

Title: Somber  
Text: Luke 10.13-16  
Theme: Christ's warning  
Series: Luke  
Prop Stmtnt: The coming judgment is real, serious and personal.

The judgment of God is not a comfortable topic, but it is a necessary one. Jesus talked very plainly about judgment. He talked about it because it is true. And people know that. God has given us, (in the words of one of our elders, Bert Spalding) the gift of dread. We are in the midst of a 45-day period where more than 400 million Hindus are expected to bathe in one of India's rivers in a ritual that they claim will cleanse the of their sins. Tragically, their faith in the river, is misplaced, but these people at least have a sense of shame and guilt. Part of being human means that we fear of day of judgment when our secrets are exposed and the truth about our lives are revealed. We have a conscience. We have an internal sense of right and wrong. Even a child will look around to see if someone is watching before he/she tries to do something that is wrong. This is a gift. It makes us aware that there is such a thing as right and wrong, truth, error, and fair and unfair. And like many difficult topics, Jesus did not avoid it. He lovingly spoke clearly and faithfully about it. But as Mark Twain once observed, *"it ain't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it's the parts that I do understand."* Our text is hard to hear, but it is not hard to understand. It is somber.

Read Text:

There are certain topics like our mortality, funeral plans, life insurance, wills, that some of you do not like to talk about. What are those topics for you? What are the things that you would rather not discuss? And why do you think that is? Do you think that if you ignore hard topics that you will not have to face them? What if you had a doctor like that? If you found out that you had cancer and your doctor hid that diagnosis from you, would you trust him if he then said, "but you'll be fine." Recently a man asked me if he could ask me about something that really bothered him. He wasn't a "church guy", but at his grandfather's funeral, the minister who spoke assured everyone that the man was in heaven because God forgives all sin. The guy told me that his grandfather was a terrible person and he was confused by what the minister said. I asked him on what basis did the minister say this? Another guy overhearing our conversation said that the minister was just trying to make everyone feel good. But it had the opposite effect for this guy. For this guy, he didn't trust anything that minister said. If you won't be honest with people about the bad news, they have no reason to trust you if you have good news. Jesus is honest about sin, guilt and judgment. We need to know this, so we know how to be ready for that day. You can be ready for that day. Listen to what Jesus says.

### 1. **God's judgment is real.** (13)

*Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!* Jesus knows these towns by name. He knows the people in them by name. He knows what the people in these towns really believe and what they really do. He is not fooled by appearances or reputations. Jesus knows the truth. And he

knows that what the people in these towns believe and have done is bringing judgment upon them. "Woe" is a cry of anguish over a disaster that has occurred, is imminent or is coming. Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me" when he saw a vision of the holiness of God. He was so undone by this, that he assumed that he would be instantly consumed by the white-hot righteousness of God because in that moment, he realized that he had nowhere to hide and nowhere to go. He braced himself for the inevitable wave of judgment. This is what Jesus is saying about these two towns. Why?

Chorazin and Bethsaida are two towns in the Galilee region near Capernaum where the people had repeated exposure to the miracles of Jesus. The miracles of Jesus demonstrated his authority as the Son of God and the King of the Kingdom of God. They rejected the kingdom of God because they rejected the King. This is the worst thing a person can do. I want so desperately to convince you at the heart level of this truth. Your life is no accident. You are not here because of some haphazard molecular event billions of years ago, or because of some random mutation of cells. This earth is not arbitrarily spinning on its axis while it illogically and unpredictably rotates around the sun. The reason why we can send rockets and satellites into space is because we can trust the laws of this vast universe. The laws of gravity, time, mass and motion are fixed. And we all know it intuitively. There is no law without a law-maker or law-giver. Things like this, just don't happen. There is a God. He has spoken. He made us on purpose and He is carrying out his purpose. Most people ignore him, or act like they can sit in judgment of him. While, on one level, we may not like to address the judgment of God, the reality of it makes this clear: Your life has value. Your life matters. God cares about what you do with your life because he gave you your life.

*"For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes."* The judgment that Jesus warns these towns about is based upon God's perfect knowledge. Notice the "if" clause. God has perfect knowledge not only about what has happened, what is happening and what will happen, but God has perfect knowledge about what may have happened. God knows with certainty that IF Jesus had performed in Tyre and Sidon the same miracles that he did in Galilee that Tyre and Sidon would have responded by repenting. The message of Jesus would have gone right to the heart of these people. Sackcloth was a material that came from animal hair and as such it was normally used as a loincloth. To wear it would be to humble oneself to that of an animal, while the wearing of ashes or dust would picture a further level of grief. Together it pictures a person who understands that his sin is serious and he is grieved to the bone about it. Jesus says that the people in Tyre and Sidon would have responded like that, to his ministry. Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum and others had SO much opportunity and they ignored it and rejected it and it only made their hearts harder. Now, it seems to me that Jesus is telling these cities that for them, it is too late. Judgment is coming. It is real. And there will be no excuses.

Jesus would have been received so well in those historically pagan, Baal-worshipping immoral and godless cities. He knows this. He knows the difference between the what and the what-if. Which means this: God's judgment is real and God knows everything. There are plenty of loud

boasters in our world whose large followings artificially inflate their sense of power. On the day of God's judgment, there will be no boasters, no whiners, no excuses and nowhere to hide.

## 2. **God's judgment is a specific event.** (14)

In v.14 Jesus says, "*But it will be more bearable in THE judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.*" Tyre and Sidon are two ancient cities just north of Israel well known for their worship of pagan gods (idolatry) and immorality. They tend to go together. Ezekiel describes Tyre in Ezekiel 28 in a way that many have thought that it was also a not so veiled description of Satan. The fact that Jesus says that Tyre and Sidon will face judgment is not surprising. Jesus actually visited Tyre and Sidon briefly (Matthew 15.21-28). You may remember that there was a woman (a mom) whose daughter was demon-possessed and this mom was desperate for her daughter to be freed from this. There was a lot of evil in those temples and many dark practices that very likely contributed to this girl's hopeless condition. Jesus healed her. This woman in Tyre described as a Canaanite, believed in Jesus and begged him to heal her daughter. Jesus did. It was a bit shocking to his disciples because it was hard for them to believe that there was anything redeemable about Tyre. It was that bad. So again, the fact that Tyre would face judgement is not surprising to them. But it may be unsettling to you to realize that God will judge the human race.

The judgment that Jesus refers to is the great white throne judgment that John describes in Revelation 20.11-15. I want you to turn to this passage and read it with me. As you do that, I want to remind you that the book of Revelation begins with the apostle John being visited by Jesus in his glory and it overwhelms John. When John saw Jesus in his glory, John responded like Isaiah did. He fell at his feet as though dead. But he didn't die. Jesus gave him this specific mission to write down what he sees because we need to know this. The book of Revelation is a series of visions that John has about "*the things that you have seen, those that are, and those that are to take place after this.*" What we are about to read in chapter 20 is what Jesus wants you to know. His judgment is a specific event. Read Revelation 20.11-15.

This is a fixed event and everyone will be there. You and I will be there. On that day, there will not be the rich, poor, powerful, lowly, educated, backward, mighty or weak. There will be the entire human race standing before their Creator and will be held to account of the things that they had done.

## 3. **God's judgment is fair.** (14-15)

If you are not a follower of Christ and yet you come week after week, there is a sense in which I am glad that you are here because you are hearing the gospel. I pray that at some point it will break down the walls of your heart. At the same time, I know that if you hear God's Word and you chose not to embrace it, that it will harden you and your accountability to God and therefore judgment will be greater. The warning of Jesus about the coming judgment informs us that there is a level of detail because God's justice is fair. Those who have had the privilege of more light are held to that standard. More exposure = more accountability. Notice the words, "more

bearable” which occur here in v.14 and in v.12. As evil as Sodom was (and it was so evil that God destroyed the city) it will be more bearable in the judgement for Sodom than for those who heard the news about the kingdom of Jesus and rejected it. As evil and arrogant as Tyre and Sidon were, and they were, it will be more bearable for them in the day of judgment than for these towns in Galilee who saw the miracles of Jesus and heard him teach. The failure of people to believe Jesus was not a matter of information. It was a matter of rebellion and simply unbelief. They chose not to believe because they did not want to give up the right to control their own lives. There were times when Christ would not do miracles because of their unbelief. That does not mean that the power of Jesus was thwarted by their unbelief. Jesus is God. He can do whatever he wants. But Jesus would not do any more miracles because it would only harden their hearts even more and add to their accountability and condemnation. After his resurrection, Jesus could have showed up to the next meeting of Sanhedrin. He could have shown up in Pilate’s court. Why didn’t he? It would have been dramatic. It would have been the ultimate Shock Moment. But Jesus did not because it would not have generated faith. Another personal revelation of himself would have only added to their condemnation. That is his point here.

Jesus is saying this to his disciples and followers who are about to embark on a short-term preaching to prepare local villages for the imminent arrival of Jesus. God is coming to your town and you need to be ready. There will be some who happily receive Christ and some who refuse. The stakes are high. But these are the cities and towns that should have known better. These were the cities and towns of ancient history whose people at one point came out of Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, received the law at Mt. Sinai, constructed the tabernacle, crossed the Jordan and were gifted this land. The city of Jerusalem and the temple were tangible reminders of God’s dealings in their lives. And yet, they were assuming that there was something special about them. They were the people chosen by God which meant that they were simply better than others. That could not be further from the truth. By telling them that if Tyre and Sidon had seen the miracles of Jesus that these ancient pagan people would have repented long ago, Jesus is indicting the people of Galilee and all others in Israel who rejected him. Pagan Gentiles have more spiritual discernment than you do! Therefore, on the day of judgment you are not only NOT going to be fine, you are going to discover that you are at the very bottom of list. Sodom will not face the same judgment as you do and they were really, really bad.

I’ve talked to some of you and many others who have had the privilege of visiting Israel. You say the same thing. Here is where it all happened. These are real places. The accounts that you have read and believed are now seen in their setting and it is amazing. You cannot imagine someone living in that land and being bored and unmoved by it all. But they were. The Son of God was living among them and they did not really care. That is the point of v.15. Jesus singles out Capernaum which functioned as the primary hub of his ministry years. Jesus would die in Jerusalem, but he spent way more time in Capernaum. The question in v.15 is rhetorical. Jesus is telling Capernaum that she is going to hell. Jesus speaks of heaven as a literal place and hades (hell) as a literal place. Capernaum thinks that she is something, when she isn’t at all. Her sin has blinded her to the reality of her spiritual condition.

There is no benefit of privilege unless you take the opportunities to heart and act on them. This is a somber text for all of us. Can you make a mental list of the privileges that God has given you?

God's Word

God's Word in your language

Multiple copies of God's Word in your language that are accessible to you.

Education, so you can read God's Word in your language and understand it.

Freedom to own God's Word

Churches that teach you God's Word.

Multiple ministries in those churches who give you opportunity upon opportunity to know the greatest truths you could ever learn.

Faithful people, elders, deacons, deaconesses, staff, missionaries, teachers, whose lives reflect the power of the gospel.

In many cases, parents who love you, taught you, invested in you so that you could go to camps, trips, events, concerts, retreats, conferences all designed to help you understand the gospel.

Podcasts, videos, recordings of faithful preachers, accessible books from some of the world's greatest theologians that are at your disposal.

We have Bible colleges and seminaries that are remarkable.

These are wonderful gifts from God for our good and enjoyment. But having these wonderful gifts increases our accountability. It does not mean that we are special.

Millions of believers around the world would be stunned to find out that perhaps for some of you, these historic privileges mean very little, in fact, you are unmoved. Do you see what Jesus is saying here? The fact that you have all of this does not mean that you are better. Your privileges are only valuable if you let them accomplish their designated mission, otherwise they will be a curse to you.

#### 4. **We represent God.** (16)

It is never easy to speak about the judgment of God, but it is necessary. This text is literally what Jesus said. This is what is in the Bible. This is what I must preach. This is what you must believe. This is what you must say to others about God. But you will not tell people the whole truth unless you believe the whole truth. But the whole truth is hard to hear and hard to say. When you tell people the whole truth, there will be many who reject you. In fact, when you look at v.16, the emphasis that Jesus places on the rejection his followers will face leads me to think that he is preparing them for more rejection than acceptance. That should not surprise us. Think back to Luke 9.26, where Jesus said, "*Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*" We represent God; therefore, we have to say what he says. What you say to others about God will reveal to you whether or not you believe it.

By telling these preaching teams this, Jesus is letting them know that when they face rejection it is ultimately against God. This would help them not be embittered, but grieved over what awaits those who refuse the message. You can warn people about their sin and not hate them. In fact, it is true love for them that motivates us to warn people. That is what Jesus did for you.