

August 21, 20`16

WHAT WE SHOULD FEAR

Matthew 10:24-31

Jesus had just finished speaking about the ways His followers would be persecuted. The Disciples were being sent out as sheep in the midst of wolves. They would be flogged in the synagogues, dragged before authorities, betrayed, hated, put to death, and persecuted. Then Jesus says that disciples are not better than their teacher, slaves are not above their master. *“It is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master.”* (v. 25) In other words, Jesus is saying, if it happens to Me, it will happen to you. *“If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of His household?!”* (v. 25b) The world fears the Kingdom of Heaven, partly because it can’t be understood in this life (at least, not completely), and partly because it is entered through judgment. And people fear judgment. We would rather judge ourselves than be judged by a perfect savior. But remember... our savior is merciful, and... He *is* the Savior!

“So have no fear of them...” (v. 26) **Them** = the people who reject Jesus and His Kingdom, as well as the preaching of the Kingdom. Do not fear **them**. They will be exposed. *“Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret will not become known.”* (v. 26b) Jesus is speaking, here particularly, about the Pharisees. He calls them hypocrites. Hypocrisy is living a lie. The Pharisees, unwilling to acknowledge any sin in their lives, were hypocrites. By being so strict that their lives were Law without grace, and, at the same time, claiming to be faithful, they were little more than hypocrites to Christ. The leaven of the Pharisees was that of ritual correctness in the absence of compassionate grace. They neglected justice and the love of God. (Luke 11:42) The leaven of the Pharisees was the notion that you can be right with God through rituals, and, that it didn’t matter whether or not you were right with others. The truth is that rituals are only tools to be used in the ministry of grace. They are not an end in themselves. Jesus could tolerate any sin by virtue of God’s divine grace except the denial that one had sin. I will speak of the “Unforgiveable Sin” down the road. Suffice it to say, for now, that the truth must be accepted or we end up living a lie.

Nothing is secret that will not be made known. The truth has a way of making itself known. Jesus was rising in favor with the people, while the Pharisees and scribes were out to find fault with Him in order to condemn Him. When Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites, He was merely saying out loud what everyone was already thinking.

Beware of religious leaders who are more law than grace. Beware of professional clergy who have high expectations but little love. Beware of pastors who are strict and not kind, serious and not gracious. And beware of religion that is ritual without relationship. And by that I mean worship without inspiration; head knowledge without heart-warming; and intellectual assent without emotional connections. The truth has a way of masking itself known.

Beware of belief without witness. *“What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light. And what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops!”* (v. 27) Don’t worry, this verse is about what you believe, not about dirty laundry! We should never keep our belief’s a secret. (And yet, we often do.) Jesus was speaking at a time when it was considered, by the religious status quo, blasphemy to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and therefore safer to keep quiet about claiming Him as Lord. But...should we always feel as though we have to play it “safe?” Jesus knew things would get worse. Perhaps the times He describes in verses 17-23 were already happening. The faithful would gather in the inner rooms of their homes at night and talk about Jesus and their belief in Him as the Christ. But the time would also come when they would proclaim it boldly... in the daylight. The time comes for everyone when to be silent is to lie. I’ve said it before: If you knew there was a cure that everyone needed, and, you knew where they could get it, it would be wrong not to tell them. The truth has a way of making itself known!

Don't fear the ones who will stone you for blasphemy. In Acts, Chapter Seven is a story that was known before the Gospels were written. It is about Stephen who was stoned to death by the scribes and Pharisees for his proclaiming the truth about Jesus. *"Don't fear anyone who can kill your body but not your soul! Rather, fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell!"* Fear God! Fear the Author of the Truth! Fear the Father of Jesus. Fear the One who made you. Why? Because He knows your heart. We should fear God because He *is* our Judge! No one wants to be judged. In fact, we live in a time when the trendy way of thinking is that there is no Judgment. Many think only that God is love, not a judge. They forget that God is holy, and His love is holy. Nothing unholy can approach what is holy. His Son died to make us holy! There are dozens of passages of Scripture though, that affirm that God is Judge. I only want to share a few...

Psalm 7:8 – *The Lord judges the peoples...*

Psalm 9:7-8 – *The Lord sits enthroned forever. He has established His throne for judgment; and He judges the world with righteousness; He judges the people with equity.*

Psalm 50:3-6

Isaiah 2:4 – *He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks...*

Matthew 25:31-46 – The Parable of the Great Judgment... *"Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not unto me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."* (vs. 45-46)

Romans 2:16 – *God will judge the secrets of humankind by Christ Jesus.*

Revelation 11:18 – *The nations raged, but Thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding Thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear Thy Name, both small and great, and... for destroying the destroyers of the earth!*

Yes, God is our Judge. And not believing in the Judgment doesn't mean it's not true. It usually means we just don't want to think it, or, even imagine it. God is holy and nothing unholy can approach Him. So God will judge us as to whether or not we are made holy by our faith in His Son, who takes away our sin.

But...let me tell you something about our Judge. As cheap as a sparrow is, none of them are ever forgotten before God! And we are of infinitely more value to God than a sparrow. God even knows the number of hairs on our heads. God knows us! God know me, and God loves me in spite of all the ways I know I am unworthy. God loves me even in spite of all the ways you know I am unworthy!

But the reason we need to fear God is that he will judge us by how we accept or reject Jesus. And should we reject the Son of God as our savior, there is a consequence! God has the power to cast our souls into hell! And... if you don't fear hell, you probably don't believe it really exists. But Jesus...right here... is telling us it's real. Fear it. Fear God with the respect that is due One who doles out the consequences. But know that God loves you so much that you will never be forgotten.

Whether you will fear God or trust God is up to you. As a Pastor, I want to encourage everyone to trust God. And I think the reason people don't trust God is that they don't know God or God's Word, God's promises, God's truth. You can decide to accept the Truth. Or, you can decide to reject the Truth. The Truth has a way of making itself known.

But now, what will we do once we know the truth? Will we share it? Will we tell those who don't believe that hell is a definite consequence? Will we tell them whom to fear? Will we proclaim our trust in the One who saves us? Will we be seen as a part of the truth, or, will we live a lie?

The Truth has a way of making itself KNOWN!