

Luke 12:54-59 – Right with God, Right with Others

- 1) Today, Jesus addresses the crowd – meaning, His words here apply to everyone:
 - a) Committed believers
 - b) “Fans” - who ‘believe’ but have not changed their living
 - c) Detractors who delight in contradicting what God says
- 2) The lesson is in two parts:
 - a) 12:54-56: Regarding our relationship with God; related to 12:4-7, with advice on how to be at peace with God
 - b) 12:57-59: Regarding human relationships; related to 12:2-3 and 13-15, with advice on how to be at peace with each other
- 3) 12:54-56: Reconciliation with God for those able to see – and willing to seize - the opportunity
 - a) Superstitions and folklore offer many ‘insights’ into signs, like Punxsatawney Phil and Almanac advice that predict weather
 - b) We pay “pundits” highly for help in reading political ‘signs’
 - c) God gives some people a talent for “understanding the times” (for example, 1 Chronicles 12:32)
 - d) Jesus even admits that “The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light” (Luke 16:8)
 - e) But as Jesus says in Luke 9:25, 25 “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?”
 - f) Political trends mattered in Judea just as they do for us, and knowing what the weather would be a benefit to farmers in any age, but a more important even was taking place that the crowds were blind to even as they witnessed it – Jesus did not come simply to heal a few people who would get sick again – He came to offer the only way to peace with God and forgiveness of sins
- 4) 12:57-59: Reconciliation with others for those willing to seize the opportunity
 - a) The opening words of verse 57 take us back to 12:13, where “Someone in the crowd (whose brother likely is there as well) said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’”
 - b) Here Jesus says (to them in particular perhaps), “Judge for yourselves what is right”, but turns the tables on them, as if to ask – “How would it go for you if instead of you accusing your adversary, it was your adversary accusing you?”
- 5) Though this parable can lead to lengthy descriptions and speculation, its meaning is really quite clear:
 - a) Seek to settle what we owe rather than get what we ‘deserve’
 - b) Our disputes - like 12:13 - are petty in light of eternity
 - c) As much as it depends on you, live at peace with others (Romans 12:18)
 - d) Settle all accounts possible so that you owe no one anything except to love one another (Romans 13:8)
 - e) Better to be wronged than to accuse others only to be proven at fault ourselves (1 Corinthians 6:7, 1 Peter 3:17)
 - f) Our careless words and secret thoughts will be made known (12:2-3) - we have little right to judge others (Matthew 12:36)
- 6) This passage is easily misunderstood if we forget:
 - a) We must not interpret one Scripture in a way that contradicts the main message of Scripture on that subject
 - b) The context here is an earthly, not heavenly court and ‘prison’
 - c) This passage and its parallel (Matthew 5:24-25) are used to defend the doctrine of Purgatory – a teaching that gained widespread acceptance in the 12th century based, not on Scripture, but on an Irish legend about St Patrick
 - d) This passage deals with earthly, not heavenly, judgments
- 7) What we need to keep in mind
 - a) We should not try to explain things in greater detail than God does, especially spiritual things
 - b) Jesus’ death and resurrection offer forgiveness from God for sins committed against Him – what we owe each other we ourselves are responsible for (see Samuel in 1 Samuel 12, Zacchaeus in Luke 19:8-9; Paul in Acts 9:16 and Philemon 1:17-19)
 - c) Before the Judgment seat of Christ we will need to account for offences done to others and we will receive “according to what {we} have done during our lives, whether good or bad” including giving account for every careless word we have spoken (Matthew 12:36);
 - d) However, none of this will affect or postpone our acceptance and entry into God’s presence – Jesus’ death was sufficient to guarantee that (see 1 Corinthians 3:15)