

The Really Real You

March 12 – Luke 11:37-12:12

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Day 71 – 294 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Jesus visited the house of a Pharisee, who had invited other guests as well. While He was there, **Jesus pointed out their hypocritical lifestyle**. While that may sound harsh, the host was the first to pass judgment. He was surprised that Jesus did not wash before eating. Washing was not a law but a custom or tradition that the Pharisees instituted on top of the law. The purpose of washing was to signify one's desire for purity, which allowed Jesus the opportunity to point out their hypocrisy.

First, Jesus said that while **Pharisees looked good on the outside, they were rotten on the inside** (11:38-40). Furthermore, they expected their external charity to make up for their internal depravity (v.41).

Second, Jesus pointed out that Pharisees make such a public spectacle of their giving (tithing everything they own, even down to their garden herbs), and they demanded the best seats in the synagogues, as well as respectful greetings. Yet they were like concealed tombs, which defiled people when touched (v.42-44). In other words, **they played the religious game, but they were not genuine followers of God**. They cared nothing of what He expected of them.

Third, **they said one thing and did another**. They placed expectations on others that they did not follow themselves (v.45, 46). In other words, they had a double standard. They measured others with a different ruler than they used for their own behavior.

Fourth, they honored the prophets with their words and even built tombs for them, but they were complicit with their forefathers who killed them. **Honoring the spokesmen of God made them look good to the people**, but inside they despised these men and their messages.

Finally, Jesus said that they hid the key of knowledge from the people, **keeping them**

ignorant to the truth of God's words and, instead, replacing His with their own (v.52). By keeping people ignorant, these legalists were able to control them and use them for their own devious purposes.

Daily Reflection

Of course, everything Jesus said was right. He had revealed their evil motives and made public what they thought was private. This scene foreshadowed the coming judgment of God, who knows everything and will make known that which has been hidden (12:1-3).

Jesus warned His followers to beware of the leaven (influence) of hypocrites. If we are not careful, they will rub off on us (v.4-12). The motive for such behavior is fear of what others may think or say of us. We fear getting labeled, shunned, or persecuted for being a follower of Christ. Our fear of man eclipses our love and fear of God, so we pretend and say all the right things, depending on who is around at the time.

We all know people like this, but have you ever fallen into this hypocritical trap, playing the religious game, saying one thing to impress people but doing another? Explain.

Evaluate your public and private life. Are they the same? Is what others see and hear the really real you? Is what others see and hear what God sees and hears? Or are you playing the Pharisee and living two lives? **Rather than a life of hypocrisy, God expects a life of integrity**. What He thinks about you is far more important than what others think, but which matters most to you? Only the day of judgment will tell.

Possessed

March 13 – Luke 12:13-34

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 72 – 293 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Jesus taught about greed and anxiety. His entire discourse was sparked by a man who asked Jesus to tell his brother to divide the inheritance with him (v.13). As always, Jesus knew the man’s heart and thoughts. He was not seeking fairness or justice, rather He was seeking wealth. He idolized money and stuff, meaning his identity and significance were connected to his possessions. Thus, Jesus launched into a warning against every form of greed (v.15).

In essence, Jesus taught that life is not about stuff, which is why He followed up with the parable of the rich farmer (v.16-20). He had so much extra grain that he didn’t know what to do with it. Rather than look for people who needed it, he stored it up for himself later. While there is nothing wrong with saving, the man placed his security in something that he could not keep. That day he died. His stuff did not save his soul, and it went to someone else anyway. **Life goes beyond the grave, and nothing we possess can afford our eternal destination.**

However, on the other side of the spectrum, life does, in some way, consist of food, clothing, and shelter. We need to eat, we need to cover ourselves, and we need a place to live. While we may not seek worldly wealth, we need these things to survive; and it’s easy sometimes to worry about providing these things for ourselves and our loved ones. It is for this reason that Jesus shifted His lesson to the topic of worry.

Worry can be just as big a trap as greed. Even if we have very little, we are still putting our security in earthly goods. But, again, the Lord taught that life is more than our possessions, even the essentials. The truth is that He takes care of His own. He knows what we need and when we need it; and rather than fear or fret about these things, we must trust God. We must seek His will for our lives, and He will take care of the rest.

Daily Reflection

Though Jesus taught about two topics, He was making one point. Whether we have a little or have a lot, our heart and mind get distracted from what really matters, and we obsess about earthly possessions. **At that point, we are revealing what we treasure most (v.34).**

Have you ever fallen into these traps, when you were preoccupied with possessions? Explain.

Re-read Verses 21 and 33. What does it mean to be “rich toward God”?

Now, read *1 Timothy 6:17-19*. What is the remedy for greed?

Life is not about what you possess but about what or who possesses you. Do you possess your things, or do they possess you? In what or whom do you place your security? In what or whom do you find your identity or significance? If you died today, could you take it with you?

Dressed in Readiness

March 14 – Luke 12:35-53

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 73 – 292 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Jesus spoke of His second coming and encouraged His followers to be ready. What's interesting is that no one who heard Jesus speak on this subject would be alive when He returned. So then, Jesus was speaking to the generation who would be alive upon His return. Is that us? Perhaps.

The Bible makes it very clear that Jesus will come a second time. Although the Jews misunderstood the Old Testament prophecies and thought Jesus would accomplish everything in His first advent, we now know that Jesus has two advents. His first advent was for the purpose of salvation, and His second advent will be for the purpose of judgment. When He returns, He will separate those who are His true followers from those who are not.

Though we believe that Jesus will return someday, no one knows exactly when that will occur (*Matt. 24:36-44*). Those who knew Jesus personally thought that He would return during their lifetime. Every generation since then has believed that He would return during their time on earth. Even today, we believe the same. But **the longer the delay, the less prepared we are for His return.**

That's why Jesus said, **"Be dressed for readiness and keep your lamps lit"** (*v.35*). Today, we might say, "Keep your shoes on and don't turn out the lights." Like servants waiting for their master to return from a long trip, they want to be ready to serve him when he arrives. But Jesus said that when He returned, He would prepare Himself to serve them (*v.36-38*). What an amazing twist and promise!

In the meantime, Jesus said, He had "a baptism (of suffering) to undergo," referring to His death on the cross (*v.50*). He also said that the thought of crucifixion distressed Him, and He couldn't wait until it was accomplished. His followers had no idea what was coming.

Daily Reflection

We will talk about Jesus' crucifixion another day. Let's revisit the topic of His second coming. **The problem is that the longer the Lord delays His return "in the night," the sleepier we get.** Each generation grows less expectant and less prepared. Why is that?

What are some practical ways that we can be "dressed for readiness and keep the lamps lit"?

Jesus said, "Blessed is the faithful and sensible steward," whom He left in charge in His absence. Blessed is he that the Master finds managing well when He returns (*v.42, 43*).

How are you doing "managing His house" and being ready for the Master's return? Are you expectant, faithful, and prepared?

The Lord has given us much — forgiveness, hope, joy, eternal life, and more. He should expect much from us (*v.48*). He should expect to find us ready for His return, not wasting our time on worldly, self-centered pursuits. **Get dressed and ready to go!**

Fruitless Trees

March 15 – Luke 12:54-13:35

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 74 – 291 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Though we read a lengthy passage, there was one theme. Jesus highlighted the Jews' hard hearts and warned them about missing the Messiah. God was doing amazing things in their midst, but they were blind to it all. Consider the little stories and lessons in light of the whole.

First, Jesus pointed out that the Jews could determine the weather by identifying the signs, but they couldn't see that all the signs of the prophets about the Messiah were being fulfilled in their day (12:54-56). Second, Jesus warned them to settle with the judge (Him) while they could, or else they would suffer greatly after He made His final judgment (57-59).

Third, the people told Jesus about two incidents that occurred in Jerusalem (13:1-5). One report was of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, who killed a group of Galilean Jews giving offerings in the Temple. The second report was about a group of eighteen people who were crushed when the tower of Siloam collapsed. The Jews assumed that these things happened to them as God's punishment for being great sinners. In other words, the Jews were quick to point out others' sins, but they were blind to their own. But Jesus refuted this idea by saying, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish," meaning all people are sinful and deserve death. Jesus is the only means to life.

Fourth, Jesus told the parable of the fig tree, which is a symbol of Israel, the Jewish nation (v.6-9). For three years (the length of Jesus' ministry), the farmer looked for fruit and found none, so He ordered the tree to be cut down.

Next, Jesus healed a woman on the Sabbath, another picture of Israel (v.10-17). She had been possessed by a demon which caused her to be bent over. Jesus helped her to stand upright again. But the synagogue official accused Jesus of breaking the law of the Sabbath. Again, Jesus pointed out the

hypocrisy. The Messiah was here, healing God's people, and yet they condemned Him for it.

Then, Jesus told two parables about the kingdom of God (v.18-21). One was about the mustard seed that became a tree; the other was about leaven. Both parables highlighted the humble beginning of the kingdom of God, which eventually would encompass the world.

However, very few Jews would come to the kingdom (v.22, 23), which is why Jesus gave the last warning that we read today (v.24-35). He said that the door to the kingdom (salvation) would not remain open for long, and those who thought their eternities were secure as God's people would ultimately be surprised and disappointed to find they were not. They would find themselves on the outside looking in.

Daily Reflection

These stories are sad. The Lord wanted to help people who did not want to be helped. In fact, they will eventually arrest and kill Him. When I read passages like these, they cause me to reflect on my salvation and spiritual growth.

First, regarding salvation, have you come to the realization that Jesus is the only way to be right with God? You cannot save yourself. God is not impressed by your family tree, your church attendance, your charity, your kindness to strangers, or any of your "good" works. "Unless you repent of your sin, you will likewise perish."

Second, what if Jesus evaluated your "fig tree"? Would there be any fruit on it? While our works do not save us, they can be an indicator of a new life in Christ (Jn. 15:1-17). **Is there fruit on your tree, or is it barren?**

Let it not be said of our tree, as it was said of the Jews, "Why does it even use up the ground? Cut it down!" **If your tree is fruitless, perhaps you have not yet surrendered your life to Christ.** Don't miss your chance to come to the Savior.

I Once Was Blind

March 16 – John 9:1-41

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 75 – 290 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. John connected the man’s condition to three characters in the story — the disciples, the man who was healed, and the religious leaders. In other words, Jesus cured physical blindness, but He also confronted spiritual blindness.

For example, consider the conversation that Jesus had with His disciples regarding the reasons the man was blind (v.1-5). It was a common misconception at the time that physical suffering was always connected with sin (like Job’s friends did). But Jesus corrected their theology and told them that the man’s suffering was allowed for that providential day (v.3). His suffering would bring him to faith in Christ.

Let’s turn, then, to the man Jesus healed (v.6, 7). It’s quite possible that he did not have any eyes at all. The Creator healed him in a unique way, by spitting on the ground and using mud or clay, perhaps forming eyes from the dirt, as He did in the beginning (*Gen. 2:17*). Jesus asked him to wash in the pool of Siloam so that he could demonstrate his faith in Christ. John pointed out the meaning of Siloam was “sent.” He must have thought it was fitting for the moment, either for the Messiah who was sent of God to restore sight to the blind or for the man whom Jesus sent to the pool to wash.

After the man received his sight, his life was obviously changed (v.8-12). Others noticed a visible difference, so much that they did not even recognize him. The rest of the story records the man’s gradual faith. At first, the man called Jesus a prophet (v.13-17). Then, he testified to the religious leaders that He knew very little of Jesus, but He believed that He was from God (v.18-34). Finally, after he got to see Jesus with His new eyes, He believed in Him as his Savior and worshiped Him (v.35-38).

The third set of characters John connected to blindness was the religious leaders. What Jesus

had done did not reconcile with their skewed theology, and they were unwilling to believe that Jesus was who He claimed to be. This explains Jesus’ statement, “I came into this world so that those who cannot see may see and that those who see may become blind” (v.39). Because these religious leaders refused to see Jesus as the Messiah and their Savior, they were blind, and they remained in their sin.

Daily Reflection

My favorite statement in this story, and perhaps yours too, is when the healed man said, “**One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see**” (v.25). John Newton, the former slave-trader turned pastor described his spiritual transformation with his beloved poem, now song, “Amazing Grace” (1772).

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
**I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.**

The blind man’s story is our story. **We once were blind, and now we see.** Has God restored your sight? How would you describe your spiritual journey, your gradual faith-walk with Christ? Do you recognize that you were once blind, and now you see?

You know people who think they see but who are still spiritually blind. Take a minute to pray for them, that God might “open their eyes.”

The Good Shepherd

March 17 – John 10:1-42

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 76 – 289 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Jesus told the parable of the Good Shepherd and used sheep imagery throughout the passage. Sometimes parables can be like riddles. They are hard to understand until you know the answer. Once you know the answer, the riddle makes sense.

In this chapter, Jesus compared Himself to past and present “shepherd” leaders of Israel, who oppressed, deceived, and manipulated the people (*Ezek. 34:1-16*). The people of Israel are the sheep in the sheepfold, a fenced area where they slept at night. Folds had one gate or door, one way in and out. Now that we understand the setting, let’s unfold the imagery.

The fence in the story is the law of God. Israel was confined by the law until one day when the Shepherd arrived (Jesus). By fulfilling the law of God perfectly, He is the only person to lead the sheep out of the pen. In fact, Jesus referred to Himself as “the door” (*v.7*), the only way to be freed from the law and escape God’s judgment. Evidently, others had come before Him and claimed to have a way to be saved from the law. They were only thieves and robbers, and they tried to sneak into the fold over the side.

When the Good Shepherd arrived and called to His sheep, they followed Him because they knew His voice. However, notice that some sheep did not respond to Jesus but rather stayed behind in the pen (*v.4*). When Jesus leads out “His own,” He leads them to good pasture, what He called “abundant life” (*v.10*). Not only is Jesus the Good Shepherd and the only way out of the pen, He was also willing to lay down His life for the sheep (*v.11, 15, 17*).

But if the sheepfold is Israel, then where are we Gentiles (non-Jews) in the story? Notice that Jesus said, “I have other sheep which are not of this fold...” (*v.16*). He will find them and add them to His flock. Together, His sheep will become one flock with one shepherd.

Of course, Jesus’ parable did not sit well with the Jewish leaders, especially when He linked Himself to the Father (*v.18*). They will attempt to arrest and kill Him for blasphemy (saying something offensive about God). Others pressed Him to reveal whether He was the Messiah. He pointed to His works and said, “You do not believe Me because you are not My sheep” (*v.26*). Again, we see that not everyone belongs to God’s flock, God’s family.

Daily Reflection

Amid the sheep imagery, Jesus said something else that is worth noting. “I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one can snatch them out of My hand” (*v.28, 29*). **Those whom Jesus has redeemed are eternally secure in their salvation.** Therefore, we do not have to maintain our “saved status” somehow. We can rest assured that our salvation is in good hands, God’s hands, and nothing we do or say can separate us from His love.

Have you ever struggled with the security of your salvation, believing that you must do good things to remain saved? Why or why not?

You do not have to fear losing your salvation. You did nothing to earn it. Thus, you can do nothing to lose it. **Salvation is not in your hands, but rather it’s in the hands of your Good Shepherd.** The reason why we do good things is not to preserve our salvation but to express our gratitude for being one of His sheep.

What's Missing?

March 18 – Luke 14:1-24

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 77 – 288 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Jesus was invited to the home of a Pharisee for a meal. Of course, He used the opportunity to teach. As always, both His actions and words were pointed and purposeful. He highlighted several things that were missing.

First, the dinner party took place on the Sabbath. Jesus noticed a man with dropsy, an unnatural collection of water in a part of the body, usually caused by a disease. Before Jesus healed the man, He asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" He knew that the religious leaders believed it was wrong to do so. They valued their policies over the lives of people.

What was missing? Compassion or mercy.

Then, Jesus noticed the dinner guests vying for the best seats at the table. Each man made his case as to his importance and rank. Jesus pointed out their pride and offered words of wisdom regarding appropriate action. He was not giving advice regarding dinner etiquette, but rather He was spotlighting their self-righteous mindset. The one who invited the guests should determine where they sit.

In context of the story that Jesus told during the meal, the dinner host is God. Those who claim the best seats at His table are those who try to earn their way into His favor. But that's not how it works. Jesus said, "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (v.11). **What was missing? Humility.**

Third, Jesus noted that the guests were all well-to-do men of the town, high society friends and neighbors. Missing from the scene were the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Jesus knew their hearts, and He discerned their self-righteous attitudes. Meals like this one were meant to score social points with other "important" people who might reciprocate the generosity. They overlooked the needy, and thus **they lacked kindness or charity.**

Finally, Jesus told a parable after someone at the table said, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God." He perceived that this man, as well as the other guests, believed that they would attend that meal. But Jesus' story revealed that many invited guests would reject God's invitation. Again, He was aiming His comments at the self-righteous Jews who believed they would automatically inherit the kingdom of God. That was not the case. In fact, God would invite many people that the Pharisees would rather not — the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and the Gentiles. **Many of the Jews will miss God's party.**

Daily Reflection

Self-righteousness. Where does it come from? What causes us to believe it? What are its consequences?

Have you ever struggled with it? Why or why not? **What is missing?** How do you overcome it?
