

Boy! Do fashions ever change! (And quite frankly) we should all be thankful that the fashionable dress of the 1600's has long since past. In the 1600's... great effort was taken in Europe by wealthy families to look as beautiful as possible. ... Men wore expensive suits... which would include accessories such as a leather purse hanging from the belt and a fashionable walking stick. ... They would shave their heads and wear high crowned wigs with long flowing hair. ... But the women may have had it worse.

Women wore beautiful long-flowing dresses. Around their waste they wore puffy panniers stiffened with cane frames to make their hips fashionably wide. (And) they too... wore extravagant... tall wigs... that HAD to be supported with **wires**... and then be decorated with feathers or flowers. Sometimes these wigs would brush against the candles of the chandeliers and they would catch on fire.

But (here) is what really amuses me – it is the women's fashionable fans... which they hung on their wrists. Do you know what the purpose was for those elegant fans...? (I always thought they used them to keep themselves cool in the summer heat)... but according to an article that I read this week... cooling themselves was not their main purpose. No. ... The women used these stylish fans - to cover their rotted teeth and to blow away their bad breath. ... [ P A U S E ] ...

OK... So... outward they were beautiful and elegant... but inwardly they struggled with rot and odor. ... And (eventually) after the party... they would have to return to that reality. ... Isn't **that** a very fitting picture of what hypocrisy is ... ?

Or consider a different picture for it. ... Think about two young people on their very first date. ... The guy arrives in a beautiful BMW to pick up the girl that he wants to impress. He's dressed in a three-piece suit. To strike the best impression... he takes her to the best restaurant in town. ... (Now) as for her... she is dressed in understated elegance and sporting a marvelous hair-do that looks ever-so-casual. (In other words... not the fashion of the 1600's which looks pretentious and over-done.) ... There they are... spending the perfect evening.

But the fact is... he borrowed the car and the suit... and he spent a week's wages on the dinner. She had her face in a mud pack for two hours before she went out (something she would not be able to repeat every day... if they continue their relationship) ... and her hair-do cost a fortune. ... Let's say that they actually DO establish an on-going relationship. They have got to eventually unmask and be who they really are.

Hypocrisy will ultimately be exposed. Its deception cannot last forever.

... [ P A U S E ] ...

We will encounter a passage today in Luke's Gospel... when Christ's ministry had peaked. Great crowds of people were following Him. It was at this time that He performed so many miracles. There were literally thousands of blind who had their eyes opened... thousands of lame that were made to walk... and thousands of dumb that were made to speak. Christ healed multitudes.

This crowd was so large... that our first verse (Luke 12:1) reveals that it was impossible to number them. (Luke employs the Greek word ***urias*** {***moo-ree'-as***} which means "an unlimited number." It has been translated

“ten thousand times ten thousand” and “two hundred thousand-thousand.”  
There were so many people that they could not be numbered.

The people were pushing against one another... and (actually) some were being trampled. ... This was not a polite church group. It was a nasty **mob**... and a dangerous place to be. (But I am not only talking about **PHYSICAL** danger.)

Jesus knew that such popularity was temporary. Instead of optimism... Jesus responds with realism... and He warned His disciples... to be aware of hypocrisy – “the Leaven of the Pharisees” – He called it.

Why is He warning them **now** at this particular time of popularity? ... The answer may be the fact that Jesus knew that the disciples might be tempted to gain popularity by pleasing the increased crowds. ... All of us want people to like us... and it seems such an easy thing to “act the part” that others want to see. ... (“*Crowds are coming now... let’s keep them coming... by impressing them with images... that REALLY **isn’t** us...*”)

The desire to impress people may lead to a double life... and a double life is a destructive and empty lifestyle... that ignores what God always sees.

This would be a good place for me to stop right now... and point out a strong thread that runs all through our passage today. I’ll frame it in the form of a question – and it is at the heart of everything I will discuss today.

DO YOU TRUST YOUR OWN WAYS TO PRODUCE RESULTS YOU WANT – **MORE** THAN YOU TRUST GOD’S WAYS...? “*No thanks God! My way is better than Yours! I better handle this myself... I’ll use my methods to get what I really want. ... I am going to trust my acting...*”

*pretending... and fakeness... so that I will continue to enjoy the popularity..."*

Jesus may have used this occasion (of the increased crowd size) to warn them about hypocrisy – because He knew this was their tendency. So He addressed it head-on.

But (You know) another reason for Jesus' warning at this time is just as likely. The verse that is immediately before today's passage – shows us how nasty and angry at Jesus... Israel's religious leaders had become. ... The disciples saw how venomous they were... and Jesus may have figured that they might be tempted to resort to hypocrisy in order to avoid trouble by pleasing the scribes and Pharisees.

The press of the people was so great... they were actually "*trampling on one another*." ... The combination of the Pharisees' terrifying pursuit of Jesus and the jostling... unruly crowd... made it dangerous to associate with Jesus. ... This mounting pressure might have had the effect of making some of the disciples less than open about their relationship with Jesus. Some might hide their allegiance... and therefore... succumb to disgraceful spiritual hypocrisy. ... Some might even deny Him.

Or maybe they might conclude: "*These Scribes and Pharisees are very ANGRY! They might make life very difficult for me. Let's just avoid trouble by giving-in and obeying their ridiculous rules and regulations – which we know are completely unnecessary! We'll just play along...*" ... But Jesus said "*Don't do either of these things! ...*" ... So now they were faced with the question that we must vigilantly ask ourselves: DO YOU TRUST YOUR

OWN WAYS TO PRODUCE RESULTS YOU WANT – **MORE** THAN YOU TRUST GOD’S WAYS...?

**Luke 11:53 – 12:1**

“*Beware... be on your guard... be constantly vigilant...*” or (as my High School teachers used to reprimand me: “*Sit up straight and pay attention!*” ... “*Stay focused.*” ... Luke expresses the way that Jesus said this... as a “present imperative” – which means Jesus calls us to a CONSTANT watchfulness. Don’t put this in the back of your mind... and only examine yourself occasionally. No. Check relentlessly... making sure it never takes hold and develops in you. ... Be on guard!... pay close attention!... Be alert!

Hypocrisy is like yeast (or leaven.) It only takes a tiny amount. But it slowly multiplies – barely noticeable at first – but it eventually inflates the human spirit. If left unchecked it becomes a swelling rot.

OK... so how do we make sure hypocrisy is not swelling inside of us...? That is what the rest of our passage will tell us. Watch for these four instructions. #1. Remind yourself that nothing will stay hidden. #2. Know what causes hypocrisy. It is fear of man. Fear God... more than man. ... #3. Proclaim Who Jesus is openly... boldly... and freely... before others here on Earth. ... #4. Don’t be distracted in defending yourself. Know that God will give you the words to say. (Remember that nothing stays hidden. ... Fear God. ... Proclaim Jesus boldly. ... And know that God will give you the words to say.)

**FIRST** - Remind yourself that nothing will stay hidden.

**Luke 12:2-3**

The art of being a hypocrite depends on concealment... but one day all will be revealed. ... Jesus explained the danger of hypocrisy and the futility of hiding the truth. ... In the present world order... secrets and dark corners conceal sin and give cover to evil intentions. ... When the kingdom of God comes (however)... everything will be exposed to the light of divine truth. All secrets will be revealed... every heart exposed to open examination... all intentions presented for public scrutiny. ... If one lives the life of a phony... it will become known.

**1 Corinthians 4:5 (ESV)**

*<sup>5</sup> Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.*

The point is that God knows what one does (good or bad)... whether with integrity or hypocritically. ... Everything will be exposed for what it is.

**FIRST** - Remind yourself that nothing will stay hidden.

**SECOND** – Fear God more than man.

**Luke 12:4-5**

Jesus mentioned “fear” five times in these verses, so He is teaching us that a basic cause of hypocrisy is *the fear of man*. When we are afraid of what others may say about us or do to us, then we try to impress them in order to gain their approval. If necessary, we will even lie to accomplish our purposes, and this is hypocrisy. Unfortunately, many of the scribes and Pharisees were more concerned about reputation than character, what people *thought* about them than what God *knew* about them.

### **Proverbs 29:25 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> *The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.*

The fear of man always brings a snare... and Jesus wanted His disciples to avoid that snare. ... Fear God and you will have no one else to fear.

The remedy for hypocrisy is to forget about what people may say and do and *fear God alone*. ... The fear of God is the fear that conquers all other fears... for the person who truly fears God need fear nothing else. ... All that men can do is kill the body... but God can condemn the soul! ... Since He is the final Judge... and He judges for eternity... it is logical that we put the fear of God ahead of everything else. ... Our God knows us and cares for us. ... He cares for the sparrows... and we are of more value than they - so what do we have to fear from men?

“Don’t fear people; fear God because He will hold all people accountable for the evil they do.” ... There have been so many Christian men and women down through the history of Christianity – who have accomplished so much for the kingdom of God... because they lived by this piece of instruction. The Scottish reformer (John Knox) was one of them. As he was being lowered into his grave at his funeral... it was declared: *“Here lies one who feared God so much that he never feared the face of man.”*

### **Luke 12:6-7**

Jesus urged his followers to consider their comparative value—“Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” We are made in the *imago Dei*, we are the apex of his created order, and we are the objects of his redemption—he gave his life for us.

**Romans 8:32 (ESV)**

*<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

God knows every moment exactly what is happening to us. “If God’s unrestricted providence extends to such minutiae, will it not be concerned also with the disciples of the heaven sent mouthpiece of God?”

*His eye is on the sparrow  
And I know He watches me.*

Even the plight of sparrows doesn’t escape the compassionate care of our Creator. Consequently... we... who are His disciples... whom He values far more than birds... can rest assured He will take note of any suffering. Nothing escapes His omniscient attention... He knows us better than we could ever know ourselves. ... Because of the extent to which God knows us... We don’t even come close to His understanding of what we need... or the best way to obtain it.

DO YOU TRUST YOUR OWN WAYS TO PRODUCE RESULTS YOU WANT – MORE THAN YOU TRUST GOD’S WAYS...?

How do we make sure hypocrisy doesn’t swell inside of us...?

**FIRST** - Remind yourself that nothing will stay hidden.

**SECOND** – Fear God more than man.

**THIRD** - Proclaim Who Jesus is openly... boldly... and freely... before others.

**Luke 12:8-10**

I must confess something. As I started to study our passage for today... these verses threw me for a loop. When I prepare a sermon... I try to read



over the passage slowly and ask tough questions about it. ... When I read these verses I kept asking:

*“So what? What’s the big deal about Jesus confessing me before the angels...? Angels...? Really...? Why should I care whether or not Jesus confesses me before angels? Why do I want angels to think well of me? It isn’t that they will decide NOT to step-in whenever I need their assistance. They do whatever God tells them to do. If God sends them – my reputation with them doesn’t matter... Does it? If I have a guardian angel... will it stand by and say – ‘Get yourself out of your own mess’... ? What’s the big deal about Jesus confessing me before the angels...?” ... .. [ P A U S E ] ... ..*

Then I looked at a parallel passage to our verses today... over in Matthew’s gospel (Matthew 10:32.)

**Matthew 10:32 (ESV)**

*<sup>32</sup> So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven,*

Luke said Jesus will confess us before **angels**... but Matthew wrote that Jesus said He would confess us before “God the **Father**.” Is this a contradiction...? ... .. No. First of all... remember Luke 12:1 expressed that Jesus began to proclaim these things *first* to His disciples. So He said these things on more than one occasion. He taught this lesson multiple times. Second of all Mathew’s rendition and Luke’s rendition have the exact same meaning.

It is the Heavenly court that is pictured here. When Jesus confesses us before the Father... it is among the angels... because they fill the courts of heaven. Luke wants us to envision the heavenly scene. Our name will echo the chambers of Heaven where God and the angels are – when we boldly profess to others who Jesus is!

This does not speak of salvation... as much as it does status and reward... to a much greater extent than having your name mentioned on national T.V.

I don't believe that these verses are about salvation... because that would mean Peter didn't go to Heaven. The one who denies Jesus will be denied in Heaven. Peter denied the Lord. Was he denied salvation? I don't think so. But his reward might have been greater.

Many believers are primarily motivated by an earthly fame that they try to achieve. They want the temporal recognition that is only in the here and now... and won't last. It is a rapidly fading glory. Heavenly fame is quite different. It will last for eternity. ... Can heavenly fame motivate you to boldly proclaim Who Jesus is... before others...?

There is a real and important place for a *public* declaration of allegiance to Jesus. ... For many... this is the most difficult challenge of all — and is usually difficult because of a fear of man. ... The test to either confess or deny Jesus before men may come in many ways. ... But take this to heart! If you are a Christian - it will always come. ... .. It is helpful to be determined in heart and mind *before* the test comes.

DO YOU TRUST YOUR OWN WAYS TO PRODUCE RESULTS YOU WANT – **MORE** THAN YOU TRUST GOD'S WAYS...?

While denial or failure to confess Jesus before others will be answered (in kind) in heaven... Jesus added a grave warning for *blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*. ... You may have already denied Jesus before your friends. There may have been situations where you spoke as though you don't believe Who He is. You might have spoken against Jesus being the Messiah. Maybe you wanted to fit-in with the group. ... By confessing that

as sin – you can be forgiven – just as Peter was. Peter’s three-fold denial of Christ... at Jesus’ crucifixion trial... demonstrates this truth.

But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will **not** be forgiven. Let me explain what that is. (There has been so much unbiblical conjecture about what it is.)

We learn about it primarily from Matthew chapter 12. But let me summarize. Blasphemy of the Spirit (the unpardonable sin) is the persistent and decisive rejection of the Holy Spirit’s message and work concerning Jesus. Whenever a person obstinately rejects... and fixedly refuses the Gospel message and the Holy Spirit’s prodding to believe it – that person will not be forgiven. In Matthew 12... this is what the Jewish national leaders were doing when Jesus called them out on it. They were resolved (hardened... their hearts were set in stone) to deny the Spirit’s work. But they had just witnessed an undeniable miracle that Jesus performed. So they attributed that miracle to the working of Satan.

This is much different than Peter’s instant denial of Christ – which he repented of. ... When someone blasphemes the Holy Spirit... they **never** repent. But the National leaders of Israel steadfastly refuse the prodding of the Holy Spirit... Who tries to convict them. This is the unforgiveable (unpardonable) sin. ... **[ P A U S E ]** ...

How do we make sure hypocrisy doesn’t swell inside of us...?

**FIRST** - Remind yourself that nothing will stay hidden.

**SECOND** – Fear God more than man.

**THIRD** - Proclaim Who Jesus is openly... boldly... and freely... before others. (But if you fail... when you are tested in this – and you **will** be... seek forgiveness through confession... like Peter.)

**FOURTH** - Don't be distracted in defending yourself. Know that God will give you the words to say.

### **Luke 12:11-12**

Jesus didn't introduce this command with "**if**," but "**when**." The terms "synagogues," "rulers," and "authorities" refer to tribunals that can have a huge impact on the futures of true disciples. Synagogues were the ecclesiastical courts of their day, ruling on matters both religious and civil. Excommunication didn't merely bar a Jew from coming to the synagogue; it expelled them from all social and commercial contact as well. A person "cut off" from the people could not buy food or supplies, earn a wage, receive medical attention, or even sell property.

"Rulers" and "authorities" included civil government officials (like Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate, and Tiberius.) Obviously... these men and their deputies could send people to their deaths — or could institute flogging... imprisonment... banishment... or debilitating fines — with the wave of a hand.

"When" true disciples face these potentially life-changing encounters... Jesus' divine promise could serve as reassurance. He said (in effect):

*"When you are brought before the tribunals and you are expected to give an answer for your faith, don't think you have to prepare an eloquent speech; simply speak from the heart. Because the Holy Spirit lives in you, you will say what needs to be said."*

Trusting God to give you the words... will keep you from resorting to hypocrisy. ... But listen Bible Study leader... Awana worker... Kid's Church teacher. This is not a license to neglect preparation and study. ... This about being brought before religious and government authorities who put us on trial for proclaiming God's truth. Know that if we ever find ourselves in trouble for His sake... God will give us the words to say. We don't have to give-in to a fear of man – which produces hypocrisy.

Luke 12:1–12 speaks to us (as followers of Christ)... as we live before a hostile world. ... We have a tough road to travel. ... Jesus warns against the pressure to conform to surrounding attitudes and thus become a hypocrite. .... Pressure comes from raw secular power that can cause us to fear people... not God.

Perhaps time pressures or the unfriendly atmosphere of your workaday world... or your home life... or your social world... have made you less than candid about your allegiance to Jesus. ... Perhaps you see yourself as being in Jesus' "secret service." ... Perhaps you have bought into trite rationalizations such as "*I witness with my actions—I don't need to put it into words*" or "*My faith is a very personal thing.*" ... - What a tragedy!

Of course we must witness with our actions. And of course we must not share Christ insensitively or rudely or use the pretext of the gospel to work out our unresolved aggressions. ... But we should consistently and joyfully confess Christ whenever possible — over a business luncheon when a prize account is at stake... to an acquaintance who holds the keys to our social acceptance.... or public acceptance.

DO NOT TRUST YOUR OWN WAYS TO PRODUCE RESULTS YOU  
WANT – **MORE** THAN YOU TRUST GOD'S WAYS!