

## LUKE 12 - 14

As Jesus continues on his way to Jerusalem surrounded by crowds of eager people, his teaching focuses on discipleship. To be a follower of Jesus is difficult, even dangerous. But Jesus encourages his followers to persevere without worry or anxiety. Though the increasingly hostile encounter with the Jewish leadership highlights the risks and potential costs of discipleship, Jesus continues to demonstrate that this difficult route leads to wholeness (salvation) of life. Those who choose to follow draw near to the kingdom of God.

### 12: 1-3 – A Warning Against Hypocrisy

One of the great sins Jesus accuses religious authorities of manifesting is hypocrisy. They are concerned with pretenses and getting people on side. Or else, they impose requirements on people in order to control them by moral guilt. One way or the other, they lack compassion and crave power. Hypocrisy is a big obstacle to entering the kingdom of God.

### 12: 4-12 – Exhortation to Fearless Confession

Suffering and persecution will come for those who follow Jesus faithfully, because there is a lot of antagonism toward him by those in power. But Jesus urges them to focus on threats to the soul more than threats to the body. The soul is about integrity, justice, compassion, service, generosity and an honest and open heart. That's what Jesus' vision is all about. Don't sell your soul to survive. It's not worth it. Jesus' vision is also where the Holy Spirit lives. To accuse Jesus of blasphemy and as inspired by Satan is to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. To shut off from the Spirit in oneself and shut it off to others by deception and corruption is true death.

### 12: 13-21 – The Parable of the Rich Fool

In Luke, Jesus says much against the accumulation of wealth and possessions. It motivates people and keeps them attached in the wrong ways. It makes them easier to control by the authorities who bribe and threaten that way. Besides, all of it dies with you or it is left to others. Only moral and spiritual wealth is carried into the kingdom of God, and only spiritual wealth cannot be taken away by those with power.

### 12: 22-34 – Do Not Worry

Easier said than done, for sure. And yet, there is truth in what Jesus says. Worry will not help deal with the issues causing the worry. Also, a shift of focus from material concerns to more spiritual concerns will help shift worry as well. Trusting in God can make a difference where worry is concerned. Things find their place better than we imagine. We grow in new ways and handle things better. That's the promise. We just need to shift where our treasure is from more material to the more spiritual and relational.

## 12: 35-48 – Watchful and Faithful Slaves

Jesus speaks parabolically about the importance of his followers remaining faithful to his teaching as he anticipates not being with them long. But he will be back. Will they receive him faithfully or will they have lost their nerve, their courage, their inspiration and their way? Moreover, those who are given more from Jesus should be better equipped. They will be judged more harshly for failing to remain faithful than those who have been given little. There are higher expectations of the immediate disciples of Jesus than for others.

## 12: 49-53 – Jesus is the Cause of Division

To follow Jesus in difficult times can divide people. They will fight over where they stand in relation to him.

## 12: 54-56 – Interpreting the Time

Jesus is going to be captured and killed. Can his followers not see the building hostility? Also, Jerusalem will eventually explode with all the hate being fueled by the authorities. Can they not see that? Only compassion and forgiveness can heal and make whole. Only repentance opens doors to possible reconciliation and peace.

## 12: 57-59 – Settling with Your Opponent

This is a lesson for Jesus followers after he's gone and for Israel as a whole in relation to Rome. Try to make peace where you can. Don't invite conflict where you can avoid it. All the fueling of rage and hate is pushing things in a deadly direction for the people.

## 13: 1-9 – Repent or Perish and a Parable

Jesus is offering a last chance for people to repent before the oncoming onslaught. By rejecting him and killing him, Israel is saying they don't want to change. Jesus' vision of a compassionate Israel ready to repent of the hate, violence, sexism, classism and abuse of the vulnerable is the only hope. We repent because we recognize we have betrayed the love that has called to us. Jesus is trying to heal the trees in the garden one last season hoping for new life, before it's too late.

## 13: 10-18, 14: 1-6 – Jesus Heals

Jesus continues to heal and restore people into social communion. The fact that the religious authorities are more concerned about him breaking moral rules (the Sabbath) they have set up and enforced as a form of control reveals how far they are from his vision of the kingdom.

### 13: 18-21 – The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

It's through invisible (little) things of the Spirit like love, that truly great spiritual fruit grows. Don't neglect the most important things which are the invisible things people do not see. This is opposite to hypocrisy and pretense which is all about what people see.

### 13: 22-30 – The Narrow Door

Following Jesus in difficult times is like having to pass through a narrow door. Many enjoyed interacting with Jesus and even being healed by him. Many are spectators. Few are prepared to internalize his call to follow, especially as it will cost them materially, socially and personally when the ways of the world and those who rule are against them.

### 13: 31-35 – The Lament over Jerusalem

This passage shows us that God's will for Israel as Jesus has tried to achieve it is for Israel's conversion to a vision of a kingdom based on love, not military might, power and wealth. He recognizes that this will not succeed. His death will be a rejection of this vision. He declares that he will return to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. What then?

### 14: 7-24 – Humility, Hospitality & the Parable of the Great Banquet

Clearly Status is very important to the religious authorities, as is power, wealth, privilege and control. Jesus talks about humility and he also talks about hospitality. It really counts when you welcome and serve those who cannot scratch your back with anything that would benefit your status, privilege, power or profit. Then, your hospitality can only be motivated by the generosity of love.

The parable that follows supports Jesus' argument. It further reveals how it is that those who don't count in society are the ones most embracing of Jesus' vision. The last in the world will end up being first in God's great banquet in the kingdom. A society that does not welcome those most vulnerable and care with them with sincere love, is far from the kingdom of God.

### 14: 25-35 – The Cost of Discipleship and Being Salty

To follow Jesus has a cost in the world. It does involve giving up attachment to comfort, security, status, possessions and all those things that give us advantages others do not have. To love someone who may not return the favour can be hurtful. To love makes us vulnerable to betrayal and being taken advantage of. To love means giving practically and spiritually from the heart. Having genuine love in our hearts and acting out of love is what gives us true spiritual flavour. Without it, all our striving, doing and being is flavourless.

