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## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: Luke 12:1-21*

### Context to this chapter-

At the end of Luke chapter 11, Jesus is invited to supper with a Pharisee. The Pharisee is astonished to see that Jesus did not wash his hands before eating. This has nothing to do with Jesus's personal hygiene standards. There was a tradition—one that still exists today—of a ceremonial washing of hands before sitting down to eat. The Pharisee is shocked that Jesus does not follow this tradition. Jesus then speaks to the Pharisees as a whole, and He has some harsh words for them. He says that their religious life is like cleaning the outside of a dish, while the inside is full of greed and wickedness. Could you imagine inviting Jesus over for supper and hearing Him speak this way about your religious life? It would feel extremely rude. Not only does He not apologize, but He continues to point out more faults of the Pharisees.

In Luke 11:45, a lawyer (an expert in the law of the Torah) says, "Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also." Once again, Jesus does not apologize, but goes on to point out the lawyers' faults as well.

Is Jesus just trying to be mean? No. Jesus is addressing a serious problem in the religious thinking of the time—one that is still relevant for us today. In Luke chapter 12, we will look at what Jesus is pointing to.

### Read Luke 12:1-4

Jesus changes his location, but thousands of people follow Him. So many people are trying to get to Him that they begin trampling one another. Jesus tells His disciples, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." He is pointing back to His recent interaction with the Pharisees. "Leaven" (yeast) is a term used many times in the Bible. Jesus is not talking about physical yeast (used to bake bread), but about what 'leaven' represents. Passover is the most important feast God commanded the Israelites to celebrate. On the first day of Passover, another feast begins—the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:15–17). During this time, the people were commanded not to eat

any leaven for seven days and to remove all leaven from their houses.

The disciples would have celebrated this feast every year and would have understood that leaven represented sin. We see Paul use this same language in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8. Here, Jesus is pointing out that the sin of the Pharisees is hypocrisy.

The Pharisees were professionals at outward religious appearance. They made a show of their praying, fasting, giving, traditions, and many other religious practices. They did and said things so that others would applaud them. This is something Jesus directly addresses in Matthew 6. He explains that when people do religious acts for human approval, they have already received their reward—the applause of others. Instead, Jesus says to do these things in secret, so that God “the Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

There is a saying, “Fake it till you make it.” The idea is to act like you know what you’re doing—at your job, for example—until you eventually become what you pretended to be. But there is no ‘faking it’ with God. God sees our hearts and knows our thoughts. God calls us to come to Him in humility, bringing all of our brokenness, so that He can heal us. When we do that, we don’t need to fake anything—we can be in a genuine relationship with Him.

### **Read Luke 12:4-7**

We need to remember that when Luke was writing his book, Christians were being persecuted, and some were martyred (killed for their faith). Because of this, these verses would have been extremely important in those moments.

Most of us in North America do not fear for our lives because we believe in Jesus, but we do fear the opinions of others. We don’t want to be rejected by our peers or friends, and this fear of others can affect our relationship with God.

This section begins with the words, “My friends.” What a beautiful way to start. God cares deeply about each one of us, as we see in 12:6–7. God knows us better than we know ourselves and wants what is best for us. However, there is something we should fear, and that is eternal separation from God.

God does not want anyone to be separated from Him, but He has also given us the gift of choice. Jesus died on the cross so that we could be in an eternal relationship with Him, and there are consequences to the decisions we make.

### **Read Luke 12:8-12**

In 12:8, Jesus says, “Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.”

A question we should ask is: what does it mean to ‘acknowledge Jesus’? A helpful clarification comes from the Apostle Paul. In Romans 10:9, he writes, “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.”

We need both belief and confession—acknowledging that Jesus is God who came in the flesh, died for our redemption, rose from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of God. Jesus emphasizes this because many people in Israel saw Him heal the sick, cast out demons, and fulfill prophecy, yet they still rejected Him.

The God of the Bible is one God. When we read the Old Testament, we see that this one true God is complex in His nature. From the very first verses of Scripture, we see that God has a Spirit—the Spirit of God—who is fully God and has a unique role. Throughout the Bible, we see the Spirit of God active in many stories. In the New Testament, the role of the Holy Spirit is to testify about and reveal who Jesus truly is (John 15:26).

### **A Sin that Cannot be Forgiven**

“Anyone 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.” (Luke 12:10)

In 12:10, Jesus gives a serious warning: not to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, which is unforgivable. If you have read the New Testament, you will notice that there is no other sin that cannot be forgiven. When we come across a difficult verse like this, it is very important to interpret it in light of the rest of the New Testament.

There are different opinions about what it means to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. However, when we look at the context of this passage and the broader teaching of Scripture, it points to one thing that will not be forgiven: hardening our hearts—like Pharaoh did in Exodus {when God sent plagues through Moses & Aaron)—and choosing not to confess that Jesus is Lord, even when the Holy Spirit is clearly revealing who Jesus is.

“See! I stand at the door & knock. If anyone hears my voice & opens the door, I’ll come in to him & eat with him, & he with me.” (Rev. 3:20)

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus presents Himself as someone standing at the door, knocking. The picture is of Jesus patiently inviting, not forcing. If a person hears His voice & responds—opening the door—Jesus promises real relationship, –to eat & drink with him/her—fellowship, & restoration. Sharing a meal in Biblical culture represents friendship, acceptance, and intimacy.

The warning Jesus gives earlier in Luke connects directly to this image. If we repeatedly ignore the Spirit’s voice, resist the truth about who Jesus is, or harden our hearts, we slowly stop hearing the knock. God does not stop ‘knocking’/inviting, but our hearts can become closed to Him.

Jesus is knocking. The call is to respond while our hearts are still soft—to acknowledge Him as Lord, trust Him, and walk openly with Him. The consequence of refusing Him is separation, but the invitation is life, forgiveness, and relationship. Let us not harden our hearts, but ‘open the door’ while He is calling.

### **Read Luke 12:13-15**

Someone from the crowd came to Jesus and asked Him to tell the man’s brother to divide the inheritance. If I were the younger brother, I would want my brother to share the inheritance with me as well. Jesus responds, “Man, who made Me a judge or arbitrator over you?” This is an interesting response, because we know that one day Jesus will judge everyone. Yet what we see Him do in situations like this is use the moment to point to a greater truth by telling a parable (a story with a message, a punchline).

### **Read Luke 12:16-21**

Most of our lives, we do not think about our own death. Even when we do think about death, it is usually someone else’s death and not our own. What we do think about is improving our lives here on this earth. From a young age, life becomes centered on ourselves and our well-being. As we grow up, we are taught to take care of our bodies, to save money, and to develop skills that will give us a good job in the future.

In the story, the rich man does what seems sensible—some might even say ‘responsible.’ He is a good investor. So why would Jesus call him ‘foolish’? Here is a person God calls ‘Fool.’ When we read the Bible, we see many examples of people who are very wealthy, and in some cases, their wealth is a gift from God. This story is not meant to tell us whether it is right or wrong to be rich. Rather, it is about what our focus is in this life.

The rich man is so focused on his future security and his wealth on earth that he never asks the most important question: Do I have a life-changing relationship with God? Or, as 12:21 puts it, ‘Am I rich toward God?’ In 12:19 he says to himself, “You have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, and be merry.” In other words, he believes he has everything he needs and can simply enjoy life without concern.

There is a common idea that we can live however we want now and then turn to God later—perhaps when we are older. While it’s true that we can always come to God in repentance, we do not know how much time we have on this earth.

One proverb says, “The best time to plant a tree was 50 years ago, but the next best time is right now.” In other words, it is never too late to come to God and repent—but we must choose to do it now rather than assume we have more time

**Conclusion**

This passage shows us that God knows us better than we know ourselves—even to the point of knowing how many hairs are on our heads. Jesus came to this earth to reveal how deeply He loves us by dying a thief’s death on the cross for us.

Throughout history, the Holy Spirit has been revealing to humanity who God is. He continues to reveal who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Let us take this passage seriously and choose to respond by acknowledging Jesus before others and believing in our hearts that Jesus paid the price for our sins.