

SBCOD Bible Study Notes

3-26-25

Luke 12

A Warning To Beware Of Hypocrisy – Verses 1-3

¹ Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ²There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ³What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

12:1-2 As Jesus watched the huge crowds waiting to hear him, he warned his disciples against hypocrisy— trying to appear holy when one’s heart is far from God. The Pharisees could not keep their attitudes hidden forever. Their selfishness would act like yeast, and soon they would expose themselves for what they really were— power-hungry impostors, not devoted religious leaders. It is easy to be angry at the blatant hypocrisy of the Pharisees, but each of us must resist the temptation to settle for the appearance of respectability when our hearts are far from God.

12:1-2 What are the signs of hypocrisy? (1) Hypocrisy is knowing the truth but not obeying it. People can say they follow Jesus, but not be obedient to his Word. (2) Hypocrisy is living a self-serving life. People may desire leadership only because they love position and control, not because they want to serve others. (3) Hypocrisy reduces faith to rigid rules. People can end up worshiping their own rules and regulations about what they think God wants instead of worshiping God himself. (4) Hypocrisy is outward conformity without inner reality. People can obey the details but still be disobedient in general behavior. For example, a person may carefully tithe his income, but be rude and obnoxious to his coworkers.

12:3 Many non-Christians use the supposed (or real) hypocrisy of Christians as an excuse to stay away from God and the church. Look carefully at your life. You are not perfect; therefore, at times an action or behavior might provide the ammunition for someone to label you a hypocrite. However, you must discern your own heart. Consider the signs of hypocrisy noted above and make sure you are not guilty. Then ask God to help you live rightly.

Do Not Fear Persecution – Verses 4-7

⁴ “I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. ⁵But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. ⁷Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

12:4-5 Fear of opposition or ridicule can weaken our witness for Christ. Often we cling to peace and comfort, even at the cost of our walk with God. Jesus reminds us here that we should fear God, who controls eternal, not merely temporal, consequences. Don’t allow fear of a person or group to keep you from standing up for Christ.

12:7 Our true value is God's estimate of our worth, not our peers' estimate. Other people evaluate and categorize us according to how we perform, what we achieve, and how we look. But God cares for us, as he does for all of his creatures, because we belong to him. Thus, we can face life without fear; we are very valuable to God.

The Importance Of A Good Confession – Verses 8-12

⁸ **"I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. ⁹ But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God. ¹⁰ And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. ¹¹ "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."**

12:8-9 We disown Jesus when we (1) hope no one will find out we are Christians, (2) decide not to speak up for what is right, (3) are silent about our relationship with God, (4) blend into society, and (5) accept our culture's non-Christian values. By contrast, we acknowledge him when we (1) live moral, upright, Christ-honoring lives, (2) look for opportunities to share our faith with others, (3) help others in need, (4) take a stand for justice, (5) love others, (6) acknowledge our loyalty to Christ, and (7) use our lives and resources to carry out his desires rather than our own.

12:10 Jesus said that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. This has worried many sincere Christians, but it does not need to. The unforgivable sin is attributing to Satan the work that the Holy Spirit accomplishes (Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29). Thus, it is the deliberate and ongoing rejection of the Holy Spirit's work and even of God himself. A person who has committed this sin is far from God and totally unaware of any sin at all. If you fear you have committed this sin, be assured that your very concern shows that you have not sinned in this way.

12:11-12 The disciples knew they could never get the upper hand in a religious dispute with the well-educated Jewish leaders. Nevertheless, they would not be left unprepared. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would give them the appropriate words in their time of need. The disciples' testimony might not make them look impressive, but it would still point out God's work in the world through Jesus' life. We need to pray for opportunities to witness for Christ, and then trust him to help us with our words. This promise of the Spirit's help, however, does not compensate for lack of preparation. Remember that these disciples had three years of personal instruction and practical application. We need to study God's Word. Then God will bring his truths to mind when we most need them, helping us present them in the most effective way.

The Parable Of The Rich Fool – Verses 13-21

¹³ **Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴ Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" ¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." ¹⁶ And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' ¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" ²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what**

you have prepared for yourself?’ ²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

12:13 Problems like this were often brought to rabbis for them to settle. Jesus’ response, though not directed to the topic, is not a change of subject. Rather, Jesus is pointing to a higher issue— a correct attitude toward the accumulation of wealth. Life is more than material goods; far more important is our relationship with God. Jesus put his finger on this questioner’s heart. When we bring problems to God in prayer, he often responds in the same way, showing us how we need to change and grow in our attitude toward the problem. This answer is often not the one we were looking for, but it is more effective in helping us trace God’s hand in our lives.

12:15 Jesus says that the good life has nothing to do with being wealthy, so be on guard against greed (desire for what we don’t have). This is the exact opposite of what society usually says. Advertisers spend millions of dollars to entice us to think that if we buy more and more of their products, we will be happier, more fulfilled, more comfortable. How do you respond to the constant pressure to buy? Learn to tune out expensive enticements and concentrate instead on the truly fulfilled life— living in a relationship with God and doing his work.

12:16-20 The rich man in Jesus’ story died before he could begin to use what was stored in his big barns. Planning for retirement— preparing for life before death— is wise, but neglecting life after death is disastrous. If you accumulate wealth only to enrich yourself, with no concern for helping others, you will enter eternity empty-handed.

12:18-21 Why do you save money? Are you saving for retirement? to buy more expensive cars or “toys”? to be secure? Jesus challenges us to think beyond earthbound goals and to use what we have been given for God’s kingdom. Faith, service, and obedience are the way to become rich toward God.

Do Not Worry – Verses 22-31

²² Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! ²⁵ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life^[b]? ²⁶ Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? ²⁷ “Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ²⁸ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

12:22-30 Jesus commands us not to worry. But how can we avoid it? Only faith can free us from the anxiety caused by greed and covetousness. Working and planning responsibly is good; dwelling on all the ways our planning could go wrong is bad. Worry is pointless because it can’t fill any of our needs; worry is foolish because the Creator of the universe loves us and knows what we need. He promises to meet all our real needs but not necessarily all our desires. Overcoming worry requires: (1) Simple trust in God, your heavenly Father. This trust is expressed by praying to him rather than worrying. (2) Perspective on your problems. This can be gained by developing a strategy for addressing and correcting your problems. (3) A support team to help. Find some believers who will pray for you to find wisdom and strength to deal with your worries.

12:31 Seeking the kingdom of God above all else means making Jesus the Lord and King of your life. He must control every area— your work, play, plans, relationships. Is the kingdom only one of your many concerns, or is it central to all you do? Are you holding back any areas of your life from God's control? As Lord and Creator, he wants to help provide what you need as well as guide how you use what he provides.

Trust In God's Provision Builds Generosity In The Followers Of Jesus – Verses 32-34

³² **“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.**
³³ **Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.** ³⁴ **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

12:32-33 Money seen as an end in itself quickly traps us and cuts us off from both God and the needy. The key to using money wisely is to see how much we can use for God's purposes, not how much we can accumulate for ourselves. Does God's love touch your wallet? Does your money free you to help others? If so, you are storing up lasting treasures in heaven. If your financial goals and possessions hinder you from giving generously, loving others, or serving God, sell what you must to bring your life into line with his purposes.

12:34 If you concentrate your money in your business, your thoughts will center on making the business profitable. If you direct it toward other people, you will become concerned with their welfare. Where do you put your time, money, and energy? What do you think about most? How should you change the way you use your resources in order to reflect kingdom values more accurately?

Watchfulness – Verses 36-40

³⁵ **“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning,** ³⁶ **like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.** ³⁷ **It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.** ³⁸ **It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak.** ³⁹ **But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.** ⁴⁰ **You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”**

12:35-40 Jesus repeatedly said that he would leave this world but would return at some future time (see Matthew 24– 25; John 14:1-3). He also said that a kingdom was being prepared for his followers. Many Greeks envisioned this as a heavenly, idealized, spiritual kingdom. Jews— like Isaiah and John, the writer of Revelation— saw it as a restored earthly kingdom.

12:40 Christ's return at an unexpected time is not a trap, a trick by which God hopes to catch us off guard. In fact, God is delaying his return so more people will have the opportunity to follow him (see 2 Peter 3:9). Before Christ's return, we have time to live out our beliefs and to reflect Jesus' love as we relate to others. People who are ready for their Lord's return are (1) not hypocritical but sincere (12:1), (2) not fearful but ready to witness (12:4-9), (3) not worried but trusting (12:25-26), (4) not greedy but generous (12:34), (5) not lazy but diligent (12:37). May your life be more like Christ's so that when he comes, you will be ready to greet him joyfully.

Be Good Stewards In Your Master's Absence – Verses 41-48

⁴¹ Peter asked, “Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?” ⁴² The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? ⁴³ It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk. ⁴⁶ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷ “The servant who knows the master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸ But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

12:41-44 Jesus promises a reward for those who have been faithful to the Master. While we sometimes experience immediate and material rewards for our obedience to God, this is not always the case. If so, we would be tempted to boast about our achievements and only do good for what we get. Jesus said that if we look for rewards now, we will lose them later (see Mark 8:36). Our heavenly rewards will be the most accurate reflection of what we have done on earth, and they will be far greater than we can imagine.

12:45-48 Jesus has told us how to live until he comes: We must watch for him, work diligently, and obey his commands. Such attitudes are especially necessary for leaders. Watchful and faithful leaders will be given increased opportunities and responsibilities. The more resources, talents, and understanding we have, the more we are required to use them effectively. God will not hold us responsible for gifts he has not given us, but all of us have been given enough gifts and duties to keep us busy until Jesus returns.

Not Peace but Division – Verses 49-53

⁴⁹ “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! ⁵¹ Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

12:50 The “baptism” to which Jesus referred was his coming crucifixion. Jesus was dreading the physical pain, of course, but even worse would be the spiritual pain of complete separation from God that would accompany his death for the sins of the world.

12:51-53 In these strange and unsettling words, Jesus revealed that his coming often results in conflict. Because he demands a response, families may be split apart when some choose to follow him and others refuse to do so. Jesus allows no middle ground. He demands loyalty and commitment, sometimes to the point of severing other relationships. Are you willing to risk your family’s disapproval in order to follow the Lord?

Interpreting the Times – Verses 54-59

⁵⁴ He said to the crowd: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does. ⁵⁵ And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is. ⁵⁶ Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time? ⁵⁷ “Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸ As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled on the way, or your adversary may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. ⁵⁹ I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

12:54-59 For most of recorded history, the world’s principal occupation was farming. The farmer depended directly on the weather for his livelihood. He needed just the right amounts of sun and rain— not too much, not too little— to make his living, and he grew skilled at interpreting natural signs. Jesus was announcing an earthshaking event that would be much more important than the year’s crops— the coming of God’s kingdom. Just as dark clouds forewarn of a rainstorm, there were signs that the kingdom would soon arrive. But Jesus’ hearers, though skilled at interpreting weather signs, were intentionally ignoring the signs of the times.