

Luke 12: 1-7; Psalm 44:17-21; Whom Shall I Fear? I. The Leaven of the Pharisees II. The Futility of this Deceit III. The One Worthy of Reverence

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we return to the gospel of Luke- our beloved physician- we remember the context of chapter 11- Jesus has just finished his 3 woes against the Pharisees and his 3 woes against the Lawyers of that day. Rebuking them for their duplicity- their lying. They were leading the people astray by their persecution of the righteous and their double standard. And in the broader context, Jesus is still growing in popularity but there is a rising tide of rejection at hand as well. Our text from Ch. 12 is going to continue this theme of the proper view of the Pharisees. Now that Jesus has rebuked them- Jesus continues by warning his disciples about their deceptive tactics. The issue at hand today is this- whom shall we fear? Is it better to fear and obey God- or fear and obey men as Peter asked in Acts 4? Well- why do people tend to fear men today? The fact is- we like to be liked! We want to fit in- we want respect! We want to be known- to rub shoulders with the movers and shakers of society. But today we are going to see why it is so much better to put a priority on fearing, acknowledging and obeying God above all. With this theme: Jesus Christ teaches us to fear God from the heart by avoiding hypocrisy.

I. The Leaven of the Pharisees

In order to bring us to the proper recipient of fear and reverence, Jesus begins by exposing the truth of the matter concerning the Pharisees. Now as ch. 12 opens the crowds are running up to Jesus- but Jesus knows the heart of the people. He is not deceived by the numbers- amassing a gathering does not mean that all these truly believe! So He says to His disciples, beware the leaven of the Pharisees! Beware- be attentive and stand on guard against this. One of the things that church leaders are called to do is to be watchmen on the towers- to sound the trumpet when an enemy is approaching the city. Beware- give proper thought and consideration! Watch out for these wolves in sheep's clothing! Their teaching is compared to leaven. Leavening yeast is the ingredient that is added to flour in order to make the dough rise. Leaven is often used to describe the influence of the Pharisees and the spread of sin. Leaven grows- it spreads until it infects the

entire lump. False teaching is like gangrene- that will continue to consume until it has no more resources to feed upon. Well- the teaching of the Pharisees is like leaven- it needs to be cut off- removed- kept out of the church. But what is this leaven- this teaching of the Pharisees? Jesus concludes v. 1 by saying- this false teaching is their hypocrisy. Literally the word is “Upokrisis” which sounds like Hypocrite! A hypocrite is a pretender- one who leads astray! In that day, the hypocrite was an actor on a stage- one who wears a mask or plays a part. They are acting- not being true to their self. As I Tim. 4:2 says- they were speaking lies in their hypocrisy. They were two faced- saying one thing but doing another. They would preach kindness but their hearts were as black as coal. Religious teachers that actually hated God and His anointed One! White washed tombs- full of death and decay! They served for and sought the praise of men- willing to step on anyone to get ahead. I couldn’t help but think of all the political adds on TV this past month. Seeking the praise and popular opinions of the voters- they will attack their opponent and slander their name! Trying to convince others that they are perfect- I have been a public servant all my life! I am the only one that can do what needs to be done. Well, the fear of man- or seeking the praise of people- is nothing new. We all struggle with this- failing to be consistent with our words and actions. We want people to like us- so we put on a show- an act! But although we may be able to fool others, we cannot deceive God!

II. The Futility of this Deceit

In our second point, Jesus makes it clear that this desire to deceive will not succeed! Deceit is futile because God knows and sees all! Consider the word pictures that Jesus gives in v. 2. What is secret will be made known- what is dark made light, what is hidden revealed, what is private made public, what is quiet spoken loudly- shouted from the rooftops! The fact is, on the last day God will reveal all things and make the thoughts of man’s heart plain to all. As Psalm 44:21 says, God knows the secrets of your heart. And again in Psalm 139, He knows our words, thoughts and life. Seeing our path and knowing our ways from afar. And when Jesus comes back to judge the living and the dead, nothing will be hidden from His sight- and nothing will be hidden from the world. Rev. 2:23, I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And Rev. 20- the dead

will be raised and judged according to the things that they have done. The books opened which currently record every thought, word and action. Jesus, the just judge on His white throne- will execute justice! The fact is, your life is currently being written down- everything in it! What you do in those secret, private times which no one else sees. Now this truth is either comforting or frightening. It is comforting to know that God hears all your secret prayers and private praise- that God knows your desire to love and obey Him even if you fall and fail along the way! He knows that you trust Jesus to save and want to offer yourself in thanksgiving! God sees it all- He knows your inner being- and this fact comforts God's people! But this truth can also be frightening- God knows everything about you! The wicked who lie and scheme- the hidden plans of rebellious man- all these will be exposed and made known! But if you love the Lord from your heart- seeking to obey and living in communion with Him- this too will be known! You cannot deceive God- you cannot pull the wool over His head! You cannot keep secret or hidden from His sight- He pierces all and exposes the truth of the matter. You can try to hide leaven in a lump, but sooner or later it will come bubbling up to the top!

III. The One Worthy of Reverence

As we come to our last point, we find out who is the one that we should fear and revere? The one you fear is the one you will obey. To fear here is to respect, honor and revere! To venerate and respond with reverent obedience! But whom shall we fear? Which one shall we obey? Whose law do we take to be our own? Man's or God's? Why do people tend to fear man? Why, when faced with a persecution, do we tend to lie or deceive? Within the church, why do we fail to speak out when we should- or by our silence admit defeat? Because we often fear men! We are afraid of the consequences if we don't step in line and follow their lead! We are afraid to make waves. Maybe people won't like me- they might make fun of me the student says. I might lose my job or be ridiculed at work- we think. Or I might even be sued or hauled to court if I speak the truth! We fear men- because of what they can do to us! Man might even take our physical life as v. 4 says. But what does Jesus say? Don't fear those whose worse case can kill the flesh, because after that they can do

nothing more! The worse man can do to you is kill the body and speed your journey to the Father. Rather- you should fear God! Fear the Lord and revere His name! Now why should we fear God above all? Well- Jesus has been building the case for us! Man is limited in His power- man is filled with deceit and his wrath is but a flash in the pan. Compared to this, God is all powerful! God is the one who determines the eternal state of man. God casts one into hell and welcomes another into heaven. God determines- has control over eternity! Not only what happens to your body- but the state of your eternal soul and your resurrected body as well- this too is in our Father's hand! Added to this, God sees and know all! Don't live in fear of man who can and is deceit- live in fear of God who cannot be deceived and will not be mocked! He knows all- sees all- and He remembers! Even the little, worthless sparrows of v. 6 are known and remembered- their rising and falling known to Him! How much more doesn't God care for His children! He has an intimate knowledge of you- numbering the hairs of your head! He is full of love for you- He has great concern for you because you are worth much more than any sparrow! In fact, God did not set His heart on saving the birds of the- but He did set His heart on saving the children of man! In His love He sent His Son! And the Son was willing to have His life blood shed to be an offering in your place! When you add all these together, you find God is all knowing and all powerful, yet full of love and compassion for His people! He sees all and controls the end and future of all things! Since that is the case- whom shall we fear? God or man! Fear not man- don't be afraid of fellow human- but rather fear the Lord and worship Him- venerate Him alone and respond with reverent obedience! Fear the one true God- F, S and HG- because He is both powerful and merciful! Worthy of our adoration and abounding in His love! Fear Him- because of His great power and love for you!

To conclude, the one we fear is the one we will obey! Since we know that our God sees all, knows all and controls the end of all- whom shall we fear? Love the Lord your God- Him alone shall you fear! As Dt. 6:13 says, it is the Lord your God that you shall fear, Him you shall serve. Jesus Christ teaches us to fear God from the heart by avoiding hypocrisy. So love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength! Serve Him from the heart with true faith, because He know what lays in your heart!