

Who Do You Fear?

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[0 : 0 0] The scripture reading today comes from the book of Luke, chapter 12. Please follow along in your bulletin. Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together, that they were stepping on one another, he began saying to his disciples, first of all, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, but there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard, in the light and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops. I say to you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

But I will warn you whom to fear. Fear the one who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two cents?

Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear. You are more valuable than many sparrows.

And I say to you, everyone who confesses me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God. But he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

[1 : 2 8] And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him. But he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him. When they bring you before the synagogues, and the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say.

For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. This is the reading of God's Word. How's everybody doing?

Who made it in before they got poured on? Because I saw some people just running. I looked up, and all of a sudden it was dark, and it was like just pouring out there. And so you get an extra blessing if you made it in the rain, right?

You get an extra, extra blessing if you made it in the rain without getting wet. So that's even no one else gets that, I understand. That's okay. Okay. We are looking at this passage.

My question is, when you heard Kelvin read the passage for today, did you have a lot of questions about that passage? If you're honest, you have a lot of questions.

[2 : 4 9] I mean, there's a lot of things. It's the passage where pastors don't like to teach it or preach it. It's one of those passages that you get in there and you're like, wow, there's some really hard stuff here.

There's some really difficult stuff. The way the room is configured, I might just walk back here and grab somebody. This is interesting configuration. But you read this passage and it's hard.

There's some tough stuff here. I said, those last five verses, there's some hard words going on there, right? When I was praying about this passage for the last couple weeks, I had a lot of things going through my mind.

One of the thoughts or these images I experienced, it kind of flashed me back to 1999, 2000.

So in 1989, I'm getting old, 1989, 1990. A couple of friends and I were teaching in mainland China.

[3 : 57] And we thought that we wanted to do something fun for the Chinese New Year. And so we had this bright idea. It was me and two other, another guy and two girls and our team.

We were in Tianjin. And we had this bright idea. We said, hey, let's take a vacation for the Chinese New Year. Let's go to North Vietnam. So this is 1999, North Vietnam.

And that sounds like a really neat place. Sounds like a fun place. We've never been there. Let's do this. Let's see what it's like. And so we could speak Mandarin. And so we went to Beijing and we went to the North Vietnamese embassy.

And the Chinese guard at the front let us in because we spoke Mandarin. We walked in there. And the guy came to the front desk. And there's two pictures of the fathers, the father and the father in the back.

And the army officer came there. And so we're still speaking Mandarin to him. And we say, yeah, we'd like to visit your country during the Chinese New Year. And he started asking some questions. And finally he just stopped and he looked at us and he goes, what country are you from?

[5 : 07] And we said, we're Americans. And we just want to come check out North Korea because we've heard so much about it. And we just want to experience your culture. And all of a sudden the guy looked at us and he stopped speaking Mandarin and he spoke English.

And he said, perhaps we will not have tourism in our country this year. We took that to mean that they didn't want Americans into North Korea in 1999.

And so we ended up going into Cambodia, which was also just weird. I've said before that if I were going to write a book, probably the first chapter of my book would be the dumb things I've done in my life.

I would use stupid, but we're not supposed to use stupid in our family, right? So the dumb things I've done in my life. And chapter one, the dumbest thing I've ever done in my life would be this story here. As we were walking into Cambodia, there was still this conflict going on with the Khmer Rouge and the government fighters.

In fact, when we went into Phnom Penh in 99, they had just built this kiosk with the skulls. And there were actually skeletons still in some of the schools where they were torturing people. And so we said, let's fly up to Angkor Wat.

[6 : 14] Now, I've never been to Angkor Wat and I haven't been there since then. Now I know it's this big resort area with casinos and all that. But back then it was just an airport and a village. And so we flew up there and we didn't know what we were doing at all.

So my wife is very glad that I wasn't married to her at this time and that I was a single guy. And so we came into the airport and we just walked out of the door and this little boy grabbed us and he said, do you need a place to stay?

We said, yeah, we need a place to stay. We don't have any place to stay. We need a tour guide. We want you to show us around Angkor Wat. He said, okay. And so something should have clicked in my head because we drove into the village of Siem Reap and there were army units everywhere.

There were soldiers guarding the bridge. There were machine guns set up. There were mortar emplacements. There were just soldiers everywhere. And we ended up staying in this guy's house with his parents. And about 12 o'clock at night, all of a sudden the sky was lit up with machine gun fire.

And there were mortars going off and just everything was just chaos. And the only thing we could think is, okay, we're going to get kidnapped. We're going to get kidnapped and someone's going to sell us for a lot of money because we're a Westerner or whatever.

[7 : 18] And that night we slept. We got very little sleep. And we made it through the night. And the morning he took us to Angkor Wat and we were walking around this temple complex and it was beautiful.

We walked out the back of this temple complex and we ran into this UN mine sweeping team. Okay, so there was a Swedish guy.

He might have been Finnish. I can't tell. They all look alike, tall, blonde hair. And he was directing four Khmer guys and they were basically sweeping the field for mines. And so we started talking to him and he showed us the mines that they were uncovering because Cambodia is one of the most heavily populated bombed mine places in the world.

And as we were talking, his walkie-talkie went crazy. And he picked up his walkie-talkie and he's listening and he's yelling. And we were just sitting there and we're like, okay, this cannot be good. And he says, we have to leave right now.

And we said, why? He says, a Khmer Rouge unit was just seen. They're sweeping back into this area. They've heard there's some foreigners here and they're looking for you. We have to leave right now. And we said, okay, where are we going to go?

[8 : 25] We're going to go through this minefield. And we said, what? He says, we're going to go through this minefield. He says, watch me wherever I step.

Put your feet there. Know why? Okay, so we're in the middle of this chaos in this jungle. The Khmer Rouge are rushing in. We're following this Finnish guy followed by four Khmer minesweepers.

And we're walking through a minefield. And all I'm thinking is mines everywhere. Mines bad. Where's that guy's footprints? And stepping in those footprints.

But we made it out. When I think of today's passage, it's all about mines that we as Christians walk into every day.

Sometimes we don't know we're in the middle of the minefield. Sometimes we're playing ball or basketball. We're doing stuff within the minefield.

[9 : 29] But the passage today is all about disciples. Luke 12 is all about Christ followers. It's all about disciples, people who are following Christ.

And what Christ is going to warn us and his disciples is that there's mines all around you. Be careful where you step. Because you'll get hurt.

Now in Luke 11, we haven't been there for about five weeks. We're going through Luke as a church. We're halfway through right now.

So we're about a year and eight months old. We're halfway through. So in two years from now, we'll finish Luke and we'll start something else. But in Luke 11, remember, there was this scene.

And Jesus was having dinner with these Pharisees. And it got intense. I mean, it got really intense. In fact, it got so intense that the Pharisees walked out.

[10 : 26] And in their mind, we're told in Scripture, they want to kill Jesus. That's all they're thinking about is we are going to get rid of this guy. He's dangerous. He's terrible. We're going to kill him.

Now at the same time as he's having this conflict with the religious leaders of his day, all the people are flocking to Jesus.

All the masses were told in Luke 11 and Luke 12. The word there, myriads, is the largest word in Greek. It means 10,000 people. It means at least 10,000 people, maybe more than 10,000 people.

So all these people are flocking to Jesus because they want to hear of this young teacher who's come in, and he's basically taking to task all the religious leaders of the day because everyone knows that the Pharisees are corrupt and they're no good.

And you have to understand here that as the people flock in in this passage, it's becoming very difficult to keep being a disciple of Jesus.

[11 : 28] On one hand, it's getting dangerous because now they know that the religious leaders, the synagogue, and everybody is out to kill Jesus.

And if you're with Jesus, you are in risk of getting killed. So the disciples are worried, and some of them are actually falling away because it's becoming too difficult to say, I follow Jesus.

The pressure in their workplace, the pressure at home, the pressure in their community, it's just getting so high and so difficult, people are falling away.

And they say, I can't say it anymore. Every time I say it at the bank, people laugh at me. Every time I say it at school, people think, well, you must not be educated because everyone knows that Christianity and science can't interact with each other.

And so you have this group of disciples who are following Jesus, and they're sneaking out the back door because they realize that pretty soon the cost is going to become very difficult and very high for them to follow Christ.

[12 : 33] On the other hand, you have this mass of people that are coming to visit Jesus. I mean, if you read the Luke 12 passage, the way Luke, the physician, very detailed, is writing it, he's almost describing it like a rock concert.

He's saying, there's a rock concert, and 10,000 people have come to see Jesus perform. And there's so many people that they're crawling all over each other. I mean, literally in Greek, that's what he's saying.

They're stepping over each other to get to Jesus. They want to hear him talk. They want to hear him do miracles. They want to see him perform. They want to see him fight the Pharisees. And so there's this atmosphere like Woodstock where everybody wants to be with Jesus.

And in the midst of this, Jesus sees all of these things happening. And he knows what's going on in our hearts. And he knows what's going on in the disciples' hearts.

And he pulls them aside. And he teaches them a lesson about what it means to follow him when things are difficult and when things are good.

[13 : 43] Are you with me? Am I making sense? Do you know where we're at? And so if you go to your passage in Luke, we look at this passage here.

So the disciples are being pulled away. Things are crazy. And in Luke chapter 12, verse 1, we read these first passages here. Jesus is going to warn his disciples.

He's going to warn us about something that we need to be careful of. He's going to warn us that we're going to walk into this minefield. And this minefield is going to destroy us. And we're not even going to know that we're playing around in it. Verse 1.

Under these circumstances, after so many thousands, the Greek word is myriads, the same word in heaven, myriads and myriads of angels, at least 10,000 people are gathered together.

They're stepping on one another. And he pulls his disciples aside. Now he's speaking to Christians. And he says this, Beware. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

[14 : 43] Now the word beware is very intentional. It says put your mind to, think about, study, know where it is, and not only do that, but avoid it.

Avoid it. And so he brings his disciples together. And he says this huge word picture. The minute they heard leaven, they would have thought back to Exodus when all of the people of God left Egypt.

And they're to bring no leaven with them. Leaven is this microbe. It's this yeast. It's a microorganism. I mean, if you're a cooker, you know what it does. You stick it in dough and put water in it.

And with sugar, and I tell, if you're at my home and I was telling my kids what I would say is, you put this little creature inside the dough, it eats, and then it poops. And its poop is gas, and the gas makes the bread rise.

Right? That's what's happening. So next time you eat leavened bread, you think you're eating bread with poop in it. Right? Little da bien. Right? Okay. So anyway, so you're eating this leaven, and when Jesus uses that word for leaven, he always attaches it to Pharisees, and leaven is almost always a bad thing.

[15 : 55] Leaven is this small little thing that you can't see. It's like a mine. It's something that you don't know, but if it's there in your life, it does a lot of damage. It changes, and it can hurt you, and it can destroy you.

And in this case, Jesus says that what it will do is it will make you a hypocrite. Now, Jesus is going to tell his disciples three times to beware of leaven.

The first time he's going to say, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, because that's hypocrisy. The second time he's going to say, beware of the leaven of the Sadducees, because that's materialism.

And the third thing he's going to say is, beware of the leaven of Herod, which is political power in the misuse of friendships, because that will destroy you.

And so these mines are laid out there, and he's telling his disciples, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, because this leaven is hypocrisy. Now, hypocrisy, to be a hypocrite, is a very interesting Greek word.

[16 : 59] It's very, very old. Actually, to be a hypocrite, all it meant would be to be one who speaks. And the word hypocrisy, actually, all it means is to be one who is answering.

But that Greek word moved from being something that was in a monologue or a dialogue in a play to being something that was done in acting.

And so now, when the people heard this word hypocrite, immediately what they would understand is someone who wears a mask.

And so if you went to a Greek play, there wasn't a lot of costumes, there wasn't a lot of fanfare, there wasn't a lot of backdrops. It was barren. But whenever somebody changed character, they put on a mask.

And in Greek, you would say, he is playing a hypocrite. He is acting outwardly, what he's not like on the inside. He's wearing a mask.

[18 : 01] He's acting a part. He's conforming to the values that everybody expects him to in his world, in his family.

He's a chameleon. He changes who he is. He's trying to fit in. He's trying to make people think, to believe that there's something that they are not.

Have you ever met anybody like that? He's inconsistent. And what Paul says and what Jesus says about hypocrisy is that it is always deliberate.

It's always on purpose. And that we use our words and our actions either positively or negatively to determine what people think about us.

Now, Jesus is going to talk about it a couple times here in this passage and later on. Actually, he's going to use the word hypocrisy and fear four times.

[19 : 07] And he's going to say, the reason you and I are hypocrites. And let's just get this out right away, okay? I'm not speaking because I'm not a hypocrite.

I'm speaking because I am a hypocrite. And for three weeks, I've been struggling with this passage. Like, okay, God, show me where I'm a hypocrite. Show me where I'm acting hypocritical of people.

Show me where my actions and my words are hypocrisy. For three weeks, I've been doing that. You only get to do it for 40 minutes. But Jesus wants to show us that there's a huge danger if we do that.

And if we do that, we lose the gospel. We lose the power of walking in the spirit that God has given us.

And so he's going to talk about this struggle that we have. And at the core of this struggle is this idea of fear. He's going to say to you and me that we all fear something.

[20 : 27] We all fear something. We either fear man and the things around us or we fear God.

I mean, there's not two other thrones in our life. There's one throne. There's one center. There's one heart in our life. And Jesus is saying to his disciples, he's pleading to them as they begin this journey as disciples, he's going to say, hey, you either fear man or you fear God.

And you need to be careful of who you fear because if you fear the wrong thing, you're walking into a landmine field and it's going to destroy you. Is that clear?

I mean, I want to make sure that there's no unclearness here. Because sometimes my wife says that wasn't very clear. And she's totally right. I love you.

But I want to make sure this is really clear. Because what Jesus is saying here is that you and I fear. And this fear drives us to become hypocrites. And it causes us to change our life and to change our actions.

[21 : 45] And when we walk into the boardroom tomorrow, we're either fearing God or we're fearing man. When you walk into your classroom as a professor or a teacher, either God is on the throne of your life and you're fearing him, or you're fearing your students, the administration, the people who pay your salary, you're fearing them.

When you walk down the street as you're living life, going to Lan Kui Fung, or wherever God has you meeting people and being missional and sharing with them about Jesus in your life, wherever that is, you're either fearing God or you're fearing man.

And whatever you fear controls the destiny of your life. Do you see why this is so important? I mean, everybody's becoming rock stars.

Everybody's getting popular. Everybody's going towards the disciples. They all want to be with them. They're the in crowd. Everybody wants to hear what they have to say. And Jesus says, be careful. Because when you get popular, you tend to fear people more than you fear God.

Be careful. Because when people start liking you, which isn't a bad thing, you're going to change how you act and how you dress and what you say because you want to keep that popularity.

[23 : 17] And Jesus is saying, be careful. Be careful who you fear. Maybe you could ask yourself these questions. These are questions I've been asking myself the last three weeks.

Are you a people pleaser? When people come and ask you to do something, do you say, yeah, I can do it, even though you know you can't do it? I mean, when you look at your schedule, is your schedule overcommitted?

Do you have a billion things you're doing this week, but none of them have a focus, none of them have a purpose? They're all just things that people say, you need to do this, you need to do this, you need to do this, you need to do this. Do you answer yes to everything?

When people ask you to do something, do you say yes? Question two, do you second guess your decisions? Do you make a decision, but then you change it because you're worried about what people are going to think?

Come on, girls. I like the pink outfit. No, no, no, I should wear the blue outfit. Now, this never happens in my house, but I've heard that it does happen with women in households.

[24 : 28] Guys, you're the same way. Do I wear this tie? Do I wear that tie? What's the power tie? What is going to give me the most respect in this boardroom? What am I going to do? How am I going to dress? And Jesus says, be careful.

Not that that's necessarily a bad thing, but if you do it out of fear, it's a terrible thing. Do you struggle with peer pressure? Is it important what people think about you?

Do you struggle with family pressure? When your family says, we need you to do this, do you go, okay, we'll do that? When your family sets up this agenda of things you need to be doing and how you need to be doing it, do you drop everything even if you already have your own family?

Do you struggle with, as a 35-year-old guy, your mom still coming into the house and making your bed and doing your laundry and putting groceries in your refrigerator?

And your wife looks at you and goes, you know, I really hate it when your mom comes in and rearranges all the furniture. Can you tell her not to do that? And the guy goes, oh, man, oh. Yeah, I wish I could, but you know, it's my mom.

[25 : 38] I can't do it. Do you struggle with that? And finally, the question is, are you worried about your self-esteem?

Is self-esteem critical for you? And how you answer all these questions determine what you fear. There's a lot of talk in America nowadays about bullying and schools and Internet and the interaction of peers among our children and in the American papers, and I think it's a little here, the big thought is peer pressure.

And when we talk about our high school kids, we say there's a lot of peer pressure. As adults, we use the words differently. We don't use pressure, but we say people-pleasing.

We're not under peer pressure. We're under people-pleasing. But what Jesus is going to say in this scripture and what God's word says is it's called the fear of man.

And hypocrisy is always a bad thing, that it will destroy you, it will destroy your life, it will un-gospel you. You won't understand what the gospel means because you're so worried about living lives the way people want you to live it.

[26 : 58] And in the passage, Jesus gives us four ways to detect hypocrisy in our life. He says four things that you need to be aware of. If you experience any of these four things, or these are things that you get yourself out of the minefield, if you're about to walk into the minefield of people-pleasing, think about these four things.

And these four things, he says to his disciples, these things will change everything. In verse two and three, he says this, but there's nothing covered up that will not be revealed.

That word revealed is a word that only can be associated with God. And so what he's saying there is there's nothing covered up. It's this word of like, you dug this deep hole, 10 feet deep, you put something in it, you buried it up, and you say, no one will ever find out what's here.

But Jesus says, God will come around and he will reveal that. So there's nothing covered up that will not be revealed.

There's nothing hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light. What you have whispered in the inner rooms, in Greek it's the secret place. What you've whispered in the secret place of your house or of your heart will be proclaimed, shouted, yelled out from the mountaintops.

[28 : 16] And so the first warning that Jesus gives us, he says this, if you're tempted to be a hypocrite, if you're being tempted with fearing man more than you fear God, remember that whatever is said, whatever is hidden, eventually God will bring out into the light.

Now in this passage, he's saying it in a good way. He's saying it to his disciples who are worried about what people are going to think about him, who are worried about whether they're making a difference, who are worried about whether they leave father and mother and come to follow Jesus.

Will that make a difference in the end? And what Jesus says to his disciples and he says to us is this, keep doing the right thing.

Keep following me. Keep fearing me. Keep being a good employee even though no one else in the office recognizes or cares about it.

Keep being a good boss who treats your people fairly. Keep being a kind wife whose husband probably isn't here on Sunday and he could care less about spiritual things.

[29 : 43] But Christ is in your heart and you're loving him, you're caring for him, you're serving him and you wonder, is this ever going to make a difference? Because no one sees what I'm doing.

And what Jesus says here is, yes, it will make a difference. because one day everything good that you've done, even though it's been hidden in the dark, will be seen.

Honor me. One day, I am going to get up on the hilltop, I'm going to get up on the housetop and I'm going to reveal everything of your faithfulness and your goodness.

In Hebrew, there's an idiom that's attached to this story and it's basically you can't hide the sun. That if you're shining, if you're being faithful, if you're doing what God has called you to do, don't worry about what's going to happen.

It might not seem like anything's happening, but what Jesus says here is don't be a hypocrite, don't cover it up, don't stop doing it, be who you are because one day all of these things you're being faithful right now, all of these things, you're going to be rewarded for.

[30 : 59] All of these things are going to be seen in the light. All of these things, I'm going to bless you for your faithfulness. But the disciples were struggling and they were like, well, no one sees what we're doing.

I mean, we're speaking the gospel to everybody, but everybody wants to do this. What do we do when you're gone? And Jesus says to them, be aware that everything you do will be seen.

Everything you do will be seen. Another thing that Jesus says here to avoid the minefields, to avoid hypocrisy is in verse 4 and 5. He says to his disciples, I say to you, my friends, it's the only time in the Greek Bible that that word is used, my friends, it's the only time that Jesus speaks it and what he means there is there's this intimate relationship with him and his disciples.

There's an intimate relationship with God and you. You are God's friends. He says, I say to you, my friends, don't be afraid of those who can kill the body, but after that they have no more they can do.

But I warn you whom to fear. Fear the one who after he is killed has the authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you to fear him. And what Jesus is saying here is that you can avoid hypocrisy, you can avoid the minefield by realizing that as you walk with him, things are not always perfect.

[32 : 26] Because sometimes stepping out and saying I follow Christ has repercussions to it. Sometimes those repercussions are financial, sometimes they're emotional, sometimes they're physical, sometimes they're spiritual.

I mean, we don't ever talk about that often in church because we want the gospel to seem sexy and fun and everything's perfect and everything's good, but what Jesus is warning his friends, what he's warning us, is that if we walk with him, if we do the right thing, sometimes things will become difficult.

And that's okay. Be aware of that. That same summer we went to Saigon and I was in this park of Saigon 1990, 1989, 1990, and we were walking with our friends and this little old Vietnamese guy came up to us and he spoke perfect English.

I mean, America still hadn't normalized relationships with Vietnam, so we could be there as tourists but we weren't supposed to have American dollars in there and we weren't supposed to do business there and all these things. And this little Vietnamese guy came up to us in the middle of this park and he spoke perfect English.

And we were astounded and I said, tell me, who are you? And he goes, I was a high school teacher. And when the communists came in, they put me in prison for 20 years.

[34 : 06] And after 20 years, they just let us go because they figured we were too old to do anything. And they said to me, don't share your faith. faith. And I'm looking at this guy right there and he's speaking perfect English to us and I said, so what are you doing?

He goes, well, I just come to the park and anybody I see who looks like a Westerner, I just go up and start speaking to them and sharing with them about Jesus in my life. And I was like, dude, you spent 20 years in prison.

Aren't you worried that they're going to put you back there? And he said this to me, God's word says, don't fear him who can just kill you.

But fear him who can, after he kills you, takes your soul and separates it away from him. You know how big I felt at that time because I'm this missionary living in China doing all these cool things and sacrificing nothing, which is okay.

But this guy realized the principle of hypocrisy, that if you feel like you need to change, if you feel like the pressure is intense, if you feel like something's going to happen to you physically, what Jesus says to his disciples, and every one of them died that way except for John, he says, don't worry about those who can kill you because all they can do is kill you.

[35 : 28] But worry about him who holds your soul. I thought about that a lot. I don't know if you struggle with it, but I think I do sometimes.

I struggle with thinking that heaven is here and now, that this is all there is. And I don't really think about what happens afterwards.

But what Jesus is trying to tell his disciples, what he's trying to tell you and me, is that amidst the struggle, amidst the minefields, amidst the hardness and the difficult times, realize that your physical body will experience hard things.

But that's okay. Because you have an eternity in heaven waiting for you with me. Jesus goes on in verse 6 and 7.

Again, this is a heavy passage. This is like, whoa! He says this to his disciples. He goes, if you're tempted to be a hypocrite, if you're tempted to walk into the minefield, if you're tempted to realize that I need to be something that I'm not, the sixth, he says this, are not five sparrows sold for two cents?

[36 : 49] Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. I mean, he takes the smallest animal in their culture in a market sense. that you would buy two sparrows for one cent.

You could buy four sparrows for two cents. But they were so cheap, they threw in a fifth one. That's how worthless sparrows are. And what Jesus says to his disciples and to us is that here God has so much concern over something that seems so small and so insignificant.

arrogant. Surely, he's more concerned about us. Melissa, Henrika, 144,000.

Scientists say that if you have blonde hair, you have 144,000 pieces of hair in your head. Ed, Mervyn, 122,000.

Scientists say if you have dark hair, the average person has 122,000 hairs in their head. Charles, for redheads, it's 90,000.

[38 : 14] So scientists tell us that for redheads, you have 90,000 hairs in your head. Mike, Kelvin, some of those guys who are losing that hair right here, it's less than 90,000.

Okay, God is subtracting there, right? But what the scripture says here is that as you're tempted to be a hypocrite, as you're tempted to act apart, as you're tempted to be something that you're not because you're worried about what people are going to think about you and how they're going to act around you, realize that God loves you so much that every hair in your head is numbered.

And not one hair in your head can fall out without God allowing it to happen. how do you feel when you hear that?

I got to tell you, this is the hardest one for me because I have so many doubts about God's goodness sometimes. I have so many doubts of whether he really understands, if he really sees my future, if he really cares amongst the hard, difficult times.

I wonder if he really understands what's going on in my world sometimes. But Jesus says when you're tempted to fear man instead of fear God, you cling to the fact that God loves you, he knows you, he's always there, he's always involved, that nothing can happen to you without him allowing it to happen to you.

[40 : 12] And if you cling to that, if you understand that, then you won't fall into hypocrisy. That you'll fear God more than you fear man.

And that word fear there basically means awe, and reverence, and worship. And Jesus says when we walk through our day, Lenny, when you leave here with your family, and you're going out to eat lunch, and then you're going to go to work tomorrow, and you're going to be doing things that no one's going to see you do, God's going to say, be in awe of me.

Worship me. Jason, when you leave here and you go to China, and you're doing what God has you doing, every step that you take, God is going to say, no matter what happens to you, I'm in control of those things.

and I want you to worship me, and love me, and be in awe of me. Don't fear man, don't worship men, don't be in awe of men, but be in awe of God.

And if we keep that in our forefront, it helps us to see the landmines, and it prevents us from stepping on them and blowing ourselves up. And finally, the hard verses, verses 8 through 12, Jesus says this, and I say to you, everyone who confesses me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God, but he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

[41 : 53] Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him, but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him. When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense or what you are to say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you need to say.

And what Jesus says to his disciples and he says to us is that throughout our life we have these options, we have these choices of who we are going to put on our throne.

Now you are going to come back to that and go what does that mean? What does number 10 mean? I want to know did I blaspheme the Holy Spirit? What does that mean? Am I unforgiven? Am I unforgivable? I think it depends on where you are at.

If this is written to non-Christians what that means is that God keeps bringing himself to you. People keep inviting you to church. You keep hearing of God's grace and his mercy.

You keep seeing how incredible community is you keep seeing the power of the gospel change and transform people's lives and even as that is put in front of your face you say no, no. No, I just can't do it.

[43 : 11] No. I don't want it. I'm more happy where I'm at. I don't want that. And for those he says that on that moment you close your eyes you've blasphemed God's Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is the giver of life.

He brings truth. He presents Jesus Christ to people and in saying no I don't want that what you've done is you've rejected him. If you're in a family of God it doesn't mean that you lose your salvation but what it means and there's a lot of questions on this but what I tend to think it means is that one day as Christians we'll go before God and there will be this panorama played of our life.

And every word and deed and action will be played before us and before God. And we will see the opportunities we had to make Christ known.

We'll see the opportunities we had to be a part of his kingdom and allow it to grow and reach out to people. We'll see opportunities that we had with the giftings and the talents and the money that he's given us to make an incredible impact.

And we said no. And there seems to be a sense that we're going to lose something. We're still saved.

[44 : 46] But we're going to lose something. We're going to lose something. The passage is really clear. you and I have two options.

We have one throne in our life with two people to put on it. And the question is do we fear man or do we fear God? Do we care about what others think?

Or do we care about what God thinks more? And I'm not saying it's bad to care about what other people think. But what I'm saying is that becomes the idol that drives you in your life and it predicts everything you do.

then scripture says that you're fearing man instead of fearing God. Do we strive to please others or do we strive to please God?

Do we trust God with everything that we have and everything that he's given us? Or do we trust whatever?

[45 : 49] You fill in the blank. If you're like me it was my family. It was my medical degree. It was the people I hung out with.

It was the bank account. It was the 280Z that I drove in college. Whatever it is you fill it in there. I don't know what it is in your life or what you've put on the throne of your life but the question Jesus asked in his passage and what he warns us about is that we're walking into this minefield and we need to be careful of these things because if we don't we'll become hypocrites and we'll fear man instead of God and the outcome of that is always bad.

It's always bad. It's always bad. Does that make sense? This is a tough passage guys because this is the only time where Jesus actually uses a negative thing to reinforce what he wants us to do.

It's almost always positive do this and these things happen but here he's saying guys if you don't do this this is what's going to happen. And he wants us to be very clear as we walk with him and as we follow him.

So where are you standing today? What do you fear?

[47 : 16] on Monday when you leave here what's the worst thing that could happen to you? What's your greatest fear? What's the thing that's going to happen in your place that the minute you leave here and you've been worshipping and everything is good and someone looks at you and all of a sudden you're like whoop.

And it's like you just shut down what God's been doing in your life for the weekend or however long you've been in community. We need to be in community.

We need to be with brothers and sisters all the time. We need to have people around us who are continually gospeling, sharing the gospel message with us, asking us questions, challenging us, encouraging us, spurring us on to great and incredible things.

We need to beware that there's a minefield all around us and this minefield is going to blow up if we're not careful and that's why we need people around us and we need to understand and think every moment that we go through our day, who am I fearing here?

Who have I put on the throne of my life? Because Jesus is saying to us, the minute we put anybody but God on there, we lose the power of the gospel.

[48 : 49] And what we've done, instead of saying it's Jesus plus nothing is everything, we say it's Jesus plus something. And Jesus is telling his disciples, and Paul told us last week, that if we do that, we've lost everything.

every significant event in my life that's happened to me is because for some reason, I'm hesitant to share this, I wasn't even going to share this, for some reason, I took a step of faith and I chose to fear God more than I feared man.

Now there are many significant things in my life when I did not choose that. And now as I look back, I grieve and I grab onto God's grace and mercy and thank him for where I am now.

The first significant thing was when I wanted to tithe. I was in high school. I made \$50 a week. I heard this talk about going on an adventure with God and giving money because it was all God's money anyway and that was really novel for me.

Because I grew up, it's all my money. And so I heard this guy preach and I said, okay, I'm going to trust God and I'm going to take a step of faith and I'm going to give my \$5. I remember that \$5.

[50 : 21] Up until about 10 years ago, I remembered the serial number on that \$5. But I had it written in my Bible and I lost that Bible. But taking that step of faith and trusting God changed everything in my life.

Because it started to free me from stuff and from money and it allowed me to give freedom to give things that God has given me and see his kingdom multiplied and blessed and expanded in ways I never would have imagined.

marrying Christina. I saw this girl walk down this Christmas conference and something inside of me, all my being said, you need to go and pursue that girl.

I know without a shadow of a doubt it was God telling me that. I don't know. I'm not always mystical, but I knew here. I walked up to my best friend.

We were roommates and I said, what do you think about Christina? I really feel like God's called me to marry her or to pursue her. I was 33 years old that time, so I was getting old, right? I didn't think I'd ever get married anyway.

[51 : 31] And my friend looked at me and said, don't do it. He said, because her old boyfriend's coming back in town. And I think that they're going to get back together. And so all the guys around me, all the peers, all the men said, don't do it, dude.

Do the right thing and let her get back with her old boyfriend. But there was just something inside of me that kept saying, pursue, pursue, pursue. And I took a step of faith. And we're here.

Coming to China. I grew up in Montana, Montgomery, Alabama, Texas, New Jersey, and Delaware, and Colorado. Never outside of the States.

I felt God was calling me to come to China to work in mainland China. All my friends, all the words, all my parents, everything said, don't come to China. China's terrible.

Go to Europe. Europe's nicer. But for some reason, I just took a step of faith and said, I feel like God is calling us to come to China.

[52 : 37] And I don't know what it looks like, but I'm going to trust you. And I'm not going to put on a mask, but I'm going to trust you and I'm going to walk with you. Those three things have changed my life, but I know there are many other things that could have changed my life.

But instead, I feared man more than I feared God. God, my prayer for us as a church, my prayer for you, where you're at right now, I don't know what you're fearing, but I pray that you would leave it here before you leave here.

And you walk in faith and say, God, I don't know what this looks like, but I'm going to fear you. Can you show me what it looks like to fear you in my work? Can you show me what it looks like to fear you in this relationship?

Can you show me what it looks like to fear you at church so that when I walk in those doors, I don't have to put this mask on and people say, how are you doing? Oh, great. Everything's good. My prayer for us as a church is that we would hear Jesus' words and that we would trust God in the gospel to change our lives and to turn it into something so incredible we could not even imagine instead of walking in fear of man.

Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your word, which is living and active, and it changes us. As we look back at the minefields that your son puts forth, we realize that so many times we've made mistakes and we've stepped on those mines, and yet you're still there.

[54 : 13] You're still with us. Father, help us to trust you. You know where each one of us is that right now.

You know the things that we fear. I am very confident that most of us would never want to share them in any big group. But I pray, Lord, that we would share them with you, that we would confess them to you, that we'd repent of these things that we fear more than you, and that your spirit would change us, that your spirit would renew us.

Father, we are thankful of the mines we've already stepped on, and so many times we've become hypocrites. And still you come towards us, and you heal us, and you clean us, and you pick us up.

May we be in a community of people who know us so well, and who know our minefields so well, that they lovingly and quickly redirect us away from them.

Father, I pray for those in here who don't know you. Your word says that they fear man. And I think if we're honest, we would say, yeah, that's true.

[55 : 36] That there are certain things in my life that hold me captive. That I'm a slave to my work. I'm a slave to alcohol or drugs.

I'm a slave to money and gambling. I'm a slave to something that has done a really poor job of being master in my life. Father, I pray for them that this moment that you would speak to them, that they would trust you in your goodness and your son, and they would confess those things and invite you into their life.

And start off with a new mask. mask. The mask of a child of God. And Father, I pray for our church. Help us not to be a church who just gathers on Sunday.

Father, if that's the type of church we're going to end up being five years from now, I pray that you would just shut us down. Just remove us from here. Because your spirit has so many greater things to do in Hong Kong and beyond than to waste time with people who just want to do status quo every Sunday.

Father, help us to see the people around us who don't know you. Help us to see the community and the government and the schools that need fixing and praying for. Help us to trust you to be big because you are and you control all those things and you have all their hairs numbered also.

[57 : 00] And so as we have this fear of becoming hypocrites when we leave here, Lord, help us to fall in love with you more and more. Help us to realize the power of your spirit and the power of the gospel to change us.

May we be different. May we be different. Lord, we love you. We pray all these things in your son Jesus' name. Amen.

Hey, we are back here next week. There are some people with little blue lanyards around their neck. They're part of our prayer team. Don't leave here without having someone pray with you.

Especially if you're in this issue of struggling about where you have your heart focused. Who's on the throne of your life? What are you fearing as you walk into the classroom on Monday or into the boardroom or as you go on your business trip or if you do dinner with the extended family tonight or if you walk home into your house and it's divided or you have kids out of control?

The passage here says that God, God is awesome and big enough for you to trust him. That he wants you to do that. He wants to work in your life.

[58 : 29] But he's not going to force himself in there. He wants you to surrender to him and allow him to do that in your life. And our hope and our prayer is that you would do that.

All of us, that we'd be a people with Christ at the center, fearing God and all of him and allowing him to change us in Hong Kong. Father, we just thank you for this day.

I thank you for my brothers and sisters here. Again, I just thank you for this place that you've made available for us. And we pray and thank you for your spirit and for your word. And we pray, Holy Spirit, that you would change us, that you would come upon us, that you would convict us of sin, that you would convict us of idols, you would convict us of things that we've put on the throne of our life instead of you.

And that we would surrender those things to you. And that your power and your passion would flow through us and change us. And that we could trust you because you're good.

And Father, I thank you for my brothers and sisters because we do it in community. And we trust you to change us as a family. And so we lift up today, we lift up this week, we lift up Hong Kong, we lift up the leaders, we lift up the schools, we lift up all the things going around in the world.

[59 : 45] We know that all those things are numbered and counted and you control those things. And we trust you. We pray these things in your Son, Jesus Christ's holy and beautiful name.

Amen. God bless you. We'll see you back here next week. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.