

Sermon Preached at Grace Community Church (EPC)  
Sun City Grand, Surprise Arizona  
Sunday, January 8, 2017  
by the Reverend Cooper McWhirter

The Woes Continue: *"If Walls Could Talk"* [Part One]  
Luke 12:1-12

"He was, at the very least, the most remarkable Person who ever walked this earth. He came with words too incredible to believe, and with wonders too incredible not to. His footsteps shook the world, leaving a crevasse across the centuries, separating the ones that stretched ahead of Him from those that lay behind Him. The footprints He left were made not by the hobnailed boots of a soldier...but by sandals as unaccustomed to floors of marble as they were to fields of battle.

Who was the man that wore them? This man who wielded no sword, and commanded no army (at least not of this world). This man whose steps were so foreign to the corridors of power.

About Him we know so very little. We know next to nothing about His childhood. And comparatively little about His adulthood...He Himself wrote nothing, published nothing. His sermons were short. His prayers, mostly private. His ministry, a scant three and a half years. His name was Jesus!"<sup>1</sup>

As we begin this new year, it's my earnest desire that all of us will have ample opportunities to discover in far greater depth about the God-Man, Christ Jesus. For as John, the apostle, reminded us: *"And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written"* [John 21:25].

This tells me that there will always be things about our Lord which will remain shrouded in mystery. Mysteries which will be hidden from mere mortals; best left within the council of the Godhead.

In this sermon series, the title says it all: *"The WOES Continue"*. *Woe* to the Pharisees who sought signs [Luke 11:29]. *Woe* to those (e.g., lawyers) who place undue burdens upon the downtrodden [Luke 11:37, 45]. Indeed, the *woes* continue for all who dare to renounce Christ by committing the one unpardonable sin.

Time is of the essence. We must prepare for Christ's glorious return!

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<sup>1</sup> Ken Gire, *Moments With the Savior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers, 1998) pg. 14+.

Until then, the woes will continue. But it need not be. At least not for those who follow in Jesus' footsteps. We need not worry. Or, be weighed down with anxiety. Instead, it should be a time of great expectancy and hope! Yes, a brighter tomorrow awaits those who confess Christ as their Lord and Savior.

But WOE to those who cling to the things of this world. Things which are perishing. For they, too, shall perish! In this passage, we must be on the alert for: **THOSE WHO WOULD LEAD US ASTRAY** (repeat).

Two thousand years ago, the avowed enemy of Christ was neither Gentile, nor Jew. It was a spirit formerly called Lucifer, the "son of the dawn" [Isaiah 14:12]. Only later would he become known as Satan. And the evil pawns who were used to destroy our Lord were the Jewish religious leaders: the scribes and Pharisees.

The word Pharisee means "*separated one*." The Pharisees were a strict, unyielding sect who saw themselves as superior to both lowly Jew and Gentile. Seemingly impervious to criticism. Especially from the likes of a humble Galilean from Nazareth who labeled them as 'hypocrites'!

For the Pharisee, purity was an obsession. Doctrinal purity. Moral purity. Ceremonial purity. Racial and social purity. This notion of purity permeated every aspect of their lives (e.g., the way they prepared their food, to the way they washed their hands). It would be said of them that they were bleached white on the outside, but hollow on the inside. Their prayers were lengthy, but lacking in sincerity, piety and humility."<sup>2</sup>

Our passage begins: "*In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.'*" As on other occasions, a multitude of people had gathered to hear from the lips of Jesus. "*For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*" [Matthew 7:29].

As to the precise location where this episode took place there are two possibilities. Since Matthew's account [Matthew 10:26-33] corresponds with Luke, chapter twelve, Jesus could have been speaking in, or near Capernaum. However, in Luke's account [chapter 10], the Lord had previously been addressing Martha and Mary, Lazarus' two sisters, who lived in Bethany.

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<sup>2</sup> Ken Gire, *Moments With the Savior* pg. 466+.



But wherever this took place, Jesus first addressed His disciples. This was His targeted audience where He said: ***“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”*** In other words, be aware of those who are pretentious. Or, to implore a modern vernacular, those who are ‘two-faced’. Ones who lack sincerity. Jesus was warning His apprentices to avoid those who espouse the idiom: *“Do as I say; not as I do!”* The Lord likened these religious hypocrites to that of “yeast” or “leaven.” Yeast came to symbolize evil or corruption. This metaphor was meant to illustrate that only a tiny amount of yeast ferments, or enlarges dough. Like poison venom, only a small amount can bring about one’s death. Or, in this instance, one’s very soul.<sup>3</sup>

But, not only should we avoid those who could mislead us, it’s also imperative for us to avoid: HARMFUL WORDS AND DEEDS (repeat).

Although God remains hidden from our view; our thoughts, words and deeds will one day be exposed. Jesus continues by saying: ***“For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.”***

Oh, if only the walls could talk! Dare to imagine every hate-filled word ever spoken; every despicable deed ever committed. Armed with the knowledge that one day these will all be exposed to the light of day! For what was conceived in darkness will be exposed like film being developed.

This phrase, *“the inner rooms”* refers to the dark recesses of our minds, as if seen through the prism of a camera lens where vivid images are unveiled in a “dark room”. These storehouses hold a wealth of information about us. Images which we would never want anyone else to see.

But there is an upside. There is a way...only one way...to expunge, to eradicate, all our vile wickedness. For this to happen we must first *seek* God. We must then *confess* our sins; both known and unknown. Finally, we must earnestly *ask* for God’s forgiveness. Then, and *only* then, can our transgressions be thrown into the *“sea of forgetfulness.”*

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Barker, general editor *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985) pg. 1509.

The only thing which will ultimately remain and must never be forgotten is...God's holy Word. For although God remains mysterious, His Word offers clarity and truthfulness. One mystery that confounds us to this day is that God brought forth His perfect Word, to an imperfect world, preached by imperfect people. There would be no 'Plan B'! Paul reminds us [that]: "...*since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made...so that they* (meaning "us") *are without excuse*" [Romans 1:20].

But come what may, the followers of Christ must be prepared for:  
TIMES OF TRIAL AND PERSECUTION (repeat).

Continuing His discourse, Jesus said: "*And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!*" This refers to the "second death" as echoed in Matthew 10:28 and Hebrews 9:27.

These uneducated fishermen knew all too well that they were incapable of dissuading the prevailing views espoused by these well-educated religious leaders. But that is not to say that Jesus' disciples were ill-equipped, or unprepared. For indeed, they were prepared! The 'Comforter', the 'Paraclete', the Holy Spirit was not only *upon* them, or with them. No! They were *indwelt* by Him! He illuminated their hearts and minds to the ways of God. The Holy Spirit empowered them to recall all that the Lord had instructed them to say and do.

It's been said, "*Confession is good for the soul*" (Psalm 119:26; Psalm 32). But as our text reminds us, confession is not only therapeutic; it is a prerequisite for God's forgiveness. Jesus makes it abundantly clear that if we confess Him, or otherwise deny Him before men, then He will do likewise before the "*angels of God*", which is a veiled reference to the 'Day of Judgment' [cf. Matthew 25:31-34; Jude 24] where both the angelic hosts and God's sovereign elect will be present.

But it's important for us to understand what Jesus meant by '*denial*'. One commentator wrote: "This describes a 'soul-damning' denial of Christ. It should *not* be confused with a temporary wavering of faith as when Peter



denied his Lord three times [Luke 22:56-62]. For even spiritual “blindness” is pardonable. But, there is one unpardonable sin. And that is to deny the so-called ‘shy One of the Trinity’. He’s shy because the Holy Spirit never speaks about Himself. Instead, He is the One who sheds light on the Work and Person of Christ. Then, too, the Holy Spirit predisposes God’s saving grace upon those who are saved. The Spirit of the living God is also the One who dispenses God’s spiritual gifts upon His elect.

But when all is said and done, there is much about God which remains a mystery. Even so, God’s love for us, and His care of us, is undeniable, irrefutable, and unassailable. Oh, if only walls could talk. But then, on second thought, perhaps it’s best they remain silent!

Let us pray...