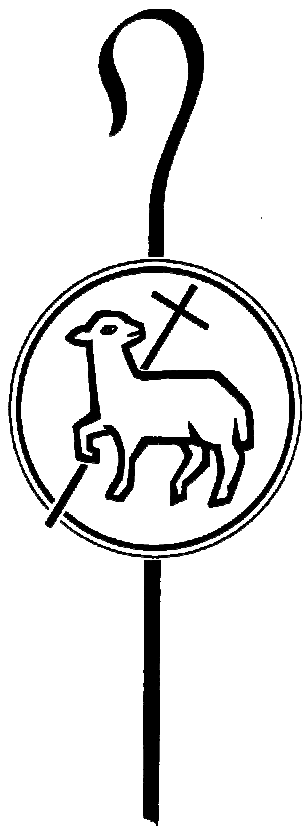


## feeding . . . gathering . . . carrying . . . leading . (Isaiah 40:11)

April 9, 2013

Dear Church Family,



A benefit of a narrative study is that we can see a big picture or major theme. This is what we looked at on Sunday for Luke 12:1-13:9 where Jesus offers various teachings all in one setting before a crowd of many thousands. And the major theme was judgment and especially the importance of someone understanding their position with regard to God's judgment. In 12:54-56 Jesus calls the crowd hypocrites because they know how to interpret the sky to understand what weather is coming, but they do not know how to interpret the present time, the time of Jesus' ministry, as to what is coming spiritually. In the following three passages, Jesus reveals that judgment is coming. With the man traveling with an adversary to the magistrate, the question about the Galileans who lost their lives near the temple, and the parable of the fig tree, the message is the same. People need to realize that a judgment is coming which they will not be able to withstand in their current state. If they only realized their situation, they would seek to reconcile with their adversary, repent, and try to produce fruit in keeping with that repentance (3:8). Jesus is the one who is able to provide the means for reconciliation, but people have to seek out that reconciliation. He is

both warning and lamenting those who fail to discern their situation and act to save themselves.

This theme of judgment applies to disciples as well as the crowd. Jesus' teachings in 12:1-48 are all directed toward disciples and all have a strong motif of future judgment. *"There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed"* (12:2)... *"Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has the power to throw you into hell"* (12:5)... *"he who disowns me before men, will be disowned before the angels of God"* (12:9)... *"This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God"* (12:21)... *"It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes"* (12:38)... *"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded."* (12:48) As disciples who have chosen to follow Jesus, we are not subject to the judgment that condemns us to death, thanks be to Jesus and his work on the cross. But we are subject to the judgment of a Holy God who is at work within us for our sanctification so that we will bear the fruit of righteousness to the glory of His name. Jesus is teaching his disciples to be mindful of that future judgment so that they will bear fruit in their present circumstances.

The warning against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, serves this purpose. Many people today would say the yeast of the Pharisees is that they were judgmental of others. It is common to understand that Jesus was critical of them for that and therefore we too should not judge others. This fits well with our pluralistic culture that promotes the virtue of accepting and affirming everyone in their different perspectives. It is understood that this virtue is necessary for promoting peace within a diverse society. If no one views anyone else as wrong then there is no cause for conflict, nothing to divide over. Thus peace and unity are achieved. It is interesting to consider Jesus' statement—*"Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division"*—in light of this cultural aversion toward judgment. Here Jesus separates himself and his mission from the goal of our pluralistic culture. It is a fundamental misunderstanding of what Jesus was all about to align his teaching and ministry to our culture's condemnation of judgment.

The yeast of the Pharisees is not being judgmental, but hypocrisy. By looking at other places where forms of this word appear (6:42, 12:56, 13:15, 20:20) we can understand hypocrisy as a failure to consistently apply discernment or judgment across the board. And it is especially the failure to apply to yourself or your situation the judgment that you are applying to others or other situations. So, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees is not that they were too judgmental; rather they were not judgmental enough. They failed to properly apply their judgment to themselves. The danger of hypocrisy is that it creates a false sense of righteousness when a person is really under judgment. It is crucially important to properly discern God's judgment on oneself and one's situation.

From the parable of the sower in chapter 8, we recall that there are two soils that fail to produce a crop. These are the rocky soil which represents disciples who stumble in the face of persecution and the thorny soul which represents disciples who stumble in the face of life's worries, riches and pleasures. Here in chapter 12 Jesus is teaching his disciples how to face both of those situations. Verses 4-12 deal with persecution, being brought before rulers and authorities and threatened with death. Verses 13-33, introduced by a man from the crowd, deal with worries and possessions. Common to facing both of these situations is the theme of proper perspective. The key is to face these two different challenges mindful of a spiritual reality that will be experienced in the future and live for that instead of the present circumstances. What is present, either through threat or temptation, seeks to deter disciples from acknowledging Christ before men or seeking God's kingdom. In both situations, fruitfulness is undermined. And in both situations, God is not only calling for faithfulness but is fully engaged in providing what is needed for the disciple to be faithful. That includes the Holy Spirit providing what to say before rulers and authorities and God providing the basic needs of life, for your Father knows that you need them. Thus, trust in God's provision is crucial for the disciple to navigate these challenges without walking down paths of self preservation or self fulfillment that hinder fruitfulness.

It was very fitting and helpful to be celebrating communion in the context of considering the judgment of God. It is only through the work of Christ that we are able to have peace and even joy in the judgment of God. Without Christ, the holiness of God is literally our mortal enemy. That is because the judgment on our sin that emanates from God's holiness will destroy us. Without Christ, we cannot celebrate or rejoice in God's holiness. We can only fear it and recoil from it in self preservation. Yet, because of Christ's sacrifice, because His body was given for us and His blood was poured out for us, we are washed clean, we are made righteous and we can celebrate and rejoice in God's holiness. We are his beloved sons and daughters, not because we have earned that standing, but because Christ has earned that standing and has given it to us. Thus we are able to enjoy both the love of the Father and the holiness of the Father.

We have nothing to fear from conviction of sin under God's judgment. It leads to repentance which gives us the righteousness of Christ. It is a beautiful and precious experience. It is an opportunity to rejoice more fully in the grace of God that has saved us from our sinfulness. It is an opportunity to draw closer to God for the strength that we need to overcome our sin. And it is an opportunity to be more fruitful and bring God more glory with our lives. *Not recognizing* our sin, rather than *conviction* of sin, is what we should fear.

All glory to Him,  
Bo

<http://www.christourshepherd.org/pastlet.htm> (and follow links to download MP3 audio of sermon)