

# November 9, 2025 - Luke 12:1-12 - Fear God and Fear Not

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] All right, Luke 12, 1-12. I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do.

But 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. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?

And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not. You are more of value than many sparrows. And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God.

But the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. 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.

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.

[ 1 : 3 3 ] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Good morning, everybody.

Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. It's wonderful to be with all of you together today for this excellent day. And I'm also very thankful to be able to give Brent a chance to have a breather.

It's not often he gets a chance to have a breather. So it's wonderful to be able to preach this message on Luke chapter 12, verses 1 through 12. If you don't know me, my name is David Suedas.

And I'm married to that wonderful woman over there. We have a baby on the way. December. Really close, actually. It's amazing. Yes, very close. So it's really exciting.

And on that point, actually, this sermon is really important to me because it deals with fear. Fear is something that this entire sermon talks about quite a bit.

[ 2 : 3 1 ] And my conversations with parents has made it pretty clear that, you know, you get some anxieties about the future and anxieties about children and all of that. But not just that, fear seems to be a constant part of our lives in general.

I'm a high school Bible teacher over at Heartland. And I can tell you that fear is a common thing that parents experience, especially when they have me teaching their students.

You know, I don't get as many angry or upset emails as I did once, but I get more common and confused ones, right? I take my students occasionally out to evangelize to the Jehovah Witnesses down the street.

And I try to make sure my students do the work. You know, I've had enough experience that it's not quite right for me to do all of that. So when we have a period or it's free, I just walk them down the four minutes.

They evangelize to the Jehovah Witnesses at the corner. And then after 30 minutes, I take them back. So some parents heard about that and they said, hey, you're taking our kids evangelizing.

[ 3 : 31 ] Is that safe? And I said, you know, I didn't really think about that too much beforehand. But yes, it is. And they said, well, who are you evangelizing to? Is this like, are you taking them to a mosque or something?

And I said, no, no, it's just Jehovah Witnesses. And they said, oh, that's okay. If you don't know, Jehovah's Witnesses are actually very peaceful, very kind.

And so it's not that dangerous to evangelize to them. Yet on that phone call, when a parent did ask me about that, I said, now in the future, when they're not evangelizing with me and they're out in the world, is the danger much of a concern for you?

And the parent said, well, I just hadn't thought of it. And I said, well, it's something to consider. I take them to a place that I know is safe. But they are being thrown amongst wolves.

All of us are being thrown amongst wolves. Fear is common. Fear is expected. And yet fear doesn't stop being any more fearful if you only think about those common earthly things that you fear.

[ 4 : 37 ] If you consider what my students felt, about eight weeks now, they felt shaken when they saw Charlie Kirk's assassination, the video of the assassination playing in their heads because they saw the up-close video.

And so some of my students had this fear about sharing their faith. And then it got worse and compounded when my students saw videos of people going online, cheering and celebrating the murder, and then actively calling for the further violence and persecution and murder of other Christian conservatives.

Actively. With millions and millions of views and likes and support. And then other politicians advocating likewise. As you can imagine, my students got quite concerned.

And this got even further compounded with the final clear revelation of what's been happening in Nigeria. With over 52,000 Christians killed since 2009.

And multiple millions displaced because of Islamic terrorist groups taking over and pushing out Christian groups. And of course, nobody ever talks about that until now.

[ 5 : 44 ] Because when Christians are killed, it's expected and not a tragedy. So, as you could think in the way that my students would, with all of this information that lines up, and then hearing about the arrest of multiple Christian apologists in the UK over the last two weeks, thrown into prison because they were debating Muslims, yet the Muslims that debated them weren't thrown into prison.

How strange is that? My students start to find their moments of fear. What am I supposed to do? This passage is beautiful because it teaches us how to fear and how to fear rightly.

This sermon is titled, Fear God and Fear Not. And my main point, as strange as this point is, is this.

A faithful fear gives freedom. A faithful fear gives freedom. Christians are killed all across the world.

And so I ask you, before we pray, are you afraid? Are you afraid of murder? Are you afraid of being judged slightly because someone dislikes you?

[ 6 : 59 ] Are you afraid because Thanksgiving is coming up, and you're kind of afraid of the conversations you'll have as you pass around turkey and stuffing, thinking that your uncle or aunt is going to judge you because you're just another religious loon, right?

Are you afraid of the holiday season where people will start to ask you questions about why you celebrate Christmas the way that you do, with reverence and with an appreciation for Christ?

Are you afraid of small bits of judgment? Or are you afraid, like our brothers and sisters across the world are afraid, because their children are killed in front of them, because they are making mass graves in Nigeria?

A pastor is standing in the mass grave of the 30 people killed in his congregation, and he is standing outside of the mass grave before they put the dirt over the bodies, and saying to the camera, why doesn't anybody care about us?

What happens to all the marches that you Americans do? When you march about Black Lives Matter, but when it's in Africa, nobody cares. When you march about how genocide is evil, but when it's against Christians, nobody cares.

[ 8 : 05 ] Where is our advocate? Where is our defender? Are you afraid? If you are, this sermon is for you.

Bow your heads with me. Father God, perfect, matchless, holy Father, I pray that your wisdom from the text is poured out and overflows, filling our minds with the abundance of your Scripture.

Let your word, which is perfect in all ways, teach us to grow and be sanctified, conformed into the image of your Son. Let fear of the things of this world be pushed aside, and let us see the truth of who we should fear, and how we should fear rightly.

We thank you, God, for the holiness of your Son. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen. Amen. In our first section, verses 1 through 3, we will first pursue this question, and this true statement, that we ought not fear, because God exposes.

In these first three verses, about not fearing because God exposes, we see this, right? Jesus saying, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

[ 9 : 28 ] Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and whatever you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

So in this first section, after an entire chapter, if you've watched any of the previous sermons, after an entire chapter of Jesus debating with and calling out the Pharisees and lawyers and scribes, we see that his conversations seem to have drawn quite a crowd.

So much so, it says, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together, they were trampling on one another. I don't know how many people remember the old Black Friday days in the early 2000s, but people, when they are ravenous for something, they're awaiting, they'll camp out, and they're all so ravenous for an item that the moment there's a little opening, there's a bit of freedom to get the thing they so deeply desire, they will trample on each other for it.

And it seems like this type of ravenous hunger has seized this audience too, yet for a different kind of gift, a different kind of bread. I can understand why, obviously, especially if you're looking at Luke 11, verse 42, Jesus calls out the scribes and lawyers with this statement, Woe to you lawyers also, for you load with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.

And if you observe the parallel passage that you see in Matthew's Gospel about tithing dill and cumin, in chapter 23, verses 23 to 24 in Matthew's Gospel, for you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness.

[ 11 : 10 ] These you ought to have done without neglecting the others, you blind guides straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel. These people who had been under the scrutiny, the harsh, hypocritical eye of the Pharisees and the scribes, the teachings and traditions, and the incomplete hypocritical legalism of the Pharisees, they have carried a yoke, that is to say, a weight on their shoulders that they could not bear.

And so imagine, if you will, carrying a weight on your shoulders for years and years and years with nobody ever attempting to even put one finger to lift the weight of these traditions and burdens, not even a bit.

Then finally someone comes and this person does so boldly. He lifts the weight of the law off the shoulders of servants and they are ravenous.

They feel free. They gather together to hear more of what he is saying. And all these years, they thought they never would. Will anyone ever speak up against these Pharisees who take widows' houses, who request of us something that they themselves will not do and not give?

Do you not see the suffering of your people, God? Do you not see our oppressors, these people who place wicked burdens on us? Do you see how they treat us, these self-righteous, wicked, merciless, unjust, unholy leaders?

[ 12 : 38 ] Do you see us, God? Why do you let us suffer? Well, the same God who in Exodus 3, verse 7 answered, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters.

I know their sufferings. It's the same compassionate God who answers them as he did in Luke chapter 4. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. And so this God of freedom has come and his name is Jesus Christ.

He is before these people in the crowds that finally tasted a bread, not of bondage, but of life, not of self-sufficiency, but of his sufficiency. Jesus himself compares the teachings of the Pharisees to bread.

And you're not going to have a whole lesson on bread making. I'm sure some of you could do a far better lesson than I would. But to make it simple, leaven was, especially if you look at the Greek term used here, it's just a bit of fermented dough that you mix in with new dough.

[ 13 : 52 ] And when you mix the fermented dough in, it spreads throughout the entire batch so as to allow it to rise. That's the whole function. You see, as it spreads, it spreads completely.

And if it's poor leaven, it'll leave a bitter taste no matter where you bite from it. That's how the Pharisees' teaching was.

Hypocrisy makes even good teaching weak, bitter, unpalatable. In fact, Jesus makes his same claim when he speaks not to the crowds of people, but first to his disciples.

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known. And he's actually calling us back to something he said in Luke chapter 8, verses 16 and 17.

No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand so that those who answer may see the light for nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will be not known and come to light.

[ 14 : 58 ] Jesus is saying this. You will know them by their fruits. Leavened bread will rise over time. It's an inevitability. In God's time, you will see the teachings of hypocrites for what they are.

And yet the pure bread, the unleavened bread of Christ, of his disciples, who he teaches even now, that will remain, that will persist, that will not alter, that will not change.

The word of God will stay the same. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the words of the Lord will not pass away. The unleavened bread will stay unleavened. It will remain as it always has been.

You will know them by their fruits. All things that are hidden will be revealed. And so, Jesus calls these Pharisees out and says that wickedness will be exposed in the same way that leavened bread will be known as it rises.

And he does this because he knows how darkness works. You see, darkness wishes to hide itself and those who love the darkness love to hide as well.

[ 16 : 09 ] They hope to never be exposed. They hope their hypocrisy and their false teachings will never be lit and made clear for the world to see. But we think of John chapter 3 where our Lord says this, and this is the judgment, the light has come into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

Do you fear that the evil that you hear about on the news and on the articles and everywhere that's happening on earth, do you ever feel and fear that this evil will never be exposed, that the evildoers will just get away with it, with no judgment, no justice given unto them, that it will stay hidden and all the other people will have to suffer as a result?

Don't fear. God exposes in his good timing by his perfect will. Yet don't think this is only externally focused.

Do you fear that perhaps your evil wickedness will be exposed someday? Or do you think you're so prideful and arrogant as to think your evil will never be exposed and you can continue on unrepentantly pursuing the sin that you have, the false life that you've lived.

[ 17 : 32 ] Do you think that you'll escape the eyes of the Almighty? You will not. God exposes everything. The light exposes everything.

And every single one of us will have to give an account. Do not fear. God exposes. I know that sounds paradoxical if you're part of those who are fearing God, but the second section explains this very well.

The second section explains that though God brings down the prideful, he does exalt the humble.

And it teases out this seeming paradox, at least when you first read it, and I'll hopefully help you to notice the strangeness of section two. This is verses four through ten. Do not fear.

God exalts. It begins with setting up how we should fear God instead of fearing man in verse four through seven and then gives examples of why you should follow that command in verses eight through ten.

[ 18 : 35 ] A what and a why, which as a teacher I always appreciate a structure so clear. At least at first it seems quite clear. Read with me verses four through seven.

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

Yes, I tell you, fear him. Sounds pretty simple, right? God is the all-powerful king of all creation. He is the judge of all creation. He is the one who deems what is right, what is wrong, and who goes where when they die.

So it makes sense for us to fear God more than we fear humanity. Until the verse complicates this a bit, because then it says in verses six onwards, are not five sparrows sold for two pennies and not one of them is forgotten by God?

Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not. You are of more value than many sparrows. Now this is confusing. We were just told that we should fear not man, but instead fear God.

[ 19 : 39 ] And then the very next verse is it tells us regarding God, fear not. You are more valuable than many sparrows. What is going on with this? Am I supposed to fear God?

Am I supposed to not fear God? Am I supposed to fear him as a judge or not fear him as a compassionate ruler? Well, that's kind of the great error that we often make when it talks about fear of God.

We mistake the fear of God as the kind of thing that makes us unable to move. We often think what they thought probably in Jurassic Park, right, when they see the dinosaur and they're like, if we just stay still, it won't see us.

This kind of fear that paralyzes and keeps you steady and still, well, that's not exactly what we have in the scripture. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom in Proverbs 9, verse 10.

Fear of God is not some sort of impulsive terror that leaves us static and unable to move or live, but it actually implies that this holy and humble reverence, that's the fear of God, it's a reverence for who he is, this holy and humble reverence for the position and might of God is actually something that should move us, guide us, propel us, make us into more wise people.

[ 20 : 52 ] There is a teleology, a directionality, there is a movement in the fear of God. The goal is not to stay still, but to be conformed into his image and likeness.

It's a recognition of God as creator, judge, and king, but as we come to know God and grow in wisdom, we see that he is the perfect, compassionate, merciful creator, God, and king.

As a king who loves his faithful subjects, we can trust that he will not cast us away from him if we are his. As a perfect judge, we know that those who hold Christ as their savior will not be cast into hell.

As such, our fear of God becomes an assurance of our salvation. And this is not a paradox. Our fear of God is a reverence of God as a perfect king who can save and can keep those he saves.

If we fear God rightly, we don't fear being cast away from him. It's those who do not fear God that should be the most afraid of being cast apart.

[ 22 : 03 ] The fear of God is the beginning of our assurance. It is our reverence for the unmoving God which becomes the foundation for an unshakable life. And it is also something which we see over and over and over in the scripture.

The fear of God is the source of also our humility before him. If you look in the Proverbs 3, verse 34, for to the scorers he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor. And in Matthew 23, verse 12, our Lord says, whoever exalts himself will be humbled, but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Even in Luke's own gospel, Mary's song, in chapter 1, verse 52, he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate. This becomes exemplified over and over.

God tears down the prideful, but will exalt the humble. A fear of God forces us to be humble, recognizing that we are not the perfect all-knowing king of all creation.

We are not the judge of the living and the dead. We are nothing compared to him, and we could never be. Now, if that's the case, that this fear of God is the source of our assurance in God, it should give us a steady foundation, realizing that God as king is the one we should fear above all else, and yet in his presence we can find safety and security, then why don't we?

[ 23 : 31 ] Why is it that if we go out and perhaps talk to some Jehovah's Witnesses who aren't even a dangerous group, yet still we find fear talking to people about our faith, if we go out and talk to people who might judge us, who are non-believers of some kind, why are we so terrified?

those who are suffering across the world, they experience fear of death, and yet they persist and continue on.

Our brothers and sisters from across the pond in Nigeria and in the UK that I mentioned before, they exemplify this assured fear of God perfectly. The Christian martyrs who have been slaughtered in mass shootings by those Islamic groups, I mentioned the mass graves in Nigeria, the pastor crying out from the mass graves, right?

We even see this in Sudan. A mother and her children were shot on camera. It's a horrible video to see and it's been spreading all around as she's crying out before the Muslims that are making fun of her shooter and her children. You know what all the Christians in those churches did after mourning the loss of so many members?

A few days later, they went right back to church. In the exact same church that was just bombed or torched, with the walls scorched with the same flames, the smoke of the clothes of their family members still stained inside the chairs and the pews, those people went right back to church.

[ 24 : 53 ] They knew that the Muslims knew that church because the Muslims in the terrorist groups had just destroyed it three days prior. And they said, this is our church, this is our king, and this is how we worship.

You have no excuse. None of us have an excuse. Their children were killed in front of them. They watched their own children get burned alive, trapped inside the church.

And after losing everything that they held dear, they held on to the one they hold the most dear, our Lord. We all have a calling to share the gospel.

And no persecution of any group on earth can stop that. They know how this verse and this section ends.

Those who acknowledge Christ before men will be acknowledged by him before the Father. fear the judgment and reproach of Christ more than men.

[ 26 : 11 ] The fear of God frees the soul from the fear of death. We must learn to fear rightly. So while the humble tremble before God and find comfort, the proud tremble before judgment and find nothing.

Fear God. And I'm sure some of you are thinking at this point, okay, I know you say not to fear, but you just read from a passage that says if we fail to acknowledge Christ before men, if we deny Christ before men, we will be denied by him in front of the Father and the holy angels of the Father.

How on earth am I able to defend myself, to speak of my faith to others? Well, that's what this third section explicitly explains.

Do not fear. God empowers. In this final section, verses 11 to 12 serves as the how to the what and why before. How can I fear God rightly and not fear men or put to death the fear I have of mankind?

How can I speak the truth boldly to a world that hates me? How in the same way can I love God and love my enemies that hate me?

[ 27 : 28 ] How can I fear God enough to love my enemies? In the same way that God exposes the lies of evildoers and hypocrites and just as God is the one who exalts the humble who fear him as their Lord and Savior, God is the one who again will work in his people.

In these last two verses, we come to a sweet promise from our Lord. 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. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, if any of you have ever wondered if you're not enough and you don't know enough, good job, you're right.

None of us are. You think you have to be a theologian to share the gospel with somebody? That's nonsense. I know tons of theologians who never share the gospel.

You think you have to be a scholar to share the word of God and the good work of Christ in your life? That is nonsense. The scripture testifies to this. Acts chapter 4, verse 8 through 13.

[ 28 : 54 ] Then Peter, the same Peter who denied Christ three times, the same Peter and John who are just fishermen had this to say.

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers and elders of the people, if we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel, it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead that this man stands before you healed.

Jesus is the stone you builders rejected which has become the cornerstone. Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

when they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Our Lord spoke to his disciples. He promised this work of the Holy Spirit to them and his promise was fulfilled and even simple fishermen. You think you're not able to defend yourself but that's because you have not understood the one who empowers you.

[ 30 : 12 ] It's not you. It was never David against Goliath and David recognized that. He says, you fight against the armies of the living God of Israel. He said, that's a Goliath. He didn't say, you fight against me with a stone.

God is the one who empowered him. The disciples recognized that it is the Holy Spirit. It is God who empowers them. you can know the whole gospel forwards and backwards but if persecuted or oppressed for your beliefs even unto imprisonment or death I can guarantee you the courage and wisdom about what to say and how to say it come from God alone.

There's no other way. And this very thing God still promises to do for his disciples even today. For when our brothers and sisters across the world are killed for their faith we see that they refuse to recant of the truth of Christ.

Even with their children and their grandparents in front of them they refuse to give up their Lord. Even when they are seeing their churches torched people run over they refuse to deny their Lord.

the reason is because God empowers them. The Holy Spirit exalts those who have been humbled before the Father.

[ 31 : 46 ] You don't need polish in your gospel presentation. You need his presence. You don't need eloquence. You need obedience. And when the moment comes the Spirit will give you the words that you didn't even know you had with a strength that you could not wield with a peace a beautiful peace that you never expected.

The same Spirit that turned trembling disciples into fearless martyrs still breathes upon the Bride of Christ his church today. His fire still falls across prisons pulpits public squares even in the desert.

His fire still falls. The question is not whether he empowers but will you yield to the Almighty? Will you fear God enough to yield to his command?

To bring this all together as we've seen in the text we hold higher our disdain of pain more than we crave the gain of his glory. We often see the judgment of wicked, foolish Christ-crucifying mankind as more important than the approval of the Christ that they crucified.

We often see the words of dead men as more meaningful than the eternal word made flesh. We fear the judgment of men more than the smile of our Savior. We fear losing comfort more than losing conviction and so our hearts shrink where they should stand.

[ 33 : 23 ] The gospel reverses all of these fears. The gospel reverses everything. The thought that you had to be good enough is nonsense.

You can't be good enough. That's why we have Christ. We could never ever be good enough to stand up to the requirements of the law even if you rip apart the law and instead go by your own standards.

I say this to my atheist students. I say this to anybody else. Even by your own standards you've fallen short. You're still hypocrites. That's why we have a perfect Savior whose gospel is unleavened bread with no mixing of any ferment.

It is perfect. It is steady. not the wicked bread of hypocritical teachers but the life-giving bread of the manna from heaven Christ himself.

Not water which is bitter but water which is sweet. The water of life. Christ himself. There is so much in this world to fear and that's true.

[ 34 : 38 ] sickness and persecution death torment and torture. There is so much to fear but if our Lord saw the torture which stood before him and chose still to go through with it seeing the will of his father as greater than the concerns of his comfort surely we can learn to choose to fear God and from then on to fear not.

Please pray with me.