

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon October 20, 2019

Luke 12: 54 – 56 “Discernment of Christ or Madness of Multitudes?”

49 "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! 51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. 52 For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. 53 Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

54 Then He also said to the multitudes, "Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. 55 And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. 56 Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?"

57 "Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? 58 When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59 I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite."

1 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." 6 He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. 7 Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' 8 But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. 9 And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.' "

- I. Introduction
- II. Today's Sermon: Luke 12: 54 – 56 “Discernment of Christ or Madness of Multitudes?”
 - a. Jesus speaks to the multitudes v54
 - b. Jesus commends their weather discernment v54,55
 - c. Jesus rebukes the multitudes as “Hypocrites” v56
 - i. Able to discern the weather v56
 - ii. Unable to discern “this time” v56
 - d. Questions to know, love and obey God
- III. Jesus speaks to the multitudes v54
 - a. “Then He also said to the multitudes...”
 - b. Multitudes: a collection of people, a throng, the common people as opposed to the rulers and leaders
 - c. Luke 12 has been set within the midst of a crowd, with Jesus alternating His teaching back and forth from disciples to crowd in this section of Luke.

- d. Luke 12:1 “In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”
 - i. Luke 12:1-12: To disciples in midst of the crowd
 - 1. Jesus teaches His disciples about the fear and hypocrisy of the Pharisees (v1-3), the coming persecution and martyrdom (v4-7), and the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (v8-12) in the midst of the throng.
- e. Luke 12:13 “Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.””
 - i. Luke 12:13-21: To crowd with disciples listening
 - 1. V13-21 Parable of the Covetous Fool
- f. Luke 12:22 “And he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.”
 - i. Luke 12:22 – 53: To disciples in midst of the crowd
 - 1. V22-34 Kingdom promises: God feeds His people. God gladly gives His people the Kingdom. Do not fear.
 - 2. V35-48 Kingdom Inheritance: readiness.
 - 3. V49 – 53 Kingdom Fire and Division
- g. And, now Jesus turns from speaking to His disciples and addresses the multitude of people present, also returning to the opening theme of this section: hypocrisy.
- h. Sometimes the disciples are best taught by direct instruction. Other times the disciples are best taught by observing Jesus teaching the crowds.
 - i. Earlier in the chapter, Jesus is warning the disciples about placing their confidence in the crowds by warning his disciples against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees that has surely infested the people.
 - 1. The threat of persecution and martyrdom is limited to His disciples.
 - ii. When a man from the crowd publicly asks a question about inheritance, Jesus answers publicly to the man and the crowd. The threat of covetousness is universal.
 - iii. All the focused Kingdom instruction is given directly to the disciples in the midst of the crowds.
 - 1. The need to understand the Kingdom principles is limited to His disciples.
 - iv. Principle: Discern those doctrines better suited for teaching to the people of God vs those doctrines better suited for instruction to those outside the Church.

IV. Jesus commends their weather discernment v54,55

- a. "Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. 55 And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is."
 - b. Note the process of discerning future weather:
 - i. Accurate Observations of Current Weather Signs:
 - 1. "you see a cloud rising out of the west"
 - 2. "you see the south wind blow"
 - 3. Knowledge to watch out for certain signs.
 - ii. Correct Forecasts About Future Weather Events:
 - 1. "immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is."
 - 2. "you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is."
 - 3. Knowledge of what the signs mean for the near future.
 - iii. Pattern recognition
 - 1. The observations of current signs have predictive power only because of prior observations of these weather patterns.
 - iv. Cultural Memory
 - 1. This pattern recognition is only helpful to the current generation because the information has been gathered and passed along by prior generations.
 - v. Because of accurate pattern recognition information passed down from prior generations (cultural memory), observers know to watch out for certain current weather signs (observations) known to accurately predict future weather events (forecasts).
 - c. Jesus teaches us about eschatological discernment by laying out the analogical process of weather forecasting.
 - i. What are the current signs the people should have recognized in order to "discern this time"?
 - ii. What are the "correct forecasts" about their near future they should have been able to deduce?
 - iii. What "cultural memory" had they cast aside?
 - iv. What "pattern recognition" did they lack?
 - v. Why did the people care more about imminent weather events than impending societal judgment and destruction?
 - d. Bock "How is it that they can discern the weather but not recognize what God is doing in their midst? Jesus has provided much evidence of God's activity."¹
 - i. These people had their Bibles, but they were either ignorant or rebellious to its teachings about Jesus.
- V. Jesus rebukes the multitudes as "Hypocrites" v56
- a. Hypocrite = an actor, stage player. A pretender. A dissembler.
 - i. Dissembler: one who conceals his opinions or dispositions under a false appearance.

¹ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1197). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

- ii. Bock “After citing the crowd’s expertise about weather, Jesus rebukes them for not also being able to determine the nature of events before them. The force of the rebuke is indicated by the use of ὑποκριτής (*hypokritēs*, hypocrite; BAGD 845; BAA 1684), a common biblical address that indicates severe displeasure for certain actions.”²
- iii. Calvin “He calls them *hypocrites*, because they pretend to ask that which, if it were exhibited to them, they are resolved not to observe. The same reproof applies nearly to the whole world; for men direct their ingenuity, and apply their senses, to immediate advantage.”³
- b. Able to discern the weather v56
 - i. “You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth”
 - ii. Recall the earlier connection of hypocrisy with fear of men. Hypocrites put forth a false public persona in order to gain the approval of men. This is the way of the Pharisees. How is it that a hypocrite is able to discern the weather but not the more significant current events involving the Messiah?
 1. The study of the weather brings no threat to their aim of gaining public popularity and widespread public respect and favor.
 2. These hypocrites are happy to submit to cultural memory that helps them with weather forecasting. These hypocrites do not lack observational skills or logic. They lack humility and a happy willingness to repent.
 3. Hypocrisy leads to terribly misplaced priorities.
 - a. Care more about weather than eternity.
- c. Unable to discern "this time" v56
 - i. “but how is it you do not discern this time?”
 - ii. What evidence were they rejecting? The Pharisees knew their Bibles
 - iii. Luke 7:19-23 “And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" 20 When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' " 21 And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. 22 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. 23 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

² Bock, D. L. (1996). [*Luke: 9:51–24:53*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1197). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

³ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 277). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

1. Fulfillment of Isaiah 35:4-6 "Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you." 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing...."
 2. Fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor."
 3. Fulfillment of Isaiah 26:19 "19 Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead."
 4. And, note how the Isaiah 35 prophecy includes this foreboding note connecting vengeance with salvation: "your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you."
 5. They had their Bibles, but they did not know their Bibles or they rejected their Bibles. They knew the weather and ignored their Bibles.
- iv. "This time" = The first advent of the Messiah. From Christ's conception to His ascension.
1. "How is it that you do not discern this time?"
 2. This question is a rebuke to the crowds. Jesus is making it crystal clear that they should have known Him, loved Him, obeyed Him and understood what His First Advent meant about their generation.
 3. Matthew 23:34,35 "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar."
 4. Bock "The crowd has "missed the moment" of God's great salvific activity. Despite all the skill they have at anticipating weather, they are inept at reading what God is doing right before them. With respect to God's plan, they were either blind or unwilling."⁴
- d. Hypocrites refuse to listen to God because they are committed first to their own reputation and safety.

⁴ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1198). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

- i. Thus, hypocrites will reject what the Bible says about this current world, and they will instead prioritize knowledge that does not threaten their first conviction: self-promotion.
- ii. How are we like these hypocrites? How are we embracing the madness of the multitudes instead of the discernment of Christ?
 - 1. Calvin “There are many persons of the same description in the present day, who plead that on intricate subjects they have a good right to suspend their judgment, because they must wait till the matter is fully ascertained. They go farther, and believe that it is a mark of prudence purposely to avoid all inquiry into the truth; as if it were not an instance of shameful sloth that, while they are so eagerly solicitous about the objects of the flesh and of the earth, they neglect the eternal salvation of their souls, and at the same time contrive vain excuses for gross and stupid ignorance.”⁵

VI. Questions to know, love and obey God

- a. Do you take the time to know your Bible *so that* you can discern this time and place in which you dwell?
 - i. Or is your Bible reading focused only upon yourself and your personal relationship with God? (must start there, yes! But can’t end there!)
- b. What are the key facts about our generation in America that help us know how the Bible categorizes our current generation?
 - i. Are we a people who love God and demonstrate it via keeping His commandments?
 - 1. What are the promises God gives to a people who love and obey Him?
 - ii. Or are we a people who despise god and demonstrate it via hating and rejecting His commandments?
 - 1. What are the threatenings God gives to a people who hate and reject Him?
 - iii. Do you see signs of both? Some who love and obey God intermixed with many who hate and reject God?
 - 1. What is the doctrine of the remnant?
 - 2. Romans 11:1-5 “I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 3 "Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? 4 But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved

⁵ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 277). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

- c. Do you understand the process of applying Biblical discernment to your decision-making in this world, seeking God's wisdom for your family?
 - i. Or, do you settle for good enough, foolishly believing "it is a mark of prudence purposely to avoid all inquiry into the truth; as if it were not an instance of shameful sloth."
- d. Do you see the TRAJECTORY aspect contained in Biblical discernment?
 - i. Do you see that wise people seek to sow wisdom righteousness now in order to reap victory in the future?
 - ii. Do you see how ignoring the wisdom principles of God's Word equate to sowing foolishness now and reaping defeat in the future?
- e. Do you dig into Scripture to go beyond the milk into the solid food?
 - i. Hebrews 5:12-14 "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
- f. Or, are you more influenced by the madness of the hypocritical masses around you?
 - i. Do you have the courage to lead your family in the ways of God, no matter what pressures you feel from the world around you?
 - ii. Are you vigilant to watch out for how the multitude of madness is singing its siren song into your home?
 - iii. Romans 3:4 "Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar"
 - iv. Some examples of the siren call in today's world:
 - 1. Education unto financial security
 - 2. Sports/Activities idolatry
 - 3. Cultural change via politics instead of the Gospel
 - 4. Having a large church