

TAKE OFF THE MASK!

Luke 12:1-3

The dinner trays had been cleared, and the passengers settled back for the last leg of Air Canada's Flight 797 from Dallas to Toronto. Suddenly someone told a flight attendant she smelled smoke. The attendant opened a rear lavatory door and black smoke poured out. With practiced calm, attendants asked passengers to move forward, while crew members tried to douse the fire. For a while, the smoke disappeared. Then it began billowing thicker and darker. The crew made preparations for an emergency landing, and one attendant pointed out the forward escape chutes and rear exit doors. By the time she finished giving instructions, they couldn't even see her. She was engulfed in smoke.

In the cockpit, the pilot was also shrouded in smoke. Within minutes he managed a miraculous blind landing at the Cincinnati airport, braking so fast he blew all six tires. The seconds he bought saved lives.

In the cabin, passengers groped toward the exits. There was no panic, no screams. They couldn't see a thing ... but just went toward the feel of the air. A man's voice called out, "Follow my voice." Suddenly flames roared through the front of the cabin like lighting a fuse on a firecracker. Inside, rescue workers found the charred bodies of 23 people, some huddled in the aisles, some still strapped in their seats.

Passengers had barely 30 seconds to slide down rubber emergency chutes and run 100 feet before the fuselage erupted in flames. Said one survivor, "Five minutes before landing, we couldn't see anything in the plane for the smoke."

Another said, "If you didn't get out quickly, you didn't get out."

The incident drew national attention and provoked lengthy discussion of airplane fire safety.

Several factors caught my attention in the accounts of the tragedy of flight 797:

23 people survived; 23 died. Many of the dead were still in their seats in their seatbelts.

All those surviving reported having a well thought-out plan of action.

Those who lost their orientation, though for only a few seconds, died on the plane.

Even the pilot, seated by an emergency exit, almost died. He became disoriented and was only saved when a douse of foam from firefighters brought him to his senses. He escaped with his uniform in flames.

Those who survived the tragedy had a plan – They knew where they were going.

[In a similar way,]

Survival in the crises of life depends on keeping focused.

- On having proper perspective.
- Those who lose their orientation are lost.

To triumph in the days in which we live

- **we must keep the right perspective**
- **we must keep our eyes on God – NOT on circumstances or problems around us.**

Luke 12 – Our Lord teaches this lesson to His disciples.

Luke has demonstrated that Jesus is Messiah.

He describes at length the growing rejection of Christ by His own people.

Those who should have received Him, oppose Him: religious leaders, etc.

Those we least expect follow Him: common people, gentiles, samaritans, etc.

As Luke deals with those who have decided to follow Jesus,

**He describes the attitudes which should characterize their lives
in the face of opposition by the Pharisees and scribes.**

INSTRUCTION IN VIEW OF THE REJECTION 12:19

PROPER CONDUCT FOR HIS FOLLOWERS 12:1-48

Basic principle: the need for proper perspective on their priorities.

Jesus helps them identify proper priorities in view of His coming kingdom.

True happiness depends on proper perspective:

By a series of 5 contrasts

He directs their attention to the proper perspective on their priorities.

Five lessons for those who follow Him:

Lesson #1

DON'T COPY THE HYPOCRITES

Don't focus your attention on:

External appearances

But rather on:

Internal attitudes of the heart

WARNING CONCERNING HYPOCRISY 12:1-3

Our Lord's disciples are in danger–

They're surrounded by huge crowds of the curious–sensationalists

The leaders are after Jesus

WARNING: DON'T IMITATE THE HYPOCRISY OF THE PHARISEES 12:1

Those who follow Jesus shouldn't imitate the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

What is a hypocrite?

"Hypocrite" comes from a Greek word used to describe an actor

– someone who played a part

A hypocrite is never genuine

– **he is always play-acting to impress someone.**

People who try to impress others to hide their real selves.

In spiritual realm, – someone who acts more spiritual than they really are.

They know they're pretending and hope they won't be found out.

How are Pharisees like hypocrites?

Always concerned with *looking* religious.

Used their religiosity for personal gain

– to earn personal prestige – power – position

Their hearts were not concerned with knowing or doing God's will.

Jesus compares their attitude to leaven

How is the Pharisee's hypocrisy like leaven?

It's an attitude that begins small and grows quickly, quietly and pervasively.

That attitude is contagious (leaven => it spreads rapidly; permeates everything)

Once we start to pretend, the process goes on quickly.

Sir Walter Scott:

"O what a tangled web we weave – When first we practice to deceive."

Ministry shouldn't be like that.

HYPOCRISY IS ULTIMATELY FOOLISH AND FUTILE 12:2-3

What is foolish about the Pharisee's hypocrisy?

Why is it foolish?

The truth is some day going to be revealed.

God will reveal the inner thoughts and motives behind our actions.

That which is "covered over" is going to be "uncovered" (play on words)

"Shouting from the housetops" The way messages were communicated to a whole village.

People who occupy important positions must guard what they say because they never know when their words might be recorded. The wide use of hidden microphones and long-range listening devices is well-established. Years ago Thomas Edison said: "In a few years the

world will be like one big ear; it will be unsafe to speak in a house till the walls and the furniture have been examined for concealed phonographs." He only foresaw a small part of present ability to listen in!

In San Jose, California, Luke Goodrich was burning garbage behind his home; that's against the law. Worse, while Luke was burning garbage, the fire got away from him. It spread over a hundred acres. It took six helicopters and 400 firefighters to put it out. Luke Goodrich is captain of the San Jose fire department.

Pharisees don't want to reveal their real motives

They keep trying to make Jesus hang Himself—so they can destroy Him with popular support.

But it keeps coming out:

Desire for first place 14:7

Desire for money 16:14-15

God will reveal their true motives!

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS FOR JESUS' FOLLOWERS?

Those who follow Jesus shouldn't live that way.

Which issues are the same? Which issues are different?

We may be terrified to think that everything about us will someday be revealed.

It shouldn't frighten us.

Robert Redford walking through a hotel lobby when a woman saw him and followed him to the elevator. "Are you the real Robert Redford?" she asked excitedly. As the doors closed, he replied, "Only when I am alone!"

"A friend is one who knows all about you and loves you just the same."

That's what God's love is like.

He knows all there is to know about us and still loves us!

He knows we're not perfect.

Bruce Larson: Advises young pastors: "Be sure to tell your congregation your faults before they discover them. You will strip them of all their ammunition."

Pre-Marital counseling— "Take off the masks!"

It's better to find out up front who you really are, instead of marrying an illusion.

Neat, well-dressed man shows up in fancy car to take out a beautiful lady.

Car is borrowed.

Clothes are rented.

Girl has been in a mudpack for two hours to get her face fixed.

He spends a week's wages for an evening's enjoyment.

They both smile and act pleasant all evening long.

The problem is they never find out what the other person is really like—until it's too late!

We need to let each other know the real us—what we are really like.

That's the way it needs to be in God's family as well.

We need to **stop trying to impress one another.**

Sooner or later we're going to find out the truth about each other!

Basic lesson: *Sooner or later*, our real nature and motives are going to be discovered.

It will then be clear that we should have been honest about them to start with.

It's true of Pharisees' attitude towards our Lord—*under discussion here*

But it's also true concerning our personal relationships *today*.

Sooner or later, our internal attitudes will show.

We must be honest about them—AND deal with them!

A young man came to F.E. Marsh and said, "Pastor, I've stolen from my employer, and I'm ashamed to tell him. I'm a boat builder, and the man I work for is an unbeliever. I have often talked to him about Christ, but he just laughs at me. In my work, expensive copper nails are used because they won't rust in water. I've been taking some home for a boat I am building in my backyard. I'm afraid if I tell my boss what I've done, he'll think I'm a hypocrite, and I'll never be able to reach him for Christ.

A bit later the man came back, "Pastor, I've settled it and I'm so relieved." "What happened?" asked the minister. "He looked at me intently and said, 'George, I've always thought you were a hypocrite. Now I'm not so sure. Maybe there's something to your Christianity after all.

Any religion that makes a man admit he's been stealing a few copper nails and offer to settle for them must be worth having."

What should we do about it?

The Mask

Margaret Anne Keller

At heart, I am a stricken thing,
 You would not think so, would you?
 And if you looked for such deceit,
 You could not find it, could you?
 I have clothed my heart with mirth,
 With brilliant colors flying.
 But down inside my funny heart,
 A child is dying.