

Luke 12:8-12 “Parapet moments”- CCH Sermon 18th July 2021 at SMPS

v8

- This summer working our way steadily through Luke 12 under the title “a crowd of thousands” v1.
 - We have the privilege to listen to the exact words that Jesus spoke.
 - following him on the way to the cross and learning about
 - how to be a true disciple
 - and not a hypocritical pharisee
 - And we saw last week that the key is to be
 - Looking forward (Eternal life rather than this life)
 - Looking upward (to God rather than ourselves or others).
 - these 2 perspectives carry on throughout the chapter, and certainly into our section today which follows on from last time with the theme of what I’m calling
 - “PARAPET MOMENTS”
 - Do you know what a parapet is?
 - A parapet was the crenulated defence around the top of the turret of a castle, and as a soldier in medieval times you might need to put your head above the parapet to defend it against the enemy.
 - And we as Christians sometimes need to stick our head above the parapet and be counted as one of Jesus’ followers.
 - The passage seems to be talking particularly about those public times of trial:
 - v8-publicly acknowledges me.
 - v11- brought before authorities

- Now we may one day get one of these **mega parapet** moments-
 - being on trial for our faith,
 - at a work tribunal for a Christian stand we have taken.
 - being brought before religious authorities as in v11.
- But more likely is that we get plenty of **micro parapet** moments
 - Down the pub, *“you’re not in the God squad are you?”*
 - At work in front of others, *“what do you think about gay marriage?”*
 - At the family wedding, *“you are not saying Islam is wrong are you?”*
- Well our passage today helps us to deal with parapet moments, large and small.
 - It shows us that however big or small the parapet moment is, we must
 - REMAIN LOYAL TO JESUS
 - REMAIN DEPENDENT ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

1) IN TIMES OF TRIAL REMAIN LOYAL TO JESUS (v8-10)

- v8-9 say roughly the same thing positively then negatively
- v8-9
- Jesus is saying there’s a link between how we treat him now, and how he treats us in eternity.
- ▲ Wonder if anyone remembers 2000 film “Gladiator” starring Russell Crowe?
 - It told the story of Maximus Decimus Meridius, as he rises through the ranks of the Roman arena to avenge the death of his family and his Emperor.
 - There’s a line in there which is rather memorable.
 - “What we do in life echoes in eternity”
- It’s not a bad summary of v8-9.

- You see the language of “the Son of Man” and the imagery of “the angels of God” points us forward (not for the last time in this chapter) to the judgement day.
 - That’s what we heard in Daniel 7.
 - God has appointed Jesus to be the judge of the world, and the Bible teaches that at the end of time all will stand before the throne of God and give an account for their lives. He will judge the living and the dead and separate the sheep from the goats.
 - Jesus is the Son of Man- universal judgement figure to whom God (the Ancient of Days) has entrusted judgement.
- And Jesus is saying “what we do with Jesus now, echoes in eternity”
 - You see we may be on trial before our friends, or our work superiors, or the government
 - But there’s a greater courtroom.
 - One that really matters. God’s courtroom.
 - And wouldn’t it be foolish to be in the clear in a human court,
 - but then to be enemies with God in his court
 - To keep our head below the parapet to save our own bacon now,
 - but to lose our soul in eternity.
- In times of trial, in parapet moments, **remain loyal to Jesus.**
 - What you do in time echoes in eternity.
 - It’s not a tit for tat you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.
 - It’s certainly not that we are buying our way into his good books by flattering words now.
 - No, it’s about loyalty.
 - It’s about recognising who is the true King.

- ▲ It's staying true to Aslan because you know he is the true King of Narnia, even when the wicked witch's servants are ready to pounce. He's the true King, he's going to win.
 - It's not easy and it takes real guts.
- But it's really just a case of remembering reality.
 - Do you love Jesus? Are you his follower?
 - He's died for you.
 - He's forgiven you
 - He's sent his Holy Spirit to live in you.
 - As you grasp how much he's done for you
 - How could we then act like we don't know him, preferring the opinions of people to the opinion of God.
- But I'm afraid that's exactly what Peter did.
 - Do you remember when Jesus was being tried,
 - Peter was asked publicly in the crowd, do you know him?
 - So does he therefore go to hell, he's blown it?
- That's where the next verse comes in, and it's both tough and tender.
- First tender. There is full forgiveness for a Peter who denies but then repents.
 - We may get words wrong here & there
 - despite an overall desire to remain loyal to Jesus.
- In the heat of battle there may be mistakes. Even big ones like Peter.
- Well there's full forgiveness. v9a.
 - Don't miss that in the context of what comes next.
 - Peter denied Jesus, but he turned with tearful repentance back to Jesus.

- But there's a tough side too.

v10b

- Well what does this mean?
 - We can't just skip it, at CCH believe that every word of this book comes from God.
 - Which is why we carefully try to listen to the Bible -as per *"Getting the Message course"*
- The ESV Study Bible says that this is one of the most
 - enigmatic, debated and misunderstood sayings of Jesus' ministry.
- It has caused great alarm to Christians over the centuries,
 - because it speaks of a sin that cannot be forgiven.
- What is that?
- Is there a phrase you can say that once uttered cannot be taken back and lead you to hell?
- It has caused great worry
 - to fearful Christians that although longing to please Jesus
 - might have committed the unforgivable sin.
- Let's spend a little time on it.
 - The phrase "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" comes once in each of Matt, Mark and Luke.
 - In each the context is against the backdrop of the resistance of the Pharisees to Jesus.
 - It's Mark 3 that gives it the fullest treatment
 - Turn back to Mark 3:28-30 (if you have a bible), I'll read it to you.

- The pharisees seemed to be ascribing the work of Jesus, so clearly a work of God by the Holy Spirit before their eyes, to the work of Satan (Beelzebul).
- This seems to be more than careless words.
- This seems to be a wilful and malicious rejection of the work of God in Jesus Christ.
- ▲ It's to see the lifeboat of Jesus Christ coming towards your sinking ship and to decide that rather than being a rescuer on the side of good, he's an evil pirate on the side of Bad.
 - And if you permanently reject the only lifeboat there is,
 - well there's no other salvation for you.
 - Of course you can't be forgiven.
- But why does it come here in this section on public trial/parapet moments?
 - Well could it be that every parapet moment is a crossroads.
 - Will I be loyal to Jesus, or will I walk away from him?
- Yes it's possible to walk down the wrong turn for a moment, like Peter, but to turn around, and as we've seen him in Acts, publicly proclaiming the Christ, and as we know from church tradition when his next really big parapet moment came he was willing to be crucified upside down for Jesus.
- But I suppose that it's possible that once that cockerel crowed, he could have gone the other way. Rather than repenting, he could have hardened his heart. He could have continued to work against the Holy Spirit in his life, becoming increasingly hardened. He could have in the end revealed himself never to have been a true disciple.

- Judas denied Jesus through betrayal, but rather than repentance and a renewed loyalty to Jesus, there was remorse, but not a return to Christ. He ended up committing suicide.
- It's not an easy concept to get our heads around, and the danger is that some with a thick skin never take seriously the toughness of Jesus' warnings.
- But the other danger, perhaps for many of you with tender consciences is never to take seriously the tenderness of Jesus' grace and forgiveness.
 - It's been helpfully said that those who are worried that they have committed the unpardonable sin do so out of a loyalty to Jesus, and so they almost certainly haven't!
 - The sign you don't want to, is a sign that you are in step with the Holy Spirit, not resisting him.
- Either way, whether we have thin skins or thick skins, parapet moments are important, they are make or break moments. A true Christian will definitely get things wrong, and there's full forgiveness. But a true Christian will seek to stay loyal to Jesus, and put him first, rather than permanently moving to a place of opposing him.

1) In parapet moments, in time of trial, remain loyal to Jesus.

2) In parapet moments, REMAIN DEPENDENT ON THE HOLY SPIRIT (v11-12)

v11-12

- What a terrifying time parapet moments can be.
- The closest I've got to bearing witness to Christ in a hostile environment was probably

- preaching the gospel to 600 teenagers in their school chapel,
 - or street preaching on the streets of Oxford,
- But those are probably different from the kind of tribunal or court experience here where the law makers in a religious or secular setting themselves seem to be legislating against Christians.
- Perhaps (as in some countries today) the death penalty itself is in view.
- But there's a wonderful promise.
- Rather than getting tongue tied about exactly what to say, and fearing letting God down by saying the wrong thing,
- The Holy Spirit himself will supply the right words to say.
- I don't know exactly in what form those words will come
 - A voice in one's head, an audible voice from God
 - or perhaps more likely a supernatural boldness and clarity of argument that retrospectively was the work of God the Holy Spirit giving me the words to say.
- By the way I don't think this is an excuse for preachers not to prepare, just relying on the Holy Spirit to give them the words as they go along! This is a trial setting.
- Believers who are under pressure will find miraculous strength and resources to be able to speak into the situation words that God wants them to say.
- This has been the case in church history.
- Some of the most eloquent and powerful witnesses to Christ have been in death penalty moments.

- How can it be that Christians, facing the death penalty itself have said such powerful, truthful words. It can only be the intervention of God.
 - Starting with Stephen in Acts 7 which we looked at this time last year.
 - to William Tyndale in 6th Oct 1536 “Lord! Open the King of England’s eyes”
 - to Luther under pressure (though he didn’t die) “Here I stand I can do no other”
- It can only be only the power and work of the Holy Spirit that can give people such boldness and clarity at the moment where they are facing eternity.
- Rather than speaking against the Holy Spirit, they are speaking by the Holy Spirit.
 Most moving to me is the story of a simple Christian teach, Haim in the time of Pol Pot’s terrible killing fields in Cambodia.
 - Rounded up with his family to dig their own graves and then be executed for their faith , one of Haim’s sons ran off into the bush.

QUOTE FROM PAGE 234.

Well may the Lord give us strength and words if ever we have to face a mega parapet moment like that. It may not be a reality now, but what might the government or even the church be saying to born again Christians a few decades from now?

- But my hunch is that for most of us, it’s the micro parapet moments that we face.
 - And I think this passage still gives us the same principles.
 - REMAIN LOYAL TO JESUS
 - REMAIN DEPENDENT ON THE HOLY SPIRIT.

➡ So let's finish with those 3 scenarios we started with...

- 1. Down the pub, *"you're not in the God squad are you? You're not one of these fundamentalist evangelicals"*

We pray hard. Lord help me to be loyal to Jesus, help me to be dependent on the HS.

- *Actually I am a Christian. I couldn't have got through the last year and a half without Jesus Christ.*

- 2. At work in front of others, when it just happens to go quiet in the whole office as your neighbour asks you *"what do you think about gay marriage?"*

- We pray hard. Lord help me to be loyal to Jesus, help me to be dependent on the HS.

- *Our church welcomes everyone whatever their background or sexuality, Jesus is for everyone. But yes, I do believe that marriage as God designed it is for a man and a woman in lifelong heterosexual marriage. All of us are failures in the area of sexual morality, but all of us can find healing and forgiveness in Christ. As the Christianity Explored course puts it "we are more wicked than we ever imagined but more loved than we ever imagined".*

- 3. At the family wedding, *"you are not saying that a religion like Islam is wrong are you?"*

- pray hard. Lord help me to be loyal to Jesus, help me to be dependent on the HS.

- *I have great respect for Muslims and share many of their values, and I'm glad to live in a culture where anyone can practise their religion with freedom. But actually, I do believe every religion to be flawed. Religion is climbing up into God's good books by our own merits and deeds. Christianity (which is a relationship not a religion) is Jesus Christ kindly climbing down to rescue us in his undeserved love".*

Let's pray for those parapet moments!