

Luke 12:1-7 CCH Sermon “Look Out” 11th July 2021

v1

- Can I start with a Q... **Does it make a difference to your behaviour if someone is watching?**
 - Do you walk into a room differently when all eyes are on you?
 - Do you drive differently when a police car is in your rear mirror?
 - Do you take the penalty differently when it's not in front of your teammates in the practice match
 - but in front of the nation in the cup final?
- Does it make a difference to your behaviour if someone is watching? I think it does.
- But this introduces a problem of integrity.
 - If I only obey the speed limit when I know there's a camera
 - Or if I obey the Covid rules when I'm with my church friends, but not with my work friends
 - which is the real me?
 - The me when I'm on my own, or the me when people are watching.
 - It's the issue of sincerity, even hypocrisy
 - And it's the first issue raised by Jesus in this sermon which thousands heard.
- We start today a new series in Luke 12- “A crowd of thousands”. And to get our bearings we need to get our bearings with where we are in Luke with two introductory points clear before we address hypocrisy.
 - The journey
 - The crowd.

First the **journey**.

- Luke's gospel has a lot of material that is in common with Matthew and Mark, but there's a point in Luke's account at 9:51 where Jesus resolutely sets out for Jerusalem.
 - If the **first** part of the book (after Jesus' birth and family tree) is mainly based in Galilee in the North,
 - And the **last** part of the book (including his death and resurrection) are mainly based in Jerusalem in the South,
 - then the **middle** section (ch9-19) is the journey.
 - And the section includes quite a bit of teaching which doesn't feature in the other gospels.
 - And in this part Jesus particularly teaches us about true discipleship.
- It's helpful for us to know this, because we also need to grasp true discipleship:
 - to know what it truly looks like to follow Jesus, rather than to be a pharisee, a fake, a hypocrite.
- And we too, if you like, we also are on the road of discipleship with Jesus, following him along the way to the cross, but ultimately following him to glory and resurrection new life.
 - Maybe you aren't out of the starting blocks yet, you are new to Christianity and are considering stepping on the journey.
 - Maybe you've been on the road for some time, and you are getting weary on the way.
 - Well this chapter will be hugely helpful for us all, as different preachers preach through it over the summer months.
And as we listen not to what we think the Bible is saying, but to some of the very controversial things that Jesus actually said.
- The journey.
 - Let's zoom in even further from the section to the chapter...

- Next the crowds.
- As Jesus goes on his way from Galilee to Jericho and to Jerusalem, he interacts with different groups of people.
- And sometimes, like here, huge crowds gather.
 - Take a look at verse 1. “Many thousands”.
 - There were 60 thousand people at Wembley on Wed night, more booked in tonight..
 - They all had a seat. These guys didn’t.
 - So they were actually “trampling on one another”!
 - You can just imagine the carnage.
 - Oi, that’s my knee. Mind my child!
 - Thousands upon thousands, (no tech team in those days) craning to hear what he says.
 - It shows how attractive Jesus was. How people flocked to hear him.
 - But notice something else in v1. “Jesus began to speak first to his disciples”.
 - Look out for this as we go through this section.
 - Sometimes Jesus talks to his inner circle- his disciples, with others eavesdropping.
 - Sometimes he interacts with someone in the crowd.
- And in our little crowd.
 - Maybe 50 in person, and up to another 30 online.
 - Yet we also have this mixture of disciples and eavesdroppers.
 - Maybe some on youtube just listening in.
 - So I think this is going to be a really important for us all.
 - As we listen to teaching that thousands heard.
- Well for our sermon today, I’ve got 3 looks.

1) LOOK OUT FOR HYPOCRISY! (v1)

- v1 Yeast.
 - Jesus is warning his disciples of something very dangerous but very subtle.
 - Something insidious, not always easy to spot initially
 - but can have a dramatic effect infecting, corrupting the whole batch.
 - Hypocrisy.
- ▲ There has been an outcry over the recent months over government officials who have said one thing in public, and practiced another thing in private.
 - Indeed, one [journalist said that Hypocrisy is too small a word](#) to use in the case of our recent health secretary, who told us we weren't allowed to kiss our dying relatives was kissing his girlfriend behind his wife's back
 - To be the senior rule maker for covid and then to break those rules has made people livid, and emptied his words of all meaning.
- Hypocrisy is serious.
 - The pharisees have already been in the limelight in chapter 11. Look at v39-41
 - *'Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But now as for what is inside you – be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you. '*
 - There's a massive mismatch between the public and the private
 - Between the reputation and the reality.

- And disciples are not immune from this which is why Jesus warns Peter, James, John, Judas and others of the dangers of hypocrisy.
 - You see we know that we can change our behaviour when people are watching.
 - Which is the real me?
 - What's to say that we wouldn't do the same in some way...
 - One set of behaviour for church or lifegroup
 - A different set of behaviour with our mates.

 - One conversation to the person's face
 - A different conversation behind the person's back

 - An outcry when someone commits adultery, "Tut, Tut"
 - But secretly lust in our hearts, which Jesus says is just the same.

Look out. Look out for the danger of hypocrisy.

- And Jesus is saying it's rife in religion.
 - Chapter 11 The pharisees love their greetings in the market places.
 - They love their religious clothing
 - They are so scrupulous on the small things- giving 10% even of their mint when it comes to the church collection.
 - But they completely ignore generosity to the poor.
 - Spotless on the outside, filthy on the inside.

It's the kind of thing that puts people off church for ever.

Can I say this section terrifies me?

- I've seen this happen in others.
- I know it could happen to me:
 - I know the darkness of my own heart, and how I love to hear my own voice.
 - And how adept I am at giving a good outward impression.
 - And how I measure conversations on whether people like me.
- And I guess you are similar too.
- Well what hope and help is there?
 - Answer, masses.
 - That's why Jesus is telling us this!
 - And why he is on the journey to the cross to die to forgive us
 - And why he's talking to the crowds to warn us.
 - and why he sends his Holy Spirit into our hearts to clean us up.

LOOK OUT.

How? 2 things.

LOOK FORWARD and LOOK UP

- How do we ensure that we don't have this public/private divide?
- Well part of it is to know that the private will be found out!
- The private will soon become public.

2) LOOK FORWARD TO THE JUDGEMENT DAY (v2-3)

v2-3.

- You can delete the internet history.
- You can swear people to secrecy or buy them off.
- You can do a great cover up.
 - But Numbers 32:23 “be sure that your sin will find you out”.
 - And that might happen in this life, but it will certainly happen in the next.
- Have you ever had the experience of hitting send on that email describing someone’s faults,
 - only to discover that they are in the distribution list.
- Or in the early days of zoom typing a private chat message to another member of the call,
 - only to discover that the host can read everything you say!
 - Talk about wanting the ground beneath your feet to swallow you up!!!
- Do you see the contrasts in these verses?
 - Concealed, disclosed
 - Hidden, made known
 - Whispered, PROCLAIMED! preached/heralded from the rooftops.
 - announced on social media for the whole world to see.
- It would be a great idea if we only said what we were willing for everyone to hear.
- Because one day they will.

- Now wonderfully for the Christian, all the sins proclaimed from the rooftops will be forgiven for the Christian- there is no condemnation for the one who is in Jesus.
- But proclaimed from the rooftops nevertheless.

These are weighty matters, but Jesus in his kindness is warning his disciples, and us to look out for hypocrisy.

- And the first step to look out for hypocrisy and avoid it is to look forward to the judgement.
- if we only looked forward rather than to the here and now
- And if you aren't a Christian what hope do you have on that day if you don't flee from the judge by fleeing to the judge.
- Acts 17: 31 *"For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead"*

Next time you are tempted to say in private what you would not want shared in public, Look forward. Look away from now, and the quick point scoring among friends, to the judgement day of God.

I'm sure this will raise questions, do ask them afterwards.

But not only do we look forward, we look up as well.

3) LOOK UP TO GOD (v4-7)

- Here's the second way of avoiding hypocrisy.
 - Look forward to the Judgement day
 - Look up to God
- Our default is to look down to now and to me.
- But we have to look forward and upward.
- These two themes actually run throughout the whole chapter.
 - The rich fool thinks of his grain and himself, not the future and God.
 - The servant who is unready for his master's return thinks of himself and now, not his Master's return.
 - We need to look forward to the judgement and we need to look up to God.
- And what we see about God is both "tough" (challenging) and "tender" (wonderful).
- First the tough side...
 - v4-5
 - Jesus is saying that it's possible to worry about the power people have.
 - Your colleagues can make your life a misery
 - Your peers can ridicule you on social media
 - Your boss can make you unemployed.
 - Your persecutors (and this is happening in some parts of the world to Christians) can take away your life. They can kill the body.
 - Jesus says, that's not very much!
 - There's something even worse than having your life taken away.

- It's having your eternal life thrown (and that is the word that Jesus, the most loving person in the world uses), thrown into hell.
- Let us be in no doubt from these words on the page that Jesus Christ taught about hell.
 - Gehenna- Jesus uses the name of a valley near Jerusalem where the rubbish and dead bodies were burned up.
 - The word is used 12 times in the new testament, and 11 of those are by Jesus.
 - God has authority to throw into hell- a place of eternal judgement and separation from God.
 - That is how powerful God is.
- That is how much he should loom on our horizon. Not people.
- But wonderfully, while the follower of Jesus knows that God has authority to throw into hell, he never will for those who have come to his Son for refuge.
- Because Jesus has paid instead. THE IOU IS RIPPED UP!
- Does that help us to get our priorities.
 - Don't fear people, what's the worst they can do.
 - Fear God- respect and revere him- he can throw into Hell.
- Don't adapt your behaviour according to whether your persecutor is watching.
- That's very hard, but it's easier when you remember God is watching.
- If I can put it like this, there's a **TOUGH** side to God, and it's why we must read the Bible, otherwise we get a God in our own image, the Werther's Originals granddad who pats us on the head whatever we do/chose.
 - *"Fear him who after your body has been killed has authority to throw you into hell, yes I tell you fear him".*

- But there's a **TENDER** side. And this melts our hearts.
 - The God of devastating power and authority over eternal life
 - thinks and cares for the smallest of birds.
 - And the most insignificant of people.

- **v6-7**
 - A sparrow- the food of the poor.
 - You can pick up 5 of them in the market for two assarions- a Roman copper coin that was 1/16th of a Denarius, translated here as a penny.
 - 5 birds 2 pennies. That's 0.4 pence each. Less than the sweets I used to buy growing up in the days of a half penny piece which went out in 1984, because you could no longer buy anything with it.
 - Can you think of a more insignificant bird?
 - And God cares for them.
 - And every one of them matters to him.
 - Not one of them is forgotten by God.
 - "Not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care". Matthew 10:29.
 - **I think of the pigeons I've seen in Trafalgar square, hobbling along with damaged clubbed feet, gathering pieces of crisps that kids have dropped by mistake, fluttering a couple of feet if they get too close to a busy commuter's stride.**
 - God cares for them.

 - It's a how much more argument.
 - If God cares for the sparrows (& we'll come back to ravens in a couple of weeks with Sam).
 - Then how much more does he care for you.

- You think your situation is too difficult for God?
 - You think your health problem is too insignificant for God?
 - You think that God has too many things to worry about on the stage of world politics to care about your bunions or your maths test, or your MRI scan or your aging mum.
- My friend, he cares for the sparrows.
- I've spoken to people who have found the last year and half so difficult they have wondered whether they can carry on with life.
- He knows how many hairs are on your head.
 - For me that's a smaller number each day!
 - He knows stuff about you that even you don't know!
 - He knows you in microscopic detail.
- Don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.
- That's why he sent his Son to die, so that he wouldn't have to throw you into hell.
- So trust him! Daily.
- God is incredibly powerful. We should fear him v5
- But he is so caring of the microscopic details of our lives v7 that we don't need to be afraid.
- so next time you are tempted to put on a front to make yourself look good, LOOK OUT, how?
 - By looking forward and by looking up.

- I'm going to finish this sermon in a rather strange way.
- Rather than applying it to you, I'm going to apply it to me!
- You will need to think about how it impacts you.
 - In your workplace, in your relationships.
- But for me...
- I know that one of my greatest sins is the fear of man.
 - Focusing horizontally on what people think of me
 - Rather than focusing vertically on what God thinks of me.
- Can I ask you to pray for me, that I will look forward to the judgement day, which I have nothing to fear because Jesus is my Saviour, yet I still want to please him.

And that I would look upwards to God, that I would care about his eyesight and not others.

Let's pray.