

Afraid And a Friend of God

Luke: All Things New



Series Goal

That Mercy Hill Church would be made new as we follow the One who is making all things new!



Sermon Text

Luke 12:1-7



Big Idea

The Christian, the disciple, is to be both afraid of God, in one sense, and a friend of God, in yet another sense. The two are not at odds with each other but intriguingly complementary. Indeed, together they keep us balanced, sane, right in a world gone wrong.

(1) Afraid of God (vv. 1-5)

Jesus is trying to encourage and prepare His disciples for the rising opposition and coming conflict. And we are tempted are we not, when we come to vv. 4-5 of His heartwarming little pep talk, to say: “Jesus, You missed the mark!” But He’s the Son of God. He doesn’t miss the mark. So what is He after here? Well, He’s actually tapping into one of the richest traditions in OT. It’s this idea of the fear of the Lord. Perhaps the most famous example of this is found in the book of Proverbs: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight” (Prov 9:10). The point here is this: You cannot even begin to see anything rightly until you see God as He is and yourself in light of Him. We are always so prone to exalt ourselves, our circumstances, this present moment to something more important, to something ultimate. We think that this is the big deal. And Jesus is saying, “Slow that down. Okay, so these guys may not like you. What’s the worst they’re going to do? Kill you?” He brings us to face God and eternity—truly ultimate reality.

(2) A Friend of God (vv. 6-7)

But now the fear of the Lord is a much richer idea than just being afraid of God, being scared into submission. That is not the fullest sense of the term. And Jesus will not let us think it is. That is why He moves seamlessly, without so much as a stutter, from this idea of being afraid of God to the idea of being a friend of God. He goes from perhaps some of the most terrifying verses in all the Bible (vv. 4-5), to some of the most comforting (vv. 6-7). We have just seen that God is great and sovereign and holy and just. Now Jesus wants us to see that God is also good and gracious and compassionate and tender—that He takes all of His terrifying might and marshals it in love and concern for His children. We have just seen that we are nothing, just grass, a vapor, and He is almighty. But now we come to the stunning reality that, though we are nothing in and of ourselves before Him, we are so precious, so valuable to Him.

The idea at the end of all this, then, is that fearing God should lead to a fearless life. Knowing Him as friend should mean you no longer tremble before your enemies. What can they do, what can they say? God—the holy, just, overturning, vindicating God—is watching over you with Fatherly, friendly concern.

Reflection Questions



- Why do you think God wants us to be honest with Him about what’s going on in our hearts? Why is it often so hard for us to confess these things to Him and others? Is there anything you are attempting to hide from God and others even now?
- Describe your experience of the fear of the Lord. What do you think it is? Why do you think it’s important? How might it actually free you from all other fears? How do you think it relates to friendship with Him?
- Which side of the balance are you more prone to err on? On the one side, some tend to think of God as more frightening, holy, angry, and distant. But on the other side, some tend to think of God too casually. He seems more of a buddy than the holy Judge of the universe. How might meditating on the cross keep you on the right track?