

God Above All

Luke 12:1-12

Winning a medal

How do you “win a medal” in life?

Whose opinion matters? Whose opinion doesn't matter?

What did Jesus say and do?

Prayer: Give us wisdom to live life well

Luke

Be watching for...

Growing crowds were interested in and divided about Jesus

Religious leaders (especially the Pharisees) opposing Him

Luke chapter 11

Jesus drove out a demon. Then “some of the crowd said, ‘By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.

Others tested him...’ ” (verse 15)

“Jesus knew their thoughts...” [hidden opposition] (verse 17)

“As the crowds increased, Jesus said, ‘This is a wicked generation.’ ” (verse 29)

“...the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say.” (v. 53-54)

Luke 12:1-12

1: Flee from hypocrisy (in self and in others)

Pharisees were afraid of the crowds

Later in Luke, the religious leaders “were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. ...

[Judas] watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.” Luke 22:1-6

This led to ‘hypocrisy’: outside ≠ inside intentionally

They were hiding their true agenda against Jesus

Pretending to be learners (to avoid the crowd's disapproval), they were actually trying to destroy Him

Jesus said: Don't be deceived by hidden opponents of Jesus. Don't follow their model.

2-3: Everything will eventually be revealed

Hiding may work with people...for a while

Nothing is hidden from God → He knows our hearts

And God will eventually reveal everything

Both good and bad things

Not just texts and emails and private conversations

Our hearts!

As tempting as hiding our hearts can be (hypocrisy) Jesus said that it is guaranteed to fail!

4-5: “Fear” God (really!). And fear nothing and no one else

Pharisees ‘feared’ the people rather than God

Deeply influenced by people's opinions and reactions

Either seeking approval or avoiding opposition

Leads to hypocrisy = selective hiding > playing a game

Instead, we should ‘fear’ God

Jesus taught: hell is real and dreadful!

Only God has authority to send to hell

So God's opinion is the only one that really matters!

And it *really* matters!

6-7: If God is for you, don't be afraid of anything

God ‘remembers’ even our most insignificant parts

If God is for us, nothing else can truly harm us. If God judges us, nothing else can help.

8-10: Our fate hinges on our response to Jesus and the Spirit

Jesus' claim: everything hinges on our relationship with Him

Amazing hope! Jesus claiming us as His family

Or great trouble: The "unforgivable sin"

One cannot simultaneously accuse Jesus of being empowered by evil and be forgiven by Jesus

This was the heart of the religious leaders

11-12: The Holy Spirit gives us the power to fear God first

Holy Spirit is not merely a source of information

"What words should I say?"

He is the ability to stay faithful to God even when all other powers try to force us to leave Him

Martyrs: followed Jesus even to death

Fear = whatever has the biggest influence in our lives

Our parents (even when they are gone...). Our spouse or partner or friends. Our critics (even when they are gone...).

Authorities: boss, government, religious figures, The "wisdom" of the crowds (likes, followers, peer reviews, ...).

Success: publications, grants, awards, raises, promotions, Our internal compass. Our heart: pleasures, pride, hurts,

Money, ...

So often, our fears are contradictory

Parents and spouse/friends

Our critics and our internal compass

So often, our fears are impossible to satisfy

They keep changing, or they keep critiquing

They do not have the power we think they have

Example: the satisfaction of praise is incredibly short lived!

None are any help to us once we die

The Big Idea: Jesus taught...

**The only true path
for a hope-filled life
leading to a glory-filled and unfading future
is to fear God above all else**

being guided by His character and commands

being concerned about His opinion above all others

with worshipful, joyful, and obedient awe

Application

Fear God alone

Everyone has "gods": whatever has the biggest influence

Can those gods handle the burden we are putting on him or her or it?

It is unfair, unwise, and unkind to put that burden on any person!

It is so foolish to trust any human institution or group

It is so foolish to trust the approval of crowds

It is so foolish to trust our own hearts

Jesus' claim:

There is one God and we can know Him

Jesus said: "If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

John 14:7

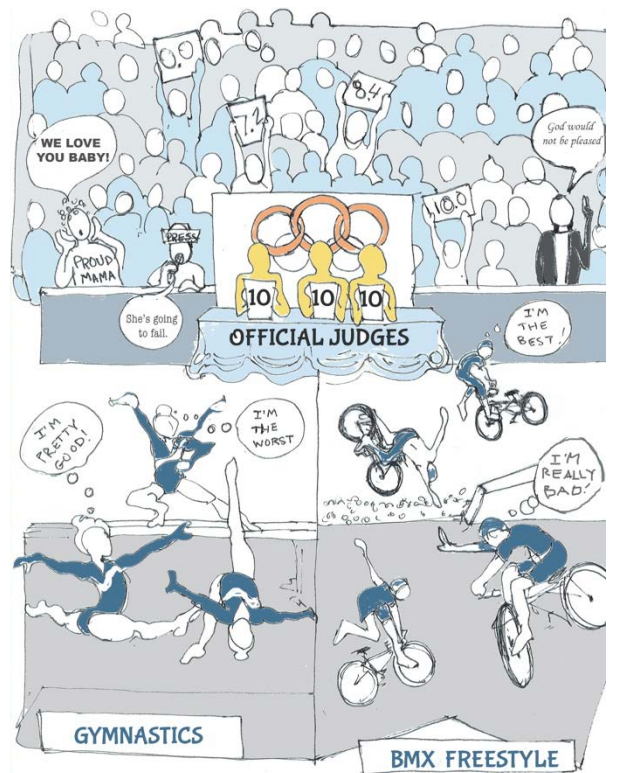
Jesus is the only way to know Him

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." *John 14:6*

God holds our eternal destiny in His hands

God is amazingly loving and caring...knowing our hair count!!

God is to be feared above all else with joy



The Spirit of God gives us the power to fear Him above all else

Live with the deep realization that...

God's perspective matters far more than anything else

God's love is better than anything else

God gives His Spirit so that He lives in those who fear God

This leads to...

worshipful, joyful, and obedient awe

being guided by His character and commands

being concerned about His opinion above all others

The best way to stop 'fearing' lesser things is...

To fear God more

Yet we are conditioned for exactly the wrong thing...

We live in a world of public review of everything and everyone

We must re-condition ourselves to value God's perspective above all else

Our conscience is an imperfect yet useful starting point

God's perspective is usually much quieter than other voices
for now...

So we have to choose to listen...

Case studies

Being a preacher and a pastor

Choose to evaluate my sermon by God's perspective before anyone else can say anything

And after... (both praise and critique...)

Doing what Jesus says

Be generous rather than loving money or time

Forgive rather than being bitter

Seeking to know Jesus

Sometimes we let other people control whether we seek Him (we fear them more than Jesus...)

This is what Jesus did!

He refused to be controlled by people (powerful or not)

He refused to be controlled by pain and suffering

He refused to be controlled by self preservation

In contrast: Peter denied even knowing Jesus!

Jesus invited Peter to fear God again, and Jesus forgave him

To fear God is also to turn to Him for mercy when we fail

Reflection Questions for later today or this week...

1. What do you fear? That is, what things or values or people have the biggest influence in your life? Why is that?
2. How do you listen to the opinion of God? What helps you hear His voice when other voices can seem so much louder in our hearts?
3. How does the Holy Spirit empower you, not merely to have the words to say, but also to have the power to fear God above all else? Where do you need to experience His power?
4. Peter denied even knowing Jesus because he feared the opinions of people more than he feared God. Yet Jesus then forgave him and even gave him a prominent leadership role in the early church. Where do you need the forgiveness and restoration that Jesus offers?