

Cross Fellowship Church
Overland Park, KS
July 7, 2019
Luke 12:1-12
Jared Chasteen

If you're new with us, we're continuing in the book of Luke, and we are almost halfway through. We're starting chapter 12 today. We have been here for a while and we've still got a little ways to go, but it's been really good. We're still in this long center section of the book that runs from the end of chapter 9 through chapter 19, where Jesus and his disciples are on the road to Jerusalem. He's teaching them about following him as his disciples, but the other thing following him is opposition. The opposition to Jesus is increasing. That makes sense, because we know where the story is headed. Not to spoil anything, but it's not going to go well for Jesus when he gets to Jerusalem. The cross is waiting for him there. As the disciples and Jesus are making their way to Jerusalem, the opposition against Jesus continues to increase.

For the last couple of weeks, Luke seems to be focusing on the unbelief and the opposition that Jesus faced from the crowds, especially the religious leaders, the Pharisees, the lawyers, and the experts in the law. That's important context for our passage this week. Two weeks ago, we saw Jesus cast out a demon from a man. The demon made the man unable to speak, so as Jesus cast the demon out, and this guy started talking, everybody could tell Jesus had done something miraculous here.

The responses to that were a little bit unexpected. We saw how one group of people accused Jesus of doing that miracle by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons. They accuse him of doing this obvious miracle by this dark power. Another group demands that Jesus do more signs for them. They want to put him to the test. They want him to prove that he is who he says he is.

Jesus strongly rebuked both of those groups. He started facing opposition and stands up to both groups. In the middle of all that, as we saw last week, a Pharisee invites Jesus over for dinner. It's kind of funny, because it says that this Pharisee invited Jesus over to dinner while Jesus was still speaking. I wonder, what in the world made the Pharisee feel like he wanted to have Jesus over for dinner in the middle of all that? He's in the middle of this scathing rebuke of the crowd's accusations and this Pharisee is like, hey, this would be fun to have that guy over for dinner. I don't know. Maybe he was just thinking Jesus was hangry. Let's gets you something to eat and you'll calm down a little bit.

He invites Jesus over for dinner and he's shocked that Jesus doesn't follow these washing rituals that the Pharisees had basically made up and said this was part of the law. This is what Eric preached on last week about how that situation led Jesus to condemn the hypocrisy and

self-righteousness of the Pharisees and the lawyers. It was really helpful last week how Eric taught us about the implications of that passage for our own lives. The primary target of Jesus' accusations there and his words in that passage were the religious hypocrites. People that put on a good external show, but they haven't repented and trusted in Jesus and been given new, clean, obedient hearts. The specific kinds of hypocrisy Jesus was peeling last week were the kinds that work really hard to look like on the outside something that you're really not on the inside. It's parallel to the self-righteousness that he also condemned in that passage.

In that sense, the call to us as Christians last week was to rejoice that Jesus has delivered us from that kind of hypocrisy. That's not who we are anymore. That's who we were. That's not who we are now. We've been given the righteousness of Christ. We no longer have to pretend to be something we're not. Now we are what the Pharisees were pretending to be and trying to be in their own strengths. We don't have to pretend to be righteous on our own anymore. We don't have to convince anybody on our own we're good.

But in our passage this week, we see Jesus turn to his disciples immediately after all of that, and he warns them about letting hypocrisy creep into their lives. I thought that was the Pharisees problem. I didn't think that was something the disciples needed to worry about. But I think a clue is found at the end of last week's passage. Instead of hearing Jesus' rebuke and being convicted and repenting of their hypocrisy and of their self-righteousness, instead, the Pharisees hardened their hearts against Jesus and began pressing even harder against him. Look back at chapter 11, verses 53 and 54 and see this is where he's leading. I think this is important to see. **“As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.”**

Have you ever faced that kind of pressure before? Have you been around people that are just trying to push your buttons and then they're watching every word that you say and they're looking to catch you in something that you say or do wrong? Like they're just looking for the opportunity to get you. What does that start to do to you mentally and emotionally? You're probably at least tempted to start being extra careful about everything that you say. When you think about speaking, that person's face comes to your mind and you wonder how they're going to react. You start being extra careful about the words that you use. Maybe you even don't speak up about things that you might feel like you want to speak up about, because what are they going to do? How are they going to react?

Do you see what's happening? Maybe you're not being a hypocrite in the sense of trying to look like something that you're not, but instead, you're trying to look like you're not something that you actually are. It's just like the other side of hypocrisy than what Jesus talked about last time. In that sense, we, as Christians, are susceptible to the sin of hypocrisy, especially when we're facing

opposition like the disciples are here. That's what seems to be what Jesus has in mind in this entire passage here that we're going to look at this morning. It's a lot more than the low-level threat that we're familiar with. Jesus is specifically going to talk about people killing the disciples, dragging them into court because of their connection to Jesus.

This is a much more serious opposition than we typically deal with. But if, in the far less dangerous opposition that we've experienced, we're tempted to try to hide who we really are, if we're tempted to try to downplay our faith, if we're tempted to try to blend in with the crowd and not stand out, if we're tempted to change the way we might say something or to speak more softly rather than boldly, to even not speak up at all, how much more, if your life is on the line, will you be like the disciples in this passage here? Jesus is warning the disciples and us to beware that kind of hypocrisy. It's just as dangerous as the other kind we looked at last week. It's dangerous to pretend to be something you're not like the Pharisees did, because you might convince everyone around you and you might even convince yourself that that's who you really are, but you can't fool God.

This time we're going to see that it's also dangerous to pretend to not be what you are, even in the face of opposition, maybe especially in the face of opposition, because you might end up proving to have the kind of hypocrisy we saw last week, fooling yourself into believing you're something that you never actually were. In our passage this week, Jesus is going to talk about that with the disciples. He's going to warn them against letting the opposition that they're beginning to face from the Pharisees, cause them to become hypocrisies like the Pharisees, and he's going to help them guard against hypocrisy creeping into their lives. We get to listen in and learn those lessons along with them.

Let's start reading here in chapter 12, verse 1. **“In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another,”** — Did you ever know that was in your Bible? Like the crowds were getting so big around Jesus, they're trampling over each other. I'm not exactly sure why Luke tells us that here, but it feels like maybe it's connected. Maybe there's a reason. I don't know. Maybe it's in contrast to the opposition of the Pharisees. They're trying to squash this thing, but the crowd is getting better, or maybe another clue that Jesus wants to confront hypocrisy with the disciples. Maybe their tendency in the faces of the crowd is to start playing to the crowd. You know how we do that? Being afraid of the people. Fearing, wondering how they're going to respond? I don't know. But it's an interesting detail that he gives there as he begins to talk to the disciples. Jesus has got these thousands of people here, but it says instead, he turns to his disciples and begins to talk to them first.

This is beginning a whole section that's going to run down through the beginning of chapter 13. When it says he says this to his disciples first, it's because he has more things he's going to talk to them about. This is just the first one in the list that we're going to look at over the next few

weeks. The warning, in verse 1: **“Beware the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”** You hear that word “beware”, and it's not a word we use all the time. It catches your attention and makes you sit up a little bit, because something is dangerous. There's something we have to watch out for. Something we need to be guarding against. That's the way we need to think about hypocrisy; it's something dangerous to watch out for, to be constantly guarding against. He calls it the leaven of the Pharisees.

You might be familiar with that biblical word leaven. It comes up other places. It might be something you're familiar with. Even if you're not, you might be familiar with how leaven or yeast works in bread dough. It's small little stuff, comes in a packet, like fine grains of sand. You don't need very much of it. You put that in your bread dough and it causes the whole thing to puff up and rise. The yeast spreads through the dough and creates a reaction in the whole loaf of bread. It happens so slow that if you were to sit there and watch it, you wouldn't realize it's happening until you come back later and all of a sudden this thing has changed dramatically from what it was before. Once you let a little bit in, there's no stopping it. You don't get it back out. You can't stop the reaction once it's there and once it gets started. That's what Jesus is saying hypocrisy is like here.

Maybe for us, a virus would be a better illustration of a more modern picture, something that can spread and infected like this. We do everything we can to avoid getting the flu or the measles. We don't think, “It will be fine if I get a little bit of that in my body. It won't be a big deal.” No! Beware! We wash our hands. We keep our kids at home when they're sick, and we get vaccines. We take Vitamin C. We take precautions to guard against getting infected. Jesus is saying the same thing is true about hypocrisy. It's serious. It's not something to play around with. Watch out. Don't let it creep into your life. That's the warning here.

How do we do that? How do we watch out? How do we guard against this? How do we beware letting that creep into our lives? That's what Jesus is going to address in the rest of this passage. He gives the disciples—and us as his followers—five truths to remember that will help us guard against hypocrisy creeping into our lives. That's where so much of our temptation in this area comes from. We forget what's true. We forget what's real. We begin to believe in things and fear things that aren't true. We begin to act like those lies are what is actually real. Jesus is going to say, “No, *these* things are true. Remember these things and it will help guard your heart against the temptation to shrink back in the face of opposition and pretend that you're not who you really are.” A few of these truths here are pretty strong warnings that will help us by reminding us of the real dangers of hypocrisy. And a few of these truths are these beautiful assurances of God's love and provision for us that should comfort us and help us be bold in the face of opposition. Let's walk through these together here.

Let's look at the first one. Jesus says the disciples, **“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.”**

Nothing stays hidden forever. It basically says that about four different ways there. Nothing is covered up; it will be revealed. It's hidden; it's he going to be known. Whatever you say in the dark is going to be heard in the light. What you whisper in private rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. It's really kind of speaking against the thing we're tempted to do when we're facing opposition: to cover up who we really are. To hide who we really are. To say things that are inconsistent with who we really are, to make us look like something else.

The focus here, and I think really all through this passage, is specifically on the words that we say. We're tempted to think, oh, this one little thing that I said there, it doesn't really matter all that much. No one was even around to hear that, just a few people. It's not that big a deal. I can get away with it this time. But it says here, nothing stays hidden forever. There's going to be a day when even the things that you said that were the most hidden are going to be brought to light and made public.

We know that. Even in this life, we think we can hide things that nobody is ever going to find out about it. But most of the time, that doesn't work out. It's very rarely that you're able to hide something forever and it never comes out. It seems like every other day or so, some new scandal is being exposed that I'm sure the person involved thought that they had covered it well and they had hidden it. They kept it in the dark and there was no way it was going to come out, and yet it does. But Jesus points toward a day in the future when all things are ultimately going to come to light at the final judgment. Jesus is saying here that even if you get away with it for your whole life, you're not going to get away with it forever. There's coming a day when we're all going to stand before it God and have to give account for every word we've spoken. Oh my goodness, that's scary in it a sense, right? Are you speaking in a way that that day will make you nervous? But that day is coming and nothing can stay hidden forever, and so it should stir us, then, to speak boldly for Jesus now and to stand for Jesus now so we don't have anything to be ashamed of on that day.

The second truth that Jesus reminds us of, to guard against letting hypocrisy creep into our lives, is in verses 4 and 5. You can see this on your handout. Remember that people are limited in what they can do to you, but God has ultimate authority over you. Let's read Verse 4 and 5. **“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!”**

There is so much here. Ultimately, this one would be the root of everything else when it comes to our tendency toward the kind of hypocrisy that Jesus was warning us against here. Ultimately, our problem is we fear people more than we fear God. We're far more worried about what people can do to us than we are about what God can do to us. We think about what people can do and the authority they have over us and we totally forget about the authority that God has over us. Jesus is saying the next way to guard against hypocrisy creeping in is to get our fears back in the proper order again.

Just look at these verses here. Initially Verse 4 almost strikes us as a little bit funny. Don't be afraid of those who can only kill your body and then they can't do anything else to you. Oh, okay. Is that all they can do? They can only kill me and that's it, huh? Oh, big deal. Well, kind of sounds like a big deal. It sounds pretty bad. We really don't want to die. The threat of death is pretty motivating, especially when we know somebody is serious. We feel that even sitting here in a public meeting space, a public school, and there's really no threat to us for doing this. Jesus is saying, if you feel that now, how much more so if you have that kind of pressure coming down on you and that kind of opposition that you're facing? Just think about that. If this is true—again, thinking about this extreme form of opposition, like we know that the opposition we face doesn't usually take that kind of a form, but if it's true, even in that kind of a forum—how much more should it be helpful to us that face extreme opposition?

The reality is that this life isn't all there is. You may live a really good, long life on earth. Maybe you'll see 80 years, 90 years, 100 years, but eventually, one day all of us are going to die. And then all of eternity is going to be stretched out before you, and even the longest lives that people have lived here on this earth are just a blip on the radar. They're just a point on the line. They're a breath. They're a moment in light of eternity.

There's only one Person that has any say over what your eternity—the rest of that timeline—looks like. There's only one Person that has any say over that. The worst that any person on this earth can do to you is send you to that point a few years earlier than you would have preferred. In the grand scheme of things and in light of the authority that God has over whether people will be judged righteous and spend eternity with him in his kingdom or whether they'll be judged guilty and spend eternity in hell under his fiery wrath, the authority that people have over us is nothing.

So why are we afraid of them? Why do we let them convince us that it will be better if we just keep quiet about Jesus or not speak up about what we believe? Why are we afraid to tell them about the judge that they're going to have to stand before themselves someday? That's part of the motivation here as well is recognizing that God has authority over them. Why are we afraid to tell them about that?

That's the one that Jesus tells us we ought to fear. We ought to fear him, he says. Not in the sense that we are afraid to stand before him as Christians. For us who have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection, we've been clothed in his righteousness, so praise God. We don't have to fear that God is going to end up throwing us in hell when we stand before him one day. But we fear him in the sense of a proper reverence and awe for the ultimate authority that he has over the eternal state of our lives and the lives of everyone else in this world. We also fear him in the sense of worshipping him for his sovereign love and care for us.

You can see that next in our handout here. Remember that God knows you and cares for you. Let's read verses 6 and 7. These are connected together here. **“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.”** What a sweet reminder to come along with the serious warnings just before this. It would be really easy without these verses here, to hear that previous warning as, “Oh, poor you. Your life is being threatened. Stop whining. You shouldn't be afraid of that.” Then Jesus reminds us of this truth, to make sure we don't hear the last one that way. He points us to the sparrows. If you're not familiar with birds, they're these little tiny brown birds that are basically everywhere. Nothing fancy about them. Nothing to draw our attention to them. Nothing that catches our eye. There's millions of them all over the place. They're so common to us that we don't really give them much notice and they have very little value.

That's what Jesus is getting at here when he talks about the price of them. Basically, they're super cheap meat that even poor people could afford at the market. The coin that he talks about there, it's about 1/16th of a day's wages. You get five sparrows for two of those. So the point is how little value that we place on these birds. But Jesus says that each of those little birds that are insignificant to us, not one of them is forgotten by God. He knows them all. The point that he makes at the end of verse 7, then, is that we're far more valuable to God than even a whole bunch of those birds. Like he's arguing from the lesser to the greater here. If God doesn't forget any of the sparrows, how much more will he care for you and watch over you?

That phrase in the middle—**“even the hairs of your heads are all numbered”**—means that God doesn't just watch over us in some vague, disconnected, distant kind of way. No. He knows every detail about us. Even the crazy details that are so insignificant to others, there's no way that anybody would ever know them, like the number of hairs on your heads. Nobody could ever know that, but God does. God cares about you that much and knows you that deeply that he knows how many hairs are on your head. What a comfort in the face of opposition and the temptation to hide and to pretend like we're not who we really are. What a comfort to know that God knows us that intimately and that he cares for us that deeply.

The point of this is not saying he's not going to let anything happen to us. It's not saying he's always going to rescue us from danger. Instead, it's just supposed to give us confidence that nothing is going to happen to us that catches him off guard. Nothing is going to happen to us that he's not sovereign over, that he's not with us and caring for us through it. Tying these two points together, then: that's the God that we're supposed to fear, the God who has ultimate authority over us, but who also knows us and cares for us. We're supposed to be in awe of him. We're supposed to worship him. If we have that kind of a fear for God, then our fear for people begins to fall into its proper place and our fear of what they can do to us falls into its proper place. That's how to guard against the temptation to hide when opposition comes: fear God rather than people in that way.

Next, remember that confessing or denying Jesus has eternal consequences. This is in verses 8 through 10. Let's read those together. **“And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.”**

These are probably the hardest verses in this passage. These are tricky ones. They are hard to follow the flow a little bit. Jesus says some hard things here. And I can almost guarantee you that in the time that we have, I'm not going to be able to answer all of your questions about these verses, so if these are things you struggle with, please come talk to us afterwards. We'd love to talk to you more about this.

Let's see if we can pick this apart and understand it a little bit. The phrases here “the Son of Man” and “before the angels of God,” would have brought to the disciples' minds a picture of the heavenly courtroom and the final judgment. The Son of Man title comes from Daniel chapter 7. We've talked about this before, but in those verses, the Ancient of Days is ruling over all of creation, and this is in the middle of Daniel's vision. He sees kingdoms that are to come in succession and how God is sovereign over all of them. In the end of this one, one like a Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven and he's presented to the Ancient of Days and he's given dominion and glory and eternal kingdom, and people and nations and languages serve him. This is a name that Jesus often uses for himself and that people understood to mean that he was equating himself with this figure from Daniel chapter 7.

This picture is of when Jesus is exalted to the Father's right hand and he establishes his kingdom and stands in judgment with angels as witnesses, declaring who belongs to his kingdom and who does not. That's the scene here. The factor that differentiates who Jesus will acknowledge as belonging to his kingdom and those who he will deny is their public profession of Jesus. I think he has a couple of things in mind. One would be our initial profession of faith. When God causes a

dead heart to come alive, that person immediately begins to confess Jesus as their Lord and king and Savior. Your blind eyes are open to see the beauty of the gospel when you're confronted with who Jesus is and what he's done for you, and your hearts turns from the sin that you used to love to trust completely in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in your place to make you right with God. Your mouth just begins to publicly confess Jesus. You can't help it. It's the confession that Paul talks about in Romans 10:9-10. **"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."** That confession is evidence that new life has begun in some of you. That's the evidence that you've been born again, that you've been regenerated.

I think the other thing Jesus has in mind is our ongoing confession of Jesus. It's not just enough to say those words one time and then you can live the rest of your life however you want and say whatever you want about Jesus from then on. Those that have truly been converted and born again will go on confessing Jesus as their Lord and King and Savior, and the point in all of this is our words reveal who we really are. Your ongoing confession of Jesus reveals who you really are. The opposite is also true: you can tell who doesn't follow Jesus by their denial of him. Their words reveal who they are as well. The point in these verses is that if you deny Jesus, then you have no reason to believe that you are a part of his people. There's no evidence that you are, that you've been born again, because people who have been born again confess him and acknowledge him before people, and that's the evidence that they'll be acknowledged before the angels in the kingdom to come.

In this context of this warning against hypocrisy, I think we have to see this as a warning that our confession or denial of Jesus matters. It's not a light thing to deny him or to avoid whatever threat we may be facing by keeping quiet. The words that come out of our mouth reveal who we really are and where our allegiance truly lies. Our confession or denial of Jesus has eternal consequences. If that's the case, it obviously raises the question, well, but what about if I've ever denied Jesus in the past? What if you've done that? What if I haven't spoken up to him? What if I've actually denied him in the past? Does that mean he's going to deny me now? Is there anything I can do? Is there any hope for me?

I think that's what the first part of verse 10 is speaking to. There's grace for you if you've denied Jesus in the past, but confess him now. Just think of Peter. Later on in Luke 22, one of Jesus' most outspoken disciples, Peter, is faced with opposition and the opportunity to confess or deny Jesus before people. Jesus is arrested. He's on trial. Not too long before this, Peter had proclaimed to the disciples that even if everybody else believes in Jesus, I'm going to stand with you. I'm going to stand for you. And here he is, he finds himself in front of a fire outside the place

where Jesus' trial is going on, and a servant girl recognizes him as one of Jesus' followers. Super threatening. Right? Serving girl. What did Peter do? He panics. He denied that he knew Jesus to this girl.

A bit later somebody else asks. Weren't you one of the ones who was with Jesus? Again, he denied it. It's more strong the second time. One more time, another person confronts him about Jesus, and Peter, the third time, basically, calls a curse down from heaven on himself and denies Jesus a third time. In Luke's accounts that we're going to get to later, we're told right then, at that moment when he denies Jesus the third time, Jesus turns and looks right at Peter. Can you imagine how Peter must have felt in that moment? Can you imagine the heartbreak? After the bold claims that he had made earlier and the repeated denials that he knew that Jesus knew in that look. Maybe you know, because you've been there.

Luke says that Peter went out and he wept bitterly. But that wasn't the end of the story for Peter. The book of John tells us that after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus pulled Peter aside and three times he asked Peter if he loved him. The third time, John says, Peter was grieved that Jesus asked him a third time. You have to believe that it was because of the weight of that number. He knew exactly what was going on. But Jesus didn't reject Peter. He forgave him and he called him back to the mission.

I think that's what the first part of verse 10 is telling you. If you've ever denied Jesus, you can be forgiven. Don't continue to deny him. Repent and turn to him. Turn to him today. Repent today. He'll forgive you and he'll receive you, just like he did Peter. It's possible to be forgiven for denying Jesus, but there's serious warning here in the rest of verse 10. Don't presume on the forgiveness of God. There is a line you can cross in rejecting him.

This is probably one of the most argued about verses in the whole New Testament. It's tricky. But I think in context, probably what Jesus is referring to here with blaspheming the Holy Spirit is what the crowd had done in the passage we looked at a couple of weeks ago. Other gospels that use this verse tie it more closely together with that than Luke does. We talked about this at the beginning, this morning, that they saw Jesus cast out a demon by the power of the Holy Spirit and they deliberately attributed that work to the prince of demons. That's how hard their hearts were. They could see something that should have been such a clear indicator of the divine authority of God and the power of the spirit working through him, and instead, intentionally reject him and accuse him of being evil.

That's a real fear for some people. That verse is something that honestly keeps you up at night and that you're afraid that maybe you've committed the unpardonable sin. My guess would be that if you're worried that you have, you probably haven't. Your heart would be too hard to care. But again, if that's a fear that you have and a question that you have, please come and talk to me or

one of the other elders about this afterward. I'd love to talk to you more. There's a lot more we could say about it, but I think the point in all of this is hopefully clear by now that confessing or denying Jesus has eternal consequence. It's not a light thing to deny him when you're facing severe opposition. Confessing him, especially in the face of opposition, shows who you really are. Let that truth guard you against hypocrisy and embolden you to confess Jesus.

One more truth here that Jesus reminds us of in verses 11 and 12. Remember that the Holy Spirit will help you be a bold witness. **“And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”** This is really closely connected to that last truth. The synagogue was both a place of worship, but also kind of the administrative center, so trials would have been conducted there, and the rulers and the authorities would be the ones that are conducting those trials. Where we had the heavenly courtroom in the last section, here we have the earthly courtroom.

One of the places that the disciples in particular were going to be called to confess Jesus was in the courtroom before rulers and authorities. The temptation for them would be just to say whatever they needed to say to protect themselves and get out of there. Right? In light of previous verses we looked at, this is not an option. This is a scary situation. You're dragged before rulers and authorities. You're there on trial in the human courtroom. What are you going to do when you're facing serious accusations for following Jesus with serious consequences, depending on your response? Are you going to stand for him then? That's the situation that they're facing. Will you stand for him or will you pretend to not be what you are to protect yourself?

The final truth that Jesus gives to his disciples to help them guard against hypocrisy in that situation is the assurance that the Holy Spirit will help them and give them the words to say. Again, just like the section about the sparrows, this isn't a promise that the Holy Spirit is going to give them the words to say to get them off the hook. Instead, it's a promise that the Holy Spirit will give them the words to say to be bold witnesses for Jesus in front of the rulers and authorities. That's our hope in that moment is not that the Holy Spirit will help us get out of there, but that he'll help us speak up and be bold and speak up for Jesus in that situation.

Even though we may not face that kind of literal legal trial for our faith, we can have confidence, too, because we have the Holy Spirit with us, and he's going to help us as well when we're faced with opportunities to confess Jesus before people. He's going to help us be bold witnesses. He'll teach us what we ought to say. This is a beautiful truth to remember when we're faced with opposition and tempted to pretend to not be what we are. The pressure isn't on us in those moments. It's not on us to stand up for Jesus on our own, but because we've been united to

Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit with us to help us be bold witnesses. That's the final truth that Jesus calls us to remember to help us guard against hypocrisy.

Those are the five truths that Jesus gives us to help us guard against hypocrisy. Remember that nothing stays hidden forever. Remember that people are limited in what they can do to you, but God has ultimate authority over you. Remember that God knows you and cares for you. Remember that confessing or denying Jesus has eternal consequences. Remember that the Holy Spirit will help you be a bold witness. We've touched on several applications along the way, but by way of final application, let me try to pull together a few main takeaways from these things here. First of all, I think the first point is just don't be surprised when you face opposition for following Jesus. Jesus faced opposition. His disciples faced opposition of the whole New Testament continues to remind the church of the opposition from the world is normal for Christians. Think of 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 12 through 16 says, **“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.”**

Just looking around this room this morning, some of you have faced opposition from your families or as you've shared the gospel and had to stand for Jesus in some tough situations. This is normal. It's something we should expect. I think especially as American Christians, we probably tend to be shocked when we face any significant opposition for following Jesus. We think something must be going wrong if we're facing any kind of opposition. This isn't telling us to go out looking for opposition. We don't go out looking for ways to stir up opposition. But we shouldn't be surprised when it comes. Especially as we look to be a church that's on mission in our own city here and even actively sending out missionaries to hard places, we're going to face opposition. It's going to come. Some of us maybe even will face the most severe kinds of opposition that Jesus talked about here. I don't say that in an, “everybody is against us” kind of way, but hopefully in a realistic, “that's what the Bible said is going to happen, what Jesus said is going to happen” kind of way. Passages like this are one way to help us be prepared to respond well when that comes.

That being said, the second main application for us from this passage this morning is don't let opposition turn you into a hypocrite. That's ultimately what Jesus' warning to the disciples was about and still is to his followers today. I think this passage falls under that heading of don't let it turn you into a hypocrite, calling us first to examine our hearts and our words. Maybe even specifically our words because of the focus on words here. Think about that. Do your words reflect

who you really are? Or do they show that you're trying to hide who you really are? What are your words saying about your relationship with God?

If you're struggling with this temptation, I think the call to us is to confess to God, to repent, to ask him to kill that sin, and pray that God would help you guard against hypocrisy. You can be forgiven for failing to stand for Jesus and he can help you stand for him now. Examine your heart. Confess the sin if it's necessary. Remember these truths. Meditate on them. Let them stir you to be bold witnesses for Jesus. When you have an opportunity to tell somebody about Jesus and you begin to feel that fear well up in your chest, remember these truths and be bold in sharing the gospel. When somebody is challenging you for being a Christian, and you're tempted to back down or even deny it, remember these truths and boldly confess Christ.

Finally, if you're here this morning and you've never publicly confessed Jesus, if you've never repented of your sin and put your trust in Jesus, confessed him as our Lord and king and Savior, I think it would be a shame to walk away from this passage without calling to you do that today. You can pray right now. You can ask him to forgive your sins, even the sin of denying him in the past. But don't do that and then keep it to yourself. The point of this is that it's a public thing. Your faith needs to be known. It needs to be known by the Church. It needs to be known by those that are around you. So pray right now. Ask him to forgive you. Ask him to give you a new heart and then come talk to us about it. We'd love to talk to you about following Jesus as elders here at Cross Fellowship Church. Talk to you about baptism, even, as a way to publicly profess your faith. And also be bold witness for Jesus where he placed you.

It's not going to be easy. It's not going to be easy for any of us. It's not going to be easy at all. We're going to face opposition in this world, in this life, but in the end, it's all going to well worth it. Jesus is going to help us. He'll give us the power we need to stand up in those moments, and in the end he'll confess us before the Father and we'll be with him forever and it will all be worth it.

Let me pray for us. Father, this is a hard passage. It's hard to be confronted with hypocrisy, especially for two weeks in a row. It's hard to have our hearts exposed in this way and to have to deal with the ugliness that's there and the ways that we are so tempted to protect ourselves and to preserve ourselves and not stand up for you. God, I pray that you would convict us where we need convicting from this passage this week, Father. I pray that you would help us to examine our hearts in light of these things. Help us examine our words in light of these things. Help us be realistic about what our testimony for you says about our relationship with you.

Lord, we don't do that in a way that connects our works to our salvation in any sense. We're not doing that in a way that says that we have to do this in order to receive salvation, but it's in evidence of the reality of your work in our heart, and when we don't see the evidence of it, we should be concerned. God, I pray that we would take that seriously. God, where we need to repent

and confess and ask you to kill that sin in our hearts, help us to do that. God, help us to meditate on these truths, that you're good. You're a good Father. You take care of us. You love us more than anything else in all creation. If you take that kinds of care of sparrows and you number the hairs on our heads, that we can trust you that you're going to take care of us.

You give us your Holy Spirit, Father, to give us the words to say, teach us the words to say in the moments where we're facing opposition. Help us not to fear man in those moments. Help us not to fear what they can do to us, but help us, instead, to trust in you, to recognize your sovereign authority over our lives and to help us to speak boldly so on the day that ultimately all things are uncovered and revealed that we have nothing to be ashamed of.

But God, even in that, we thank you that ultimately, our shame was taken by Jesus on the cross, the wrath that we deserve, the hell that we deserve, Jesus took that wrath in our place so that our sins could be forgiven and we could be made right with you and that ultimately, Jesus is the high priest that we sang about earlier that's ever making intercession for us before your throne. God, help us to cling to those truths in light of this passage this morning. Help us with hard passages like this that we wouldn't normally choose to preach, but in walking through a passage of the Bible that we have to deal with, I pray it does its work in our hearts this week. In Jesus' name, amen.

Why don't you stand with me? One of the ways that we continue to publicly profess our allegiance to Jesus is by taking the Lord's Supper together. So we want to do that together this morning. It's an appropriate response to this passage. One of the two ordinances we celebrate in the life of the church, baptism kind of connects to that initial profession of faith. It's one of the ways that we remind ourselves week by week who we are, what Jesus did for us. Our sin requires both the broken body and shed blood, but the sacrifice that he made in our place so that we could be made right with God. Even in light of the sermon, the text that we just looked at, it's because of Jesus that we don't have to be afraid and ashamed on the day that everything is uncovered, because our sin has been paid for by his broken body, his shed blood. We don't have to fear the wrath of God, because he took it for us on the cross. We cling to those things as we take the Lord's supper together this morning, to remind ourselves of those truths, and we publicly proclaim that yes, I am a participant in Christ. Let's do that together this morning.