

Luke 11:29-12:12

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Date: 22 June 2014

Preacher: David Helm

- [0 : 00] I would encourage you to put your eyes again on chapter 12 and verse 4. I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who can kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do.
- Even more brief, I tell you, my friends, fear not. Now, I know one of your fears right now. And that is that I will do a verse-by-verse exposition of the entire reading. And I say to you, fear not.
- The scripture reading today is comprised of three distinct sermons for completely different groups of people.
- So, we're going to look at the third this morning. The first group you'll see right there in 11:29.
- [1 : 21] The crowds. And the message for them was that you will not get a sign except for the sign of Jonah.
- And beware if your interior world is filled with darkness. In other words, the sermon for the crowds, well, I'm sure by the end of it, they were quite stimulated.
- The second sermon begins there in verse 37. No longer a message for the crowds, but for the religious leaders.
- The threefold woes for the Pharisees, followed by the threefold woes for the lawyers.
- As the crowds were stimulated, sermon one, the religious leaders were infuriated, sermon two.
- [2 : 30] For by the conclusion, it says they began to press him hard and provoke him in order to catch him.
- And it's precisely at that moment that we come to the text we'll deal with today. When the situation was highly charged, and it says in chapter 12, verse 1, that many thousands were now gathering to the point that they were trampling on one another.
- However, he has a message in verse 1 for his disciples. Or, as he refers to them in verse 4, my friends.
- It seemed that the disciples had gotten worried. The text doesn't indicate it directly. But given the stimulation in the crowds, that he was working in ways that they did not want.
- And the infuriation in the religious types, who saw him displacing all that they did want. The folks began to press in to where they were being trampled on.
- [3 : 58] And you can imagine the disciples, the bow-tied entourage of Jesus. You can almost see them on 53rd Street.
- This is dangerous. They're stimulated. They're infuriated. They're agitated. And we are close here to mob activation.
- He says, well, I got something for you. Don't worry about all this. Worry about the leaven of the Pharisees.

Don't worry about the stimulation that not all like my message. Don't worry about the message. Don't worry about the message. Don't worry that they're trying to catch me in my speech.

Don't worry that it is almost a dangerous activity in which we walk today. I'll tell you something to really be worried about. The hypocrisy of those who claim to be following God and yet who don't.

[5 : 07] There's something He wants them to know as they head toward Jerusalem. Take a look at verse 2.

This idea that nothing is covered up that will not be revealed. That what happens in small rooms is going to be proclaimed from housetops.

In Matthew's parallel, it's the words that He gave them in private that they will give the world in public.

But in Luke's writing, it's the words that the disciples had when they went house to house and found a man of peace. Those private words, that personal work is going to go public.

That's the meaning of the text. And knowing that, knowing that the work is going global, knowing that it won't go unopposed, He says, back to our text, I tell you, my friends, do not fear.

[6 : 36] The temptation of those early disciples would be to privatize their faith out of a fear of public persecution.

Interesting, isn't it? You get back into the terrain and the topography of this gospel written those many years ago, welcome to your neighborhood.

The temptation of the disciples to privatize their faith for fear of public persecution. Jesus, in these verses, wants them to know, and by them, He wants you to know, that the kingdom of God and His name on your head was never meant to be kept to yourself.

Personal? Yes. Private? Never. Now that cuts across the grain of all decorum as you go to your school or you go to your work or you go on your way.

It's what I call old school Episcopalianism. If you grew up in that tradition, you might know that there's a tendency to not make the wave in any overt or verbal way.

[8 : 25] You and I know that Christian faith is highly personal. You and I know that religion and politics are always controversial.

And the temptation for the disciple of Christ is to keep it to oneself. Jesus wants you to know that His message is the opposite of a privately held and publicly hidden kind of thing.

It's a personally held and publicly given kind of thing. and I know and He knew that there were reasons we would fear.

And so I ask you, what fears do you have in allowing your faith to go public? You know, fear is not a bad thing.

It's a universal thing. And He wants to overcome that in this text. So where does fear come from?

[9 : 35] Fear comes in when a perceived threat is seen without. Fear comes this way when I think there is danger that way.

Why didn't you say anything? I was afraid. One of the lessons the disciples needed to learn on the road to Jerusalem as Jesus was now walking to His death was, do not fear.

It is going to the rooftops. It is going to be opposed. Nothing you can do about it. And you have got to stay vocal because I am going global.

for the disciples in our text are in no different situation than the Iraqi Christians of our own day.

There is not a big gap between the world in which you and I live and the world in which this text was written. The fear of personal safety is a real thing for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in all corners of the globe.

[11 : 00] Those who are following Christ even in the West need to be told today that trouble is coming. That apathy toward the Christian faith is giving way to antagonism.

That indifference is receding. That hostility is rising. That there are those who share your faith who have already been told convert or die.

That's a reason for fear. There's another reason for fear. A fear that's in all of us.

A fear of being identified with the fringe elements of our faith. I mean, who really wants to go by the name of Christian when we could recount any number of publicly identifiable Christians of which we would have nothing to do with?

That's a fear of being identified with a misrepresentation. For a man in business here today, for a woman in the midst of her academic studies, there are other fears.

[12 : 37] Fear of professional setbacks. I go public for Jesus even in the most natural and unassuming kinds of ways, it could cost me professionally.

I need to wait until I have years of work that stand behind me before I get out in front for him.

these things are common. One of the things I love about Holy Trinity Church is our young people, so many of them sit right down front.

I'm sorry to draw attention to you today, but there we go. Hungry on a Sunday for the Word. Can't get too close to it.

Well, you know you have fears. Who wants to speak for Jesus and be isolated? Who wants to let the Word out and then be without any friend?

[13 : 52] Who wants to be misunderstood? Who wants to say, well, I know there are eight of us at this lunch table, and we have a lot of different faith traditions, but I believe in Jesus.

When you don't know or feel adequately prepared for what's going to happen next, the Word of Christ to the disciples is the Word of Christ for us.

Look at it again. I tell you, my friends, do not fear. Do you realize that fear is holding back the church perhaps more than any other thing in our midst.

And what we have at stake isn't anywhere near what the church has at stake in other parts of the world or down through the centuries.

if you go out of here with anything today, I want you to go out of here with the confident Word of Christ to His followers. I tell you, my friends, do not fear.

[15 : 20] He gives two reasons. The first is the reason by way of logic. You'll see it right there in 4 and 5. But I will warn you whom to fear.

Fear him whom after he has killed has authority to cast into hell. I tell you, fear him. There's some logic going on by way of argumentation.

In other words, he says, there is a God who actually has the power to cast you or me into hell.

we've got to start living in front of his face. He's the one across the table. He's the one down the aisle. He's the one on the phone. It's a greater to lesser argument.

Av fortiori. It's from a, I've got a stronger reason. You're afraid that they'll take your life?

[16 : 25] Well, if you're afraid of that, what about this? Let me just say this.

He basically says, remember this, I know you got some people that aren't going to be happy with you. And I know it may come at a personal cost to you. For some of you, even your life. Could be worse.

That's his argument. Could be worse. could have God against you. Now, you're like, wow, that's a tough call.

I mean, in a perfect world, our obedience to the words of Christ would come from maybe more positive grounding. I mean, maybe can you root this in a desire to please God, to love God?

I mean, if you're a parent, you already know that you don't want your children following your word simply out of some fear of a greater punishment. I mean, you want a child, your child, to respond out of a relationship.

[17 : 37] Not out of rules. And so, he moves from logic to love. The second reason why you shouldn't fear.

There it is, verse 6 and 7. 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.

You see, a sparrow is a very seemingly insignificant bird. I could count 40 of them in my bush in the backyard at any given moment. a single hair on your head, well, it's inconsequential, except for Saturday morning when you're trying to clean off that sink to start over again for the coming week.

A sparrow, who really knows, five go for two cents on their way to death, and Jesus says, and I see them all.

A hair! Who really cares? Unless your pastor Jackson is losing a few more every day. So I never should have said that, it's not in the text.

[19 : 05] God knows them all, which is another way of saying he knows more about some of us than others. My great grandfather had tuberculosis.

He was in Detroit. They told him you've got to get out if you're going to live. So he left his wife and his children and he headed to Denver.

This is, you know, early 1900s kind of thing. It didn't look good for him. He was in a park in Denver.

He had helped somebody and he was exhausted. His daughter, my grandma, relays what happened. He thought, if I would go and lie under that big drooping bush in the park, no one would see me there and I would end it in one night, all this misery.

I wouldn't be able to go through a night of cold. So he went and lay down under that spreading bush and while he was lying there, there came a little bird and perched up over his head and started to sing with all his might.

[20 : 26] And the Lord spoke to Andrew, that's my great grandfather's first name, and said, now, you are my son, you are my child, you are worth far more to me than that little feathered creature, and he's giving praise to me, but you're not.

You've just laid down to die, and you haven't given praise to me for what I've done for you. And my father, that's my grandma speaking, said, oh, Lord, you are right.

From this moment on, with my last breath, I want to be praising thee. And he got up on his feet, dusted off his trousers, walked back into the city with the promise to the Lord, as long as I have breath, I will praise you.

He ended up having five children. They all praised him. They had a boatload of children who taught them to praise him. And I stand here in that line.

I am the fruit of the line of someone who understood the love of God. Fear not, my friends, are you not worth more than a sparrow?

[21 : 53] If they take your life, he sees you. if you are plucked up and you fall out, he'll protect you.

In life and in death, he will be with you. Fear not. You will never be forgotten by God.

God, I don't know what you're walking into tomorrow morning or the people you're going to see by this evening. Whether it be your workplace, your home space, the public square, every time you hear a sparrow sing, know that you are more valuable than that.

I say this morning to the western world, get ready. Give Him praise each and every day.

Silence is not the proper response of someone who knows the grace and mercy of God that has come to them in Christ. Fear is not the response of the church of the living God.

[23 : 15] What you embrace here in this room, make known out there in His world, wherever He has brought you, into all spheres.

The temptation to fear is universal. It's not simply a matter of personal temperament. Oh, you know, Dave Helm, he doesn't have that fear because he's a preacher man.

He's got to go public with his stuff, but he doesn't know what I walk through. You know what? I do know what you walk through. I remember times, I've been called to speak for Christ and stayed silent.

I do know the cost. I do know the very real forgiveness of God. Even the great ones have fear.

Paul was in Corinth. That guy had some steel in his back. The Word of God had to come to Paul in the vision and said, Paul, don't be afraid.

[24 : 18] I've got a lot of people here that need to hear about me. Now, what was he afraid of in Acts 18? He was actually afraid for his own life. He was actually afraid of getting beat up again. He wasn't just getting afraid of being fired.

He was getting afraid of having to deal with a lot more than that. Even the great ones are afraid. Fear is common. George Patton said, courage is fear holding on a minute longer.

We need to be holding on a minute longer. Find your voice this week. What's the worst thing your boss can do?

Worst thing your boss can do is fire you. Then we got a deacon fund that will help you. What's the worst thing your vocation can do?

Give you no influence at all. Believe me, if that were to happen, you'd have a crowd waiting to hear what you have to say. Oh, you say, I don't want to be a lightning rod.

[25 : 38] Why not? Lightning rod attracts stuff. I guarantee you, the Lord goes with you.

Are you in grade school today? Are you in junior high? Are you in high school? This is a message that has got to go from the rooftop.

top. Do not fear. When I was in high school, I had a prayer my senior year that everyone in my high school would hear about the Lord Jesus Christ in a way that didn't, you know, just kind of beat them over the head.

I wasn't into that, and I hope you're not either. But hear in a way where they could decide for themselves what to do with the message of the kingdom and the king. By God's grace, that happened.

And it didn't go unopposed. My high school, I was the graduation speaker. Now, I know you think that's because I was the valedictorian, but that's not necessarily the case.

[27 : 03] in my high school, the whole class voted on who would be the speaker, which is the only way somehow I ended up being the graduation speaker. A lot of people in my class said, I know what he's going to do when he gets his opportunity in front of all these people, because he's been doing it to us all year long.

Been telling me to pay attention to Jesus. And so the word came back. Helm, you so much as mentioned the Christian faith in that valedictorian address at our public high school, half of your senior class is going to get up, we're going to throw our hats, and we're walking out.

Teachers went to the administration and said, we have got to find another way to get another speaker, because we know what Helm will do. They lobbied and lost.

And I was careful. I was tactful. And when I mentioned the Lord Jesus Christ, I heard it in the bleachers.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Down and out the door. My class stayed seated.

[28 : 28] I went on my way. what I'm telling you is, I know something about the cost of speaking the name of Christ to a world in which it will be opposed.

And I'm with you today. And I'll pray for you today. three wonderful promises. And we'll close with these. Look at this.

It's not just that He tells you fear not and gives you two reasons. One logic, the other love. But He gives you three promises that will help you overcome the fear.

Eight to twelve. You just have to go back and look at them this week. As you continue to speak out for the gospel, notice eight to twelve is all about speech. Here are the three.

three. This is what He'll do for you. One, you have the promise of being accepted by God. Verses eight and nine. You have the promise of being forgiven when you fail.

[29 : 45] Verse ten. And verse eleven and twelve, you have the promise of being empowered. Look at that promise of being accepted.

this ought to encourage you. Verse eight and nine. 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.

There is hope for you. You will be vindicated. If you acknowledge Christ, that is, if you profess Christ with your voice in the land of the living, and you make it known that I am a follower of Christ, that you believe in Christ, Christ, then He will, on that day, let everybody know that He is with you and you are with Him.

So, what you do here with others, He does there before the Father. That ought to encourage you. That is what Jesus wants to do. He says, fear not. You have the promise of being accepted before God.

You say, well, there's times I haven't done it. There's times I've failed in it. So often I've had something I know I need to say with someone that I love and I care about and I want to tell them about Jesus and I didn't do it.

[31 : 05] Well, there's your comfort. It's not just you're encouraged in verses 8 and 9, but there's comfort for you in verse 10. Now, this isn't a word that most people go to for comfort, but that's what this verse is for.

Everyone who speaks the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. This is the hope of restoration when you don't get it done.

After all, who here always speaks of Christ when they're supposed to? Our silence in a way speaks against the Son of Man. Think of what this one meant for Peter.

Peter was very soon to deny him three times, to not speak up for him, to say, I'm not with him. And yet, there was forgiveness for him. Think of the fourth century.

Think of the whole controversy, the persecution that broke out. Think of those of you who are historians know that there was an emperor, Diocletius, who began to persecute the church and say to the leaders, Christians, we're going to let you live if you just give up your scriptures and people gave them up.

[32 : 21] We're going to let you move on. We're going to take your property, but you can keep your property if you just don't go on with Jesus. And they said, I'm not going on. But then that persecution faded and the people who had recanted wanted to be restored.

And there's a guy by the name of Donatus who says, oh no, church is only for the people who stayed online. Church is only for the people who didn't mess up during the persecution.

And Augustine comes along and says, you're full of it. Well, he doesn't say that. But he says, look, there is forgiveness for those who have failed the Son of Man.

That's what church is. That's what Jesus says. I want to encourage you, he says. You will be accepted before the Father.

I want to comfort you. There is forgiveness. Now, but one thing you don't want to do is to say that the works of Jesus have nothing to do with the works of God. Because where are you going to get hope and help from there?

[33 : 25] Not only should you be encouraged, not only should you be comforted, but verses 11 and 12, you should be emboldened. There is a promise of being empowered. Look what it says, and we'll close with it.

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.

There's the hope that words will be given to you when they rise up against you. When you say, I'm a follower of Jesus, and then they throw something at you that you are clueless on, they denigrate you and your faith.

a simple prayer, Lord Jesus, by the power of your Spirit, may I have the right thing to say now. Words will be given to you.

The hymn writer is correct. Fear not, I am with thee, oh be not dismayed, for I am thy help and will still give thee aid.

[34 : 28] the song, let every kindred, every tribe on this terrestrial ball to him, all majesty, ascribe.

That's what we're to be doing. Ascribing. For one day we are going to join the everlasting throng. And what will we do when there?

We will open our mouth and crown him Lord of all. Those are the promises. He will receive you, so be encouraged.

He will forgive you when you fail, so be comforted. He will be with you, so be bold. Let me put it differently. You've got access to the Father, says Jesus.

Fear not. You've got forgiveness from the Son. Fear not. You've got wisdom from the Spirit. Fear not. Acclaim him.

[35 : 28] before people here. He will acclaim you before the angels of God there. Repent before the cross here. You will be forgiven in his presence there.

Ask, seek, knock, hear. He will give it to you even long before you see him face to face. Access to the Father.

Forgiveness from the Son. Empowerment from the Spirit. Fear not, he says, you get God three in one. Well, if you want to be welcomed at the end of time, if you want to be pardoned at the end of time, if you want to be his voice even in this time, you'll need his strength.

Thus the Lord's table. This, in my mind, is a real spiritual strengthening meal.

You're going to in a moment, I encourage you, you're going to see people coming down these aisles, and you're going to go, I can't believe the fullness of the family of God in this little auditorium.

[36 : 59] I can't believe the racial, ethnic, and age distinctions that are all looking to be strengthened in Christ. Let me put it differently. There are some preachers who preach in order that they can eat.

That's not Pastor Jay, that's not me. we eat so that we can preach. And it's the same for everyone here.

You don't go out of here tomorrow and do what you do all week long so that you can eat. No, you eat so you can ascribe to Him praise. You eat so you can praise His name.

You eat so you can speak of Him in just the right way. Well, here it is.

Eat to preach. Fear not, my friends. Fear not.

[38 : 05] Our Heavenly Father, as we stand and come, we need this strengthening because our fears are real, they're varied, and we know that it's costly.

So strengthen each one in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.