

SERMON *study* GUIDE

“BEWARE OF THE SCRIBES” JESUS ON SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT (LUKE 20:45-47)

CONTEXT

Jesus is in the temple, days before the cross. He turns from debating opponents to warning disciples – publicly, “in the hearing of all.”

THE CORE PROBLEM

We cannot tune everybody out, or accept every opinion. We are always being influenced.

How do you live in a world full of voices without becoming gullible, cynical, or spiritually naïve?

Jesus’ answer: **BEWARE!**

Not fearful. Not weird. Not suspicious of everyone. But *actively, humbly discerning.*

THE COMMAND - V.46

“Beware...”

ONGOING VIGILENCE

Not, “I used to be careful.”

Discernment is not a one-time achievement. You never graduate from needing discernment.

REQUIRES ALERTNESS

Like a foreigner in hostile territory, or someone crossing a dangerous highway.

Ideas are not harmless. Voices shape people.

BUT BEWARE OF DISTORTIONS!

NOT PARANOIA

Not:

- conspiracy thinking,
- constant suspicion,
- assuming the worst about everyone.

Love:

- “believes all things” (1 Cor. 13:7),
- gives benefit of the doubt,
- assumes the best as long as it honestly can.

NOT HYPER-CRITICAL SPIRITUALITY

The Pharisees strained gnats, swallowed camels. Some people bark at everything. That is not discernment either.

NOT ARROGANCE

The people easiest to influence are often the people most confident they cannot be influenced. The overconfident driver is usually more dangerous than the nervous beginner.

Humility is protection.

HOW TO ACTUALLY BEWARE

KNOW YOU CAN BE INFLUENCED

Even the disciples needed this warning.

SERMON NOTES:

More exposure to truth does not automatically mean immunity to error.

THINK ABOUT IT

- Who shapes the way I think?
- What voices do I trust too easily?
- Where am I spiritually impressionable?

RUN EVERYTHING THROUGH SCRIPTURE

The question is not: "Do I like this?"

But: "Does this match what God says?"

Discernment requires biblical categories, biblical instincts, biblical reflexes. Which means knowing Scripture is a lifelong necessity.

THINK ABOUT IT

Does what they are saying sound almost identical to:

- your culture,
- your instincts,
- modern self-help,
- or what people already naturally want to hear?

Bad ideas often become dangerous when they are made to sound Christian.

ASK FOR HELP

God did not design Christians to discern alone. We need prayer, church, wise believers, outside perspective.

Pride says: "I already know."

Wisdom says: "Help me think clearly."

Admitting weakness is not the danger. Pretending invulnerability is.

TWO MAIN EVALUATION CATEGORIES

1. Teaching
2. Character

Jesus focuses especially on character here, but both matter.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT SOMEONE'S TEACHING

God: What kind of God is being presented?

Holy, sovereign, weighty, central or small, optional, insignificant distant and uninvolved?

You: Does the teaching push you toward what God wants or what you want?

Bad counsel often sounds like self-exaltation, self-protection, self-fulfillment, even when dressed in religious language.

The Problem: What is humanity's deepest issue?

Eternal, sin, alienation from God or merely discomfort appearances, success, present circumstances?

The Solution: Who is the hero? Jesus or ultimately you?

Most people naturally prefer self-salvation, self-righteousness, victimhood, or self-importance. The gospel attacks all of those instincts.

The Source: Can their answers actually be found in Scripture?

Not vaguely spiritual, emotionally persuasive, culturally attractive— but something from the text properly interpreted?

SERMON NOTES:

JESUS' MAIN FOCUS HERE – CHARACTER

SIGN #1 – CRAVES ATTENTION

"Like to walk around in long robes..."

The issue is not clothing itself. The issue is loving status, loving appearance, loving recognition, and loving being noticed. Wanting spiritual authority through image.

Loves public honor: greetings, recognition, best seats, visible importance. Spiritual activity becomes a way to gain glory now. Which reveals a heart not resting in the gospel.

WHY THIS IS DANGEROUS

Some people step forward spiritually because they genuinely love Christ. Others step forward because they love approval. Those are not the same thing. Eventually what someone is truly about becomes visible.

SIGN #2 – HARD ON VULNERABLE PEOPLE

"Devour widows' houses..."

Religious performance used to manipulate, control, exploit, or pressure vulnerable people.

Jesus keeps returning to this pattern in Luke: self-exaltation and lack of compassion

"For a pretense make long prayers"

Not all visible spirituality is sincere spirituality. Some religious behavior is performance, image management, manipulation. Not communion with God.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Look for leaders who are not driven by approval, not obsessed with status, not self-righteous, soft toward weak people, compassionate, gracious, humble, and gospel-shaped.

SERMON NOTES:

“WHY THIS MATTERS – V.47

“They will receive the greater condemnation”

There is a judgment. Ideas matter. Influence matters. Who shapes you matters.

The crowd hearing Jesus’ warning still followed the scribes. And eventually they crucified Jesus. We may not go that far. But wrong influence still does real spiritual damage.

FINAL EMPHASIS

There is a gospel. Jesus died, rose, reconciles sinners to God, and promises eternal glory.

People who believe that should lead differently. Not hungry for status, addicted to approval, harsh toward weakness. But secure, humble, compassionate, and free from needing glory now.

SERMON SUMMARY:

WHAT?

BEWARE – STAY HUMBLY DISCERNING.

HOW?

SCRIPTURE, HUMILITY, HELP FROM OTHERS, EVALUATING TEACHING AND CHARACTER.

WHY?

INFLUENCE IS POWERFUL. JUDGMENT IS REAL. IDEAS SHAPE ETERNITY.

THE GOSPEL CREATES A DIFFERENT KIND OF LEADER. LOOK FOR THEM.

SERMON NOTES: