

**Pre-Sermon:** This is to help you prepare for hearing from God's Word.

- Read Luke 12:4-12
- What stands out to you from this passage?

**Sermon Questions:** These will help you evaluate how well you were listening.

- What is Jesus talking about in this passage and the context?
- Who is he talking about it with in the passage we are looking at?
- We believe in eternity and we want to live for eternity, but what challenge do we face as we seek to live with an eternal perspective right now?
- What three steps did we see we need to take if we are going to live for what matters in a world where living for Jesus is difficult and dangerous?
- We looked primarily at verses 4-12. In 4-7 Jesus talks about fear. Why do you think he focuses on fear in this context?
- How can fear be helpful?
- Do you think there may be ways this fear of persecution impacts our lives even without living in a context where people are going to kill us for our relationship with Jesus?
- How do we overcome life controlling fear?
- If the way we are honored on judgment day is through our relationship with Jesus, how should that impact the way we think about life right now?

**Sermon Synopsis:** This is a short summary that will help you reflect on the message.

What difference does it make that we believe in the judgment?

That's an important question. Because for one thing, we do believe in the judgment. You don't believe in the resurrection of the dead, life everlasting, and judgment, you are not a Christian. We know that. And we know it should make a difference. As someone has said, "Having an eternal perspective is in so many ways the key to living out a true Christ-following life." And yet, it's hard to live all out for eternity right now, because living all out for eternity usually requires some kind of suffering.

What do you do if you want to live for what matters in a world where living for Jesus is going to make your life more difficult and even dangerous?

**First step, make sure you have the right priority.** (v.1-3) If you are following Jesus and somehow looking good on the outside and the approval of people has become your main priority, you are in trouble and you are not going to follow Jesus very long because you are not going to look good to a lot of people in your culture or have their approval if you truly do side with Him. As Christians we were not saved by hiding from God, but rather by repenting and confessing and looking outside of ourselves and efforts to what God's done through Jesus. If that's how we were saved, what should our main priority be right now as believers. Definitely not trying to fool people into thinking that we are something we are not. But instead glorifying Jesus by actually working on being holy from the inside out and if you are going to live for Jesus in a world that hates him, that's got to be the priority you focus on.

**Step two, make sure you have the right perspective.** (v.4-7) Having the right perspective begins with putting off the wrong perspective, and specifically we are going to talk about making sure you don't have the wrong perspective of what's really scary. If you are going to follow Jesus you have to deal with fear that comes from an unbiblical worldview. This is important because fear is powerful. If I have the right kind of fear it can give me the strength to make the right decision even when I am under a lot of pressure to make the wrong one. Fear can be useful when it's the right fear. But it can be a real problem when it is not. One obstacle Jesus' followers are going to face right now to making the right decision is being afraid of the wrong thing.

Fearing those who kill the body is the wrong fear. It can have a powerful influence on our lives. Jesus is not simply talking about the physical adrenaline you might feel when you are in a difficult situation. Instead he is saying that if you are a Christian you can't allow the fear of dying because of your relationship with Him to have such a place in your life that it determines whether you do what is right or not. If you are going to live for Christ you have to fight that kind of fear deep down and not give it a place in your life, which is going to take a little bit of work because in our world right now the one thing that matters most to many people is survival. Many people seem to think there's nothing worse than dying. And yet while death is terrible and life is a gift, ultimately, that is an unbiblical perspective. There is something worse than dying. Living a long life on this earth right now is not the greatest good, because there is more to our life than this life on earth right now. If we are going to think clearly and live our lives with an eternal perspective, we have to make sure we don't have the wrong perspective and are afraid of being afraid of the wrong thing.

But how? How do we overcome that kind of life-controlling fear? We need to put off the wrong perspective. But we also need to put on the right perspective. While you shouldn't fear those who can kill the body because of your relationship with Jesus, you most definitely should fear God. While dying is a little scary, what is a lot more scary than dying is being thrown into hell and God is the One with the authority to do that. Though some people are bothered by the idea of fearing God, Jesus isn't saying if you are a Christian that you need to go around always being scared that God wants to throw you into hell. He is saying if you are going to follow Him in a world that hates him, you must not act as if people have more power than they actually have. You need a big view of God that impacts what you actually fear and if you have that big view of God, it's freeing. If you fear man you will make your life all about trying to control the future and survive and you are going to shrink your life. That kind of fear is going to put you into a prison and steal so much joy from your life because it is going to keep you from living all out for Jesus. But you get the right perspective, you take the long view, you remember that you are going to stand before God and you fear Him, and you are going to start to have some serious freedom because not only do you know that this great God who is charge of the universe has the authority to send people to hell, you also know that you are his child and that He sees what is going on in your life and actually cares about you.

You have the right priority. You are done trying to look good to other people for the sake of looking good to other people, and really want to honor God from the inside out. You have the right perspective. You know what that does? **That enables you to take the third step, and make sure you have the right purpose.** (v.8-12) While there is nothing greater than following Jesus, following Jesus will often make our lives more difficult. But we know that we are going to stand before Him and so what should matter is not being honored before men but being honored before God then, and how will any of us be honored on judgment day? It's not because of us, it's because of Jesus. So stick with Jesus! Confess the truth about Jesus when He gives you the opportunity. Side with Him. That's your life purpose. What matters is not just surviving, growing old and dying but first and foremost, no matter what, being faithful to Christ wherever He places you. Make your ultimate goal to glorify Him, and you can be sure He will give you the grace you need to do so when you need it. Because even though Jesus is in heaven, He has not left us on our own as we seek to follow Him. We have the Holy Spirit who will supernaturally empower us to live for what matters even in a world where living for what matters seems dangerous and scary.

**Application Questions:** These are some questions that may help put the message into practice.

- Do you believe that if you follow Jesus right now and associate with Jesus right now you probably will be looked down upon and even persecuted?
- What do you think about that?
- How deeply does fear influence your life?
- Why do you fear what you fear? How would you fear differently if you applied what you believe to the way you think and feel?
- How can you be different as a result of today's message?