, one right after the other, began to, Luke is signaling here a turning point in the Gospel narrative.

This is the pivot point, this is a hinge point. On the one hand the Pharisees are no longer interested inviting Jesus to share meals with them, that didn't go so well. No longer trying to figure him out, no longer walking around him like a fighter checking out the other fighter, measuring him up and down. They're no longer hoping that they can co-opt his popularity and use it to their own advantage, that's, that opportunity has passed.

As of now, as of this point, they see clearly there is no compatibility whatsoever. May we be clear enough with our Gospel, that the world can see that there is no compatibility whatsoever. That's what the Pharisees and scribes see, there's no compatibility so they began to, there's the use of that verb, they began to take an overtly hostile posture toward Jesus. As I

said the mask has come off, they're revealed for the wolves that they are and they go on the attack.

On the other hand, Jesus has for his part come to the same place. All of his teaching in the presence of the Pharisees has been gracious, has been loving. It has been the extension of amazing kindness and patience on his part to teach these people. He's tried to help them understand why he and his disciples eat with tax collectors like Levi in Luke chapter 5. He's explained to them why he allows the disciples to pick and eat heads of grain on the Sabbath. Why he heals people on the Sabbath, because he's the Lord of the Sabbath, Luke, Luke chapter 6.

He has taught Simon the Pharisee in Luke chapter 7, trying to help him understand that this sinful woman who keeps bowing before him, weeping, dosing his feet with tears, wiping off his feet with her hair, she is worshipping. She's been forgiven so much and so she loves much, and that's why she worships, worships without any restraint. Without any cognizance of the opinions of the people around her, she worships at his feet

without any restraint. He's explained that, trying to teach Simon the Pharisee, this is why.

Chapter 10, he's taken time, he's taken a lot of time with this self-righteous, self-justifying lawyer, trying to show him he didn't really love his neighbor as he thought he did. Look at the good Samaritan. He didn't really love God as he had thought he did. He's trying to help that lawyer come to the truth. Then as we've already said, Luke chapter 11, in the face of an evil generation that attributed his works to Beelzebul and demanded yet another sign he patiently teaches them through it.

He even goes to the, to the originators of that slander against him, the Pharisees. He goes to their house. He tries to confront and expose them to the truth. Even in the face of these self-righteous Pharisees and scribes, Jesus is still teaching them. He still loves them. And notice he doesn't love them by staying silent, he doesn't love them by just backing off. He doesn't, he doesn't love them by affirming all their good ideas and patting them on the head; loves them by telling them the truth. Knowing, knowing that the truth is going to hurt them.

Well they've refused to humble themselves, they've refused to repent and believe, and so Jesus began to, that's the verb, began to take another approach.

And from here on out, his focus is going to be on teaching his disciples how to please God, how to walk righteously in the midst of a hostile world. Evangelism here in his ministry is taking a back seat to discipleship. He's still proclaiming the good news, he's still going to evangelize, but it is ancillary to his training and preparing his men for the future. This is a chapter on discipleship. And Jesus here engages in discipleship in a context of hostility.

Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the prophesied Messiah of Israel, he has come to his own people to fulfill God's promises of restoration and blessing and not only does the nation fail to recognize its Messiah, but because it's an apostate nation the leaders and the people alike they've become hostile and to a dangerous degree and Jesus not only acknowledges the hostility, but he seems to even in this chapter exacerbate it, pour fuel on the fire. First by offending all the



leadership in Luke 11, but then he goes on to say things like this.

Look at verse 49, things like this openly and in public exposing hypocrisy. Look at verse 49 he says, "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!" Verse 51, "Do you think that I have come to give peace on the earth? No, but I tell you rather division." Listen beloved, we need to come to terms with the fact that as Christians when we line up under a such a polarizing leader we are on a collision course with the culture. Jesus tells us here openly unapologetically that he has come to create division on the earth.

This is not we are the world, kumbaya, everybody light your lighters, this isn't everybody put our arms around each other time on earth. This is time for fire, this is time for division. This is time to call out and elevate his own people as distinguished from the rest of the world. He's come to create division on the earth, to remove peace, even to the point of

setting family members, even good friends, setting them against one another, verse 52, verse 53.

May God give us an iron stomach, that we can stomach this. Because it's hard when your friends and family members turn away from you. Turn against you. Malign you. Ostracize you. It hurts. It's been done to me personally, and I know it's been done to so many of you. By calling us to obey a sovereign authority, Jesus demands a loyalty higher than any human authority. By calling us into membership in his fathers' family he expects us to treat his family as more important than our natural families.

Spiritual relationships are deeper than physical ones. He's calling us to a loyalty that's thicker than blood. Our loyalty to Christ offends the people around us. This is only going to get worse in our day just as it did for the apostles in their own day. Just as it has for Christians throughout centuries of church history. As the centuries have gone by, of persecution hostility, America in this experiment stands out as an anomaly, a total anomaly.

We've had favor here in our country, that time in America is drawing to a close. It's time for us Christians in America to take our place along with our persecuted brothers and sisters in the rest of the world. To join the rest of them who have suffered so much, loss of property, loss of family, loss of friends, and loss of life. That has been the way throughout the annals of church history going all the way back to the Scripture.

So it's in this climate of hostility, in this environment of growing opposition that Jesus trains his disciples to follow him and to do so no matter what. When Jesus said back in Luke 9:23, "If anyone," anyone, "would come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." You know what? He really meant that. This is where it counts. This is when it's hard.

So he began to say to his disciples first. He knows the gathered crowd is going to overhear them. He doesn't mind that.

He's not trying to pull them into a private place and speak in secret; he's going to do it right there in front of them. Lesson number one, be, "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy." Yes the rest of the crowd needed to hear that as well. If per chance any of them might be listening, might pay attention, might find salvation. This lesson is first and foremost with his disciples. Literally, it's written this way, beware or be on your guard against the leaven," comma, "which is hypocrisy," comma, "of the Pharisees.

The leaven is not the people themselves. The leaven is what they do. The leaven is what they think, how they think, how they act. The warning, is not against sinners per se, but against their chief and characteristic sin which is hypocrisy. Leaven for all of you non-bakers out there, like myself, leaven refers to a single celled sugar eating fungi. Eww. I didn't, I didn't know that, but I ingest it all the time right?

An individual fungi, individual fungi cells are so small it takes twenty billion of them to weigh one gram of cake yeast, didn't know that either. This sugar eating fungus eats and

digests sugar, and the byproduct of that, processing sugar in their little single cell, is carbon dioxide gas and ethyl alcohol. The ethyl alcohol causes the bread dough to ferment. And the carbon dioxide gas bubbles, they're unable to escape because the dough is elastic and so creates little pockets of carbon dioxide inside the bread. And that's what they refer to when they say the bread is rising. Such an apt picture of sin, don't you think?

Sin pursues what is sweet to the taste like sugar. It consumes and digests it, produces noxious byproducts that tend to puff us up. They make us empty but pretty darned proud of it. Like yeast, sin is persistent, it's strong, and at the same time it is not visible to our eyes and remains unknown until it's already spread. Until its influence has already had an effect. And so the proverb, "a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough," but goes deep doesn't, it in our thinking?

Leon Morris says, "leaven speaks of a penetration that is slow, insidious and constant." That's how the figure of speech, or the figure of leaven is used in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, the

spread of sinful influence throughout the church. Leaders need to be on guard against that kind of leaven. It also refers to teaching and conduct and false doctrine of the scribes and the Pharisees in Matthew 16:12. And leaven also speaks to the corruption of Pharisaic hypocrisy, our text.

And this is why in Israel's worship they were to offer unleavened bread to God. Because they wanted to come and picture a worship that is wholly untainted by sin. They're to have no leaven in the bread that they ingested during their worship as a reminder that they're to be attentive and diligent to root out all sin from their hearts when they come before God. So beware of, be on you guard against, watch out for, give heed to, the leaven, the spread, the infection, the influence which is the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. And Jesus said this to his disciples first. We need to hear this.

Why? Why beware? Why must we be on such guard against this? Is it because, as so many people seem to believe that Christianity, and Christian churches are filled with hypocrites. That line has been so widely disseminated it seems beyond

dispute. But is that really true? Are Christians the greatest hypocrites of all?

As I am trying to show in this sermon, we need to set the record straight that it is the world, not the church, but the world with its many flavors of the same kind of man centered religion the world itself is rife with hypocrisy, not the church. Is there hypocrisy in churches, absolutely there is. But the world is super saturated with hypocrisy. Sure Christians need to be on guard, need to be self-examining, but as Jesus is making clear here the world and its unbelief is the spawning ground of all religious hypocrisy.

And Luke is pretty explicit here in setting up the scene, pointing out this massive throng of people in verse 1, the the word *myrias*, it's, it's the word, *myriads*, literally it means ten thousands of people in this crowd. I mean Luke, whether he's intending to be strictly literal about the number, or just telling us that countless thousands were present that day, the word can be used either way, he wants us to see that this crowd vastly outnumbers the much smaller band of Jesus' disciples.

This will always be the case for Christians in the world. That we are vastly outnumbered by the world around us, and true Christians are vastly outnumbered by those who pretend to be Christians and are not. False professors of Christianity vastly outnumber the true these days. So we need to be aware, we need to beware, on our guard, against the overwhelming number of hypocrites in the world. And as we're seeing more and more in our own time, we cannot give the benefit of the doubt to the voices of the world. We cannot assume the best of their motivations and intentions. They're hypocrites wearing masks. They are unbelievers and yet they're still extremely religious in their unbelief.

I realize secularism temporarily created a vacuum of unbelief but that vacuum has quickly been filled by the wokeism that we have described earlier. Governing authorities mostly these days, most loudly these days with the liberal and democrat side of that, they've wholly bought into these doctrines, and they are dismantling and destroying our country. So, yes, we should hear them out. Yes, Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 apply to us.



1 Peter 2 we need to be praying, praying all the time for our leaders and for those in authority. We need to give honor to the king, to the governor, to the President, to the administration, to the law makers, and all the rest. But we need to do that with a healthy dose of skepticism. Christian skepticism. We need to apply what the bible actually tells us plainly about the world around us. They're dead in trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2:1. They listen to the voice of Satan, verse 2, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that's at work in the sons of disobedience right now, do we believe that or not?

The world around us is trapped in the futility of their minds, Ephesians 4:17, because "they're darkened in their understanding," verse 18. They're "alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them. Due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous, have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity." That's the unbelieving world around us. And they're religious about all of this, very religious about it.

They are worshippers of false gods. They have bowed before the idols of cult of health wealth and prosperity. And so Jesus is saying here at the very, at the very least don't be fooled by that. Be on your guard about that, be discerning about these crowds. They're not on your side. They're not sympathetic to your cause no matter what they say. They are hypocrites through and through.

But there is cause here, in this text, especially in light of the next couple of verses, to pay close attention to our own hearts lest we ourselves ingest the same leaven, lest we become infected with the same virus of hypocrisy. Look at verses 2 and 3, "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known." Now that is just a principle stated plainly, look how he applies it. Therefore, verse 3, whatever you have said, who's he talking to? His disciples first, "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 house tops."

We'll get to this next time but that is both a warning and a comfort, isn't it? Because Christians in private, as they whisper in their rooms in the privacy of their own homes, they tend to say some very godly things, don't they? That will be proclaimed. Evil people, hypocrites, they tend to say some pretty evil things in their rooms, don't they? Oh they shine in front of a camera. Oh they put on the best face. They posture. They virtue signal. What are they saying in the, in the back room when the cameras are off, when the microphones are not turned on? That too is going to be proclaimed and for Christians that's a comfort.

But for us, why beware? First because hypocrisy is the fruit of all false religion, even today's secular religion. We need to be discerning Christians but secondly because hypocrisy is a temptation for believers too. Listen even the, even the apostles struggled with this sin of hypocrisy.

I want to illustrate this just by, just for a couple of minutes, just turn to Galatians 2. We're wrapping up here but turn to Galatians 2. These apostles, pillars of the early

church, they need, they themselves need to be wary of drifting toward hypocrisy and that's why Jesus is warning them here. The Pharisees had spawned disciples who infiltrated the early churches. They were called Judaisers, they were called the circumcision party. And the pe, these people claimed to accept Jesus as Messiah but they, they taught that faith in Christ was simply a doorway into obeying Moses.

Full salvation depended on Christ plus obedience to Moses, which starts with circumcision. All gentiles get circumcised, yes profess faith in Christ, but get circumcised, start obeying the law. It's a pernicious and subtle deception that faced the early church, not easy to recognize at first, hard to deal with, hard to root out, and that's why Paul wrote Galatians.

Galatians 2:11-13, Paul says this about his dear beloved brother Peter. "When Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James," those of the circumcision party, the Judaisers, "Peter was eating with the gentiles but when they came he drew back, separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the

rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.”

Now listen, if beloved Barnabas, son of encouragement, if he can be led astray by hypocrisy. If, if the apostle Peter could actually practice hypocrisy, well then you and I folks we would do very well, wouldn't we, to walk with a little humility, to be circumspect, to pay very close attention to our hearts? Look what's at the, at the root of the sin of the Christian temptation toward hypocrisy, what is it? The fear of the circumcision party, fear of man, right? It strikes again.

We need to be on our guard against the fear of man. As I said, the remedy is the fear of God. Put off the fear of man in any form. Because the fear of man makes us vulnerable, susceptible, to hypocrisy and look how effective it is in, in really messing up that, that church. “The rest of the Jews,” verse 13, “acted hypocritically along with him.” Whenever you see fear of man and hypocrisy it divides the church.

Many faithful Christian pastors and elder, you can turn back to Luke 12 by the way. Many faithful Christian pastors, elders, today have been pointing out a disturbing trend among other Christian leaders who are falling prey to worldly hypocrisy. All of this social justice stuff has been difficult, admittedly. Critical theory, that's heady stuff. But you see even good Christian men doing things that are just, like, hard to understand.

Standing with the ungodly to take up their causes. Joining their protests. Affirming what is Marxist. Following worldly agendas, letting the world set the agenda for the church rather than the other way around. We've got Christians buying into this stuff. It is my belief that even among some faithful men, true evangelicals, friends of ours, solid reformation minded doctrines of grace teaching friends, I believe that they have failed to give due consideration to the false religion of the day. And are always having the posture of trying to, believe the best, as they would put it, they've ignored the fruit of the world's hypocrisy. They have not taken texts like this seriously enough.

And when they do that, when they lead in that way, when they speak in that way openly, they send very confusing messages to the world and they confuse sincere sensitive hearted Christians. They are blowing uncertain, unclear, trumpet sounds. And when we have so few Christians already mustering up and fronting up to fight the good fight of the day these leaders are calling Christians away from that battle line to fight somewhere else. It does not matter. The real battle rages on here.

That's the warning Jesus gives, what's the remedy? As I said at the beginning, fear of God, we're going to unpack this next time, the remedy is to fear God. Verses 4-5, look at it there, "I tell you my friends do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more than 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."

Coronavirus can kill, but it has no authority to send you to hell. Some rioter or protestor can throw a bottle aimlessly,

hit you on the head, send you to your grave, but he too has no authority to cast your soul into hell. There's only one we need to really be concerned about isn't there? Jesus' warning here is stark. The remedy that he gives, "fear God, he can cast you into hell." Man that hits sensitive ears, it's stark, it's hard. But this is exactly the medicine that we need to drink deeply. This is what we need to hear, especially at this time and in this hour. Our Lord is so good to bring us what we need when we need it isn't he?

And the rest of this chapter Jesus just keeps unpacking the benefits of fearing God. Starting with this three-fold trinitarian blessing of fearing God in verses 1-12, but then it flows throughout the entire chapter. Skip down to verse 32, notice with what tenderness our Lord speaks to his friends who fear God. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

What a promise. What safety there is in fearing the Lord. What protection. What blessing, what kindness. Proverbs 29:25 says "The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the



Lord is safe." That's a summary of the Gospel folks. That's the message of salvation in God through Jesus Christ. That those who leave this unbelieving world, who fear God by putting their faith in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. They have nothing to fear from God and nothing to fear from anybody else or anything else, Romans 8. Fear God, you'll fear nothing else. Do not fear God, you'll fear everything else. Well that's what we'll get into next time, let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you for sending the Lord Jesus Christ to be your exegete. To unpack the truth about you, about your ways. To tell us the truth with such love and boldness and he is so courageous in the face of such hostility, violent opposition. We are so grateful that we follow that one, that that one died for us, was buried, that you raised him from the dead that he lives now. He ascended to your right hand and he intercedes for this church, for all of us by name. And every other faithful church and every other Christian by name, he prays for us.

Father hear his prayer, may our church be unified, strengthened, hopeful, and strong. Please help us to heed these warnings about the danger of hypocrisy. Help us to turn away from the world and



turn our face completely fixed on Christ. In Jesus' name we  
pray, amen.