

Luke 12:1-12 home group questions

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Sermon summary

When faced with opposition, fear God (vv.1-5), fear Jesus (v.9) and fear for those who hear the Spirit's testimony (vv.10-12), but then do not fear:

- The Father is caring for you (vv.6-7)
- The Son will honour you (v.8)
- And the Spirit will give you the words to say (vv.11-12)

Key concepts

In 12:1-7, the issue is hypocrisy or play acting – giving the appearance of being religious while actually living for human approval. God will expose such false religion, however well hidden, and punish it in hell. But those who live for his approval are reassured of his intimate care for them – even in the face of death.

In 12:8-9, the issue is refusal to publicly acknowledge our loyalty to Jesus and his teaching. It is warning for Christians, not to compromise our faith. Once again, the motive in view for this sin is probably the desire for human approval, given the link with vv.1-7. And once again, we are warned to fear the Son's disapproval more. But we are also encouraged to stand firm, because his approval is far more worth having than man's; he will honour all who remain loyal before the greatest court in history. N.B. just as Peter was forgiven for temporarily denying Jesus, so our temporary failures can be forgiven. The greatest danger is if denial becomes a regular, settled pattern.

Finally, vv.10-12, the issue is blasphemy (slander or speaking disrespectfully) against the Holy Spirit. This is primarily a warning for unbelievers who despise the Spirit's testimony about Jesus – especially after Pentecost, when he was poured out in full to empower the church's witness. Jesus probably tells his disciples so they will be mindful of the danger unbelievers are in – not least when the Spirit gives them words to testify in court (vv.11-12). So when faced with opposition, we shouldn't be too self-pitying; our persecutors are in greater danger. Nor should we worry about what to say; the Spirit will give words (v.12). N.B. as with denying Jesus, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unlikely to be a one-off event, but a settled pattern of despising his testimony about Christ.

Questions

- 1) In what situations are you most afraid of human disapproval of your faith?
- 2) What is the worst that you fear could happen in these situations?
- 3) How do the warnings in this passage put those fears in perspective?
- 4) How do the promises of this passage encourage you to be courageous?
- 5) If there's time, you could discuss how to speak wisely and well about aspects of the Christian faith which commonly cause offense. Confessing our faith in Jesus and his teaching publicly doesn't mean we have to do so in blunt ways or to answer on other people's terms!

For example, are there ways we could answer difficult questions that get people to reconsider their own assumptions? If someone asks about sexual ethics or says what a great thing PRIDE month is, how could you reply to promote a higher ideal of love than simply 'it's ok so long as they love each other'? What is true love anyway? It's more than just lust or infatuation! True love is not actually about getting what *you* want but about how you can serve someone else and do them good, even if it costs you a lot. Isn't that how Jesus loved through his humiliation, coming down to earth, living in relative poverty and going to the cross? Isn't that the kind of love we should celebrate and aspire to?