

Faith and the Holy Spirit

Luke 12:1-12

Luke chapter 12 is a goldmine of preaching. The text says, “so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling on one another” (12:1), and there is a fascinating exchange between Jesus the Preacher and His audience.

In fact, He switches back and forth between His *inner circle* of disciples and the *crowd*. Who does Jesus address in v. 1... v. 13 ... v. 22 ... v. 41 ... v. 54?

- “He began to say to his disciples first of all” – v. 1
- “Someone in the crowd...” – v. 13
- “And he said to his disciples” – v. 22
- “Peter said, ‘Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?’” – v. 41
- “He also said to the crowds...” – v. 54

A proper interpretation of each paragraph depends on the context of each, including which group is targeted. The first paragraph is specifically addressed “to his disciples first of all” (v. 1), whom He affectionately refers to as “my friends” (v. 4).

I. No Secrets – 12:1-3

A. First, Jesus warns His closest disciples of “the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

1. I.e., with the Pharisees, you don’t always see behind the masks they wear.
2. There was a lot of pretentiousness.

B. It would be different with the apostles.

1. Private discussions between Jesus and the Twelve would be made a matter of public record in the pages of the gospel.
2. This did not always put the disciples in the best light, because at times they were slow learners.
3. The disciples, in turn, must have the fortitude to stand up, as it were, on *housetops*, and go public with their faith.
4. A great proclamation awaited them, and they would be the agents to carry it out.

II. Courage Needed – 12:4-9

A. Preaching the gospel would be a life-threatening enterprise, but they must press on with absolute dependence on God. Two points are made:

1. God must be feared more than men – vv. 4-5.
2. God will not forget them when they stand firm for His cause – vv. 6-7.

B. At this point, Jesus issues a challenge – vv. 8-9.

1. What does it mean, in this context, to confess Jesus before men?

2. In view of the judgment to come, there is ample reason to go public with one's faith, unashamedly and boldly.

III. The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic Message – 12:10-12

A. Much is made of the statement concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (v.

10). What does this mean, in context?

1. The whole passage pivots on the distinction between the privilege they now enjoyed as apprentices of the Master Teacher and the turbulent times ahead when they would take this message to the world.
2. The comforts of the moment would soon end!
3. The Lord would leave the apostles, the Holy Spirit would empower them and they would begin the great work for which Jesus was preparing them – cf. 24:46-49.

B. The crowds would have a second chance to repent.

1. If they rejected Jesus while in the flesh, they still had the coming of the Holy Spirit, who would operate through the apostles and their preaching.
2. If people rejected the Spirit's message, then there would be nothing left to save them from their sins!
3. Blasphemy against Jesus the Son would be forgiven, but the Holy Spirit's message through the apostles would be the world's last hope. Without it, no forgiveness is possible.

C. The last two verses of this paragraph confirm the interpretation – vv. 11-12.

1. The Holy Spirit would work through the apostles.
2. This would provide both the "how" and the "what" of their message – both method and content. Cf. Luke 21:14-16.
3. The benefit for the apostles is that their words would be supernaturally provided, and they would not have to worry about what to say in their defense.
4. The benefit to all posterity (including us!) is that we have an apostolic message, with the full authority of Jesus Christ and the complete guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Possible Discussion Items:

- Can we differentiate between allegiance to Jesus and adherence to His Word?
I John 1:2-3; 2:3
- Our view of the "inspiration" of the New Testament is based on the promises of Jesus to the apostles, and the fulfillment of those promises. How does Luke 12 help us with this issue?
- Jesus required these disciples to be courageous in proclaiming the faith. Should He expect anything less of us?