

LUKE – CHAPTER 12

PRAY

Spend a few moments together in prayer asking that you would be open to God's voice speaking through his Word today.

READ

Take time to read through Luke chapter 12

EXAMINE

Chapter 12 of Luke's gospel is a grouping of the teachings of Jesus; a sermon, if you will. The verses immediately before this (11:53-54) have indicated that the tension between Jesus and the Pharisees and the teachers of the law has begun to escalate. This tension will continue to rise as Jesus gets closer and closer to Jerusalem. "Meanwhile," though, a very large crowd has gathered to hear Jesus speak. The crowd is so large that people were trampling on one another. Jesus addresses his disciples first, though. Throughout this sermon Jesus will go from addressing his disciples to addressing the crowd and back again; to the point where Peter will ask at one point "are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" (vs 41). What is important, here, is that Jesus instructions here, which are a series of warnings and encouragements, start with the disciples first. It is addressed to those on the *inside* before being addressed to those on the *outside*.

1. Verses 4-7 centre around "fear." There is a paradox between fearing the one who has authority over you beyond death, and the instruction to not be afraid for you are worth more than many sparrows. In what way is it necessary to be reminded of "fear of God"? How does the "grace of God" help in this understanding?

The "fear of God" reminds us that our very existence relies upon God as provider and sustainer of life. Those who can kill have a weapon that finishes when we are dead, yet God has authority over us beyond the grave. The "fear" here is a holy reverence for the reality of who God is – God is God, and we are not! The grace of God, and the reminder of our value in comparison to well-fed sparrows, provides a context for this healthy fear. God loves us much more than the sparrows and so we won't be "forgotten by God."

2. There is a similar paradox regarding the Holy Spirit. The "unforgivable sin" of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is contrasted immediately with the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of trials before "synagogues, rulers and authorities." With regard to "blaspheming again the Holy Spirit," I have always suggested to people that this is a sin that you wouldn't accidentally stumble into. It would require a deliberate and conscious effort. Rather, those who are seeking to follow the Holy Spirit (and stumbling along the way) will be led by the Spirit (e.g. Romans 8) even in the midst of difficult situations. Discuss together times where you've needed "the right words" and the Spirit has given them to you.

3. There is a lot in this passage about God's provision for us (e.g. food, Holy Spirit, treasure in heaven, the kingdom). What things do you worry about? What assurances do you take today from Jesus' promises in this sermon?
4. One of the most difficult passages to contemplate is verses 49 – 53. We read here that Jesus has come to bring "fire on the earth" and not peace, but division. If we were asked the rhetorical question that Jesus asked "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth?" we would probably say yes. John would most likely agree with us (John 14:26-27). What Jesus is referring to in our passage today is the ultimate and necessary divide that comes from the call to follow him. His disciples must take up their cross daily and follow him. Those who do are his disciples. Those who do not, are not his disciples. There is no middle ground. There is no fence to sit on. This division may even come down the centre of families. This is a stark reality of the gospel message. How do you respond to this part of the passage?

It's OK to be uncomfortable with these verses. In fact, I'd be surprised if you weren't. This flows on from the fear of God referred to earlier in the chapter. We also worry for our friends and family that we know are on the "other side" of the divide here. For the leaders, remind participants of the grace and love of God and how he loves even our unsaved friends and family more than we ever could and that praying for them is effective and important.

REFLECT

1. This has been a challenging chapter. There is both encouragement and warnings contained in here. What has stood out the most today – the warnings, or the encouragement? Or both? Why do you think that has been the case?
2. Do you have fears, worries or concerns? What has come from this passage today that has helped?
3. Where have you seen God provide for you in the past? Where do you need God to provide for you now and into the future?

IMAGINE

1. List three things that have really stood out from this study.
2. Without worrying about any restrictions, what would the church look like if those things were always present? You might like to consider this from a global or local perspective (or both).

PERFORM

1. What action can you take today (taking account of real world restrictions) that is a step towards that dream becoming a reality?

PRAY

Spend time in prayer for each other, particularly for the actions you've committed to.

For next week....

1. Long Slow Read (LSR). Read chapter 13 slowly over the course of week. You can do this as many times as you like.
2. Tempo Read – Read and reread Chapter 13 several times. Take note of verses/phrases/characters that stand out – e.g. Jesus, Holy Spirit, poor, women.
3. Repeats – Choose one verse to memorise. Repeat it many times throughout the day and over the course of a week or so. Meditate on the verse and pray it in and out. Repeat the verse many times throughout your day.