

Sunday, February 11, 2024 | The Road to Redemption

Week 12 | Luke 12:1-12 | "Heavenly Hindsight"

Last week, we read how the religious leaders were publicly condemned for *hypocrisy*. Of all the sins, Jesus reserved his *harsh*est condemnation for people who, outwardly, might appear righteous but who are unclean inwardly. With "woe" after "woe," the Lord made it abundantly clear that nothing is more heartbreaking to God than a hypocrite. So, how can we avoid the mistakes of the Pharisees and lawyers? Clean the heart—i.e., humbly repent—and the hands will be clean. **Don't be like the hypocrite who cleans the outside but leaves the inside unclean.** Do service as unto the Lord, and you won't care how you might appear to others. You'll avoid being like the hypocrite who majors on minors, loves notoriety, hurts those they "help," makes religion harder, mimics older hypocrites, and, ultimately, infects their ignorance on others. Clean the inside, and you will avoid the folly of hypocrites.

Today, we'll be talking about *perspective*. Hindsight is 20/20. What fan isn't the best quarterback who ever lived come Monday morning? Only when the game is over is the better call revealed. Only from the perspective of history is the best course of action made known. If only a coach could start the game with hindsight, right?

For the Christian, God has already given us an *eternal* perspective. No, we do not know the specifics of the future. However, Jesus' followers have been granted a peek into what will happen. We already know how the game ends. In this way, the believer can walk through life with some heavenly hindsight. Understanding where the road ends and the fate of those who wander from the path keeps the disciple on the straight and narrow. Seeing this life from God's perspective helps us avoid some significant pitfalls. And such a point of view ensures we are champions in the end.

Jesus offers three takeaways about God:

- i. **God knows all the secrets.**

READ: Luke 12:1-3 (ESV)

¹ 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." ² Nothing is covered up that will not be

revealed, or hidden that will not be known.³ 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.

While Job was lamented, he addressed God as the “watcher of mankind” (cf. Job. 7:20). The Lord is everywhere and knows everything. Do not expect to hide from the Omnipresent One. Do not think that you can keep anything hidden from the Omniscient One.

Paul says a day is coming when God will Judge the “secrets of men” (Rom. 2:16) and the Lord “will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart” (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5). Things done under the cover of darkness will be exposed to the light and the things whispered in secret corners will be proclaimed on public rooftops.

What things are you hiding? God already knows them, and eventually, they will be exposed. Why not come to God now and confess your hypocrisy to God? Confess those things that God already knows about before it is too late.

ii. **Fear God, but do not be afraid of God.**

READ: Luke 12:4-5 (ESV)

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

What does it mean to **fear** God?

Well, for starters, it doesn't mean being *afraid* of God. I'll explain more about that in a moment. But suffice it to say that when we fear God, we **revere** him. To fear those who can “kill the body” is easy. One need only come face-to-face with the end of a gun to feel that kind of fear. But we often forget that **we're all going to live forever somewhere.**

For those who are saved—i.e., who've put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation—**heaven** awaits. For those who aren't saved—i.e., who've not put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation—**hell** awaits.¹ **There is no such thing as annihilationism.** At conception, a person becomes an *eternal* soul. On judgment day, the scriptures teach that **believers and unbelievers alike will be resurrected** (cf. Dan. 12:1-2; Mat. 10:28; Lu. 16; Rev. 20:14). The Christian will be given an everlasting body and live with Jesus in eternal bliss. And likewise, the non-Christian will be granted an everlasting body, but

¹ Bock (1996), p. 1136, this is the only time that Luke uses the Greek term **γέεννα** (*geenna*) for “hell.”

instead of eternal happiness, they'll experience everlasting pain, torture, and suffering (cf. Deut. 32:22; Isa. 31:9; 66:24; Mar. 9:45, 47; Ja. 4:12; Rev. 19:20; 20:11-15).

The worst anyone can do to you in this life is kill the body. To be sure, this does not diminish that pain. In the early 4th century, during the **Diocletianic Persecution**, aka the 'Great Persecution' (303-313), thousands of Christians died at the hands of the Roman government for nothing more grievous than refusing to offer sacrifices to the emperor and gods. **Men, women, and children were stripped of their civil rights, put to work in mines, had an eye plucked out, lost a foot, tortured, and/or executed via burning, being fed to lions, or crucifixion.** But even the worst forms of persecution are **temporary**. God has the power and authority to punish a person for all **eternity**. For this reason, Jesus says, "**Fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell.**"

READ: Revelation 20:11-15 (ESV)

"¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. 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. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Better to honor God today, even if you will die for it, than dishonor him today and, on that last day, be cast into hell forever.

READ: Luke 12:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷ Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. **Fear not**; you are of more value than many sparrows.

What does it mean to not be *afraid* of God?

The Greek term translated as "pennies" is **ἀσάριον** (*assarion*), and 16 *assarions* were roughly equal to a silver talent.² So, given that a talent was worth a day's wages (cf. Mat.

² Bock (1996), p. 1137.

18:24), you'd earn enough money to purchase five sparrows in about 60 min. According to first-century evidence, the sparrow was the cheapest thing sold at the market and was likely a part of the poor man's diet.³

Should you revere God, there is nothing for you to fear. If God does not miss the sale of even one sparrow, he will not forget you. The very hairs of our head are numbered. They will look at the birds of the air and think, "If God sees the birds and knows when even one of them falls from the air (cf. Matt. 10:29) or sold in the market, then, surely, his love for mankind must be great. After all, no bird has ever been cared for like a man." It is true; none of us are *worthy* of God's love. But this does not mean we are *worthless*. The one who gauges their worth in light of God's love will learn the true value of human life.

iii. **Please God and it won't matter who you displease. Displease God, and it won't matter who you please.**

READ: Luke 12:8-12 (ESV)

⁸ "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, ⁹ but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. ¹⁰ And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. ¹¹ 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, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

What is one way you can avoid becoming a hypocrite? Even if it costs you your life, confess Jesus before men. Stephen's vision gives us a peak into how God honors those who honor him (cf. Ac. 7:55-56)

Now, let's unpack what Jesus means when he says, "the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven."

Historically, people have proposed four explanations for the unpardonable sin.⁴

First, "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" must refer to an especially heinous sin such as adultery, murder, or a denial of Christ. The problem with this view is that there are

³ Bock (1996), p. 1137.

⁴ Naselli, Andy, "The Unpardonable Sin," *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-unpardonable-sin/>, [accessed, February 9, 2024].

explicit examples in Scripture where people have committed these sins yet forgiven later—e.g., David (cf. 2 Sam. 11-12; Psa. 51), Paul (cf. 1 Tim. 1:13), and Peter (cf. Jn. 18:15-27; 21:15-19).

Second, “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” was to attribute something false to the Spirit.

This was a favored interpretation by the early church fathers. However, the problem is that the parameters are too broad. Who hasn't, when they first became a Christian, said or believed something false? Christianity is complex, and there is a ton to know.

Third, “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” was to attribute Jesus’ miracles to Satan and, as such, was a sin specific to the first century.

The problem with this view is that (thankfully) miracles still happen; the miraculous is not confined to the first century. So, contrary to its own interpretation, such a sin could, in theory, be committed today. Moreover, while it would be offensive to credit devils with the work of God (cf. 11:14-23), it’s unclear how such an interpretation is born from the context, at least in Luke (cf. Mar. 3:28-30). Furthermore, such an emphasis on signs is not required for believers (cf. Jn. 20:29); why would it be so condemning for unbelievers? Lastly, some who perform miracles in Christ’s name will still be condemned on the last day (cf. Mat. 7:21-23). Such individuals must be condemned for something far more egregious than misattributing God’s miracles to Satan.

Lastly, “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” is willfully resisting the Spirit’s urging to repent; this is the most probable explanation.⁵

This is why it has often been said that if you're fearful that you've blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, then it is obvious that you've not committed this sin. A conscience concerned with this sort of thing is sensitive to the Spirit's prompting. And such a person likely makes it their habit to ask for forgiveness.

Consistent repentance makes it impossible to commit 'the unpardonable sin.' However, persistent “un-repentance,” in which a person *willfully* ignores the prompting of the Holy Spirit, will succeed in pushing God away (cf. Ac. 7:51; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:29; 12:15-17; 1 Jn. 5:16). Such an action is “unpardonable,” not because God cannot forgive it, but because the person *refuses* to ask for forgiveness. They remain unforgiven because they don't want to be forgiven. It would be like a drowning person refusing a lifebuoy.

Salvation is within arm’s reach, but such a person is “un-save-able” because they don't take hold of the one thing that could save their life. One of the last things that Stephen said before he was martyred was, “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you *always resist* [emphasis added] the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you”

⁵ Bock (1996), p. 1142, proposes five explanations but says the “obstinate rejection” view is the best.

(Ac. 7:51). Not even God can save those who have a neck that does not turn, a heart that does not soften, and an ear that does not listen.

Those who confess their allegiance to the Son of God will not have blasphemed the Holy Spirit. And, because of that confession, they will have access to the Spirit's power. God the Spirit will aid the believer whenever asked to testify about the Son of God before men. Jesus says, "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."

To be sure, this is no mere hypothetical. The N.T. (particularly the Book of Acts) and over 2,000 years of church history testify to the reality of Christian persecution.⁶ Love (especially for enemies) distinguishes Christianity from all other philosophies and religions (cf. 13:35).⁷ But, contrary to what one might think, this radical kind of love is the catalyst that sparks countless hate crimes aimed at Christians. As Morris says, "It is not without its significance that the disciples are to be known by their love, [and] the world by its hatred."⁸ When a community's sinfulness is exposed by the True Light (cf. 1:9), the darkness will vehemently oppose his advances, often using deadly force to do so.⁹ And just as Cain killed Abel "because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous" (1 Jn. 3:12), so has the world killed Christians. God's love leads men to repentance (Rom. 2:4), or else it leads them to violence. They either become the children of God, endeavoring to save others, or they remain children of Satan, where murdering is the family business (cf. 8:44).

But in the face of such opposition, Christians will not be left to fend for themselves. They will not be left alone. Through the Holy Spirit, the believer will know what to say when they need to. "Rather than speaking against the Spirit, they will be ready to speak through him."¹⁰ Interestingly, one of the most oft-requested prayer needs is boldness in speech (cf. Ac. 4:24-30; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:3-4).

⁶ This does not ignore the atrocities that have been done in the name of Christianity throughout the years—e.g., the Crusades, the witch hunts in 17th century New England, how slavery was supported by many churches during [the Civil War](#), and how many evangelicals opposed [the Civil Rights movement](#), etc. Without a doubt, the Church will have much to answer for. However, by and large, Christians have been persecuted more than they've been the persecutor. In fact, according to a [Pew Research article published in 2020](#), Christians experienced harassment in more countries in 2018 than any other world religion. Christian persecution is both a historical fact and, as Dr. E. U. Ochab puts it, "[part of a global phenomenon](#)" that has reached the modern age.

⁷ Köstenberger (2008), p. 464, "The Qumran community stressed love within the brotherhood but "everlasting hatred for the men of the pit" (1QS 9:21-22)."

⁸ Morris (1995), p. 602; Köstenberger (2008), p. 461, quotes J. R. Michaels as saying something similar.

⁹ Carson (1991), p. 524, "If the union of believers with Jesus constitutes a community of love, that community stands over against the world."

¹⁰ Bock (1996), p. 1144.

Video Description:

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SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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