

Leaven, Sparrows, and Hair

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into the themes of hypocrisy, fear, God's care, and the value God places on each individual. It emphasizes the importance of being genuine before God, the fear of God over the fear of man, and the assurance of God's intimate knowledge and care for every aspect of our lives. The message highlights the contrast between hypocrisy and authenticity, urging listeners to be real with God and others.

Scripture: Luke 12:1, Luke 12:4, Luke 12:6, Luke 12:7, Luke 12:6, Matthew 10:29, Matthew 10:29, Matthew 10:30, Matthew 10:31

Topics: "Authenticity", "God's Care"

Description

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Transcript

And we're just beginning in Luke 12 today, and I'm going to read verses 1 through 12. I'm not sure, I don't think we'll get through all of those 12 verses, but we'll read all 12. So Luke chapter 12, verses 1 through 12.

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. 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.

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 shall fear. Fear him, who after he is killed has power to cast into hell.

Yes, I say to you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Do not fear, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. Also I say to you, whoever confesses me before men, him the Son of Man will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies me before

men will be denied before the angels of God.

And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven him. But to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. Now when they bring you into the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you shall answer or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.

So the passage contains both good news and bad news. If I just had to deal with the first part, it would be a very, very hard meeting. But fortunately there is the good news in the end.

So you can either tune out now and come back to us in 20 minutes time and we'll get to the good news, or you can listen to the whole of the counsel of God. So Jesus begins to speak concerning the Pharisees. He had spoken directly to the Pharisees.

Now he is speaking to his followers about the leaven of the Pharisees. There's a great crowd. So Jesus' popularity is increasing, while at the same time the persecution or the attempted persecution is increasing.

So the Pharisees and the scribes are turning against Jesus, as we saw at the end of chapter 11. They're now looking for any reason to trip him up, to try and convict him of breaking some part of the law, while at the same time the crowd are following him and increasing to the degree that, in fact, it says that they were being trampled. So this must have been quite a thing.

Imagine a few thousand people just all trying to see Jesus. And clearly there were several thousand people at this time. And of course, as we go through the rest of these chapters going up to the cross, you'll see how the crowd increases until we eventually get to Palm Sunday, and they seek to make him their king.

And then immediately after that, they turn against him. So we have these two graphs going at the same time. Jesus' popularity is growing and increasing, but at the same time the persecution is growing and increasing at the same time.

So he then says to them, to the crowd, he says, Beware, the end of the verse, of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Now the word leaven is used throughout script. And you remember the first time we find leaven is at the Exodus, when they didn't have time to leaven the bread, and so they ate unleavened bread the night of the Passover.

And the Lord then institutes for them the feast of unleavened bread, which is attached to the Passover, but it is separate. So there are two feasts, the Passover, which happens on the evening, and then the next day is the first day of seven days of unleavened bread. The two things, the two feasts run together, run as one after the other.

And so the reason they were to have unleavened bread was to remind them, of course, of the night that they came out of Egypt, that there was no time to leaven the bread. And so they had to eat unleavened bread. So it's a reminder back there.

But in the New Testament, leaven takes on a new meaning. And here Jesus likens leaven to hypocrisy. Paul, on the other hand, also uses leaven, and he uses leaven as a picture of sin.

Elsewhere, Jesus uses leaven as a picture of false doctrine, of false teaching. So leaven is never good. There is one example where there is dispute, and people say, well, it is good, where it speaks about a woman who has a measure of flour, and she puts leaven in it, and it grows and increases.

And Jesus says, that's the kingdom. And people say, well, what that means is that the kingdom is going to grow and increase. The problem is that everywhere else, leaven is negative, is bad.

So I cannot accept that in that instance, it is suddenly good. And I'm not going to deal with the interpretation of that parable right now. So what is leaven? I think we all understand basically what it is.

Today, we would call it yeast or baking powder, both do basically the same thing. And we know that if you don't have, for those who've tried to bake, if the yeast or the baking powder doesn't work, then the cake is flat, and it doesn't rise. So why does it rise? Well, it rises because the leaven creates bubbles in the dough and causes the dough to rise.

The dough doesn't become more. The dough remains the same amount. It weighs the same before and after.

But the bubbles begin to blow it up, and it becomes airy, and it becomes light. And so the bread that we eat is leavened bread because it is light and easy. It's fluffy.

It's easy to eat. The same with cake. The matzah that we have for communion sometimes is flat and is heavy, although it's not too bad because it's like a little cracker.

So you don't get to taste that. When I was growing up, the local people on the farm didn't always have leaven, and so they baked unleavened bread, and it was like a biscuit, what you would call a biscuit or a scone or a scone or whatever you want to call the thing. Basically, it looked like that, but it was very, very heavy.

It probably contained the same amount of dough in a normal biscuit that would fit in three others, very, very hard to eat, very hard to digest. So that's what leaven is. Basically, it is rotteness.

It is bacteria and fungus. Different leavens work in different ways, but it is fungus or bacteria. It's the same stuff that makes beer ferment.

It is fermentation. It's the same stuff that makes wine ferment. And so it is basically rotten.

So we speak about sour dough, which is a different version of the same thing. It is sour. It is bad.

And yet we use the benefits to be able to eat food which is pleasant and easy to eat. So why does Jesus then say hypocrisy is leaven? Well, for exactly this reason, that leaven puffs up. It blows up.

And hypocrisy blows people up. People think that they are more than they really are because of the outward show. And remember Jesus speaking to the Pharisees, and they have all of these religious things that they're doing.

They blow the trumpet when they give money, and they put ash on their heads and wear sackcloth when they're fasting so everybody can see that they're fasting. And they're doing all of these religious things, making their fringes extra long on the edge of their garments, making the straps that they tie the law onto their left arm and onto their forehead, making those leather thongs extra big to show everybody how

religious it is. They're puffed up with pride and with hypocrisy.

And that's the problem, is hypocrisy makes us feel good because everybody else says, look how good he or she is. Look how religious they are. And so it really has to do with ego.

It has to do with pride. And remember, Jesus comes with an opposite message, and he says, blessed are the poor in spirit. In other words, those who are not puffed up with their own sense of importance, with their own sense of pride and of achievement, the reality is that we are all poor.

There is no one who has anything to offer to the Lord. And so poverty in spirit is, to me, the opposite of hypocrisy. And poverty in spirit is just reality.

It's not, you know, some people say, well, you know, don't be so down on yourself. No, this is not pessimism. This is realism.

This is understanding who we really are. Understanding what we are in the presence of God. And obviously it is not a negative thing because in the process, as we understand our poverty, his strength becomes perfected in our weakness.

As we become to the point of understanding that I have nothing, I lean on him. I draw from him. And he strengthens and he equips and he gives me the righteousness and the things that I really need.

And so being poor in spirit is being real. Being hypocritical is being not real. Unfortunately, we live in a world that is not real.

We have all of these reality shows. I don't know where they came with that name because if anything is not real, those shows are not real. There's nothing real about them.

There's nothing real about their lips. There's nothing real about their teeth. There's nothing real about their bodies.

There's nothing real about anything that they do. There's nothing real about their money. And yet this is sold as reality.

And this is the world's reality. And this is unfortunately the kind of thing that Jesus is speaking against in amongst the Jews and in the church. Now I want you to get this picture.

And I'm not going to name names. I think you've got the names. And I trust that you're on the same page as I am.

That these reality stars are grotesque. Now if you think they're wonderful, if you think that they're worth emulating, well, you have a problem. You really have.

They are freaks. And I'm sorry, but that's the reality. Their whole presentation is freakish, is terrible.

And yet we say this is great. This is what the world says. But look, here's the reality.

That when God, and we're going to see in the next verse that God sees everything. And when God looks at the hypocrite, that hypocrite looks to him like a reality star. Can you get the comparison? It's all fake.

But it's all extra big. It's extra big eyelashes. It's extra big lips.

It's extra big everything. Extra big bank balance. Extra big motor car.

The list goes on and on and on. Extra big personality. But it's fake.

There's no reality. And that's the problem with hypocrisy. It's extra big.

It's those extra long tassels. It's the extra religiosity. It's the extra holy prayer.

It's all of these things that we do to boost who we really are. And God looks at it and he says, that's a, you're a freak. You're not real.

And, you know, somehow the world is fascinated by these reality stars. They clearly make billions of dollars. One of them has just become a billionaire again, or for the first time, I don't know.

So it works. And folks, the problem is it works in the church. Many people are fooled by hypocrisy.

Many pastors and preachers are hypocrites and people flock to them because it's a good show. And folks, my cry for us as a church and as individuals is that we would just get real with God. Stop trying to put on a show.

Now, you may be able to fool some of the people, you know the saying. And you may be able to fool a lot of the people all the time. But one day God is going to expose you.

He's going to expose each one of us for what we are. And then, what does the truth really look like? You see, that's what's going to last. The hypocrisy can last for 60, 70 years, however long you get to live.

But the reality is going to be there for eternity. And so you can keep fooling yourself and trying to fool everybody else into believing that you're somewhat, when in fact you're not. But one day, the mask is going to come off.

And everyone's going to see who we really are. Because there's nothing, he says, that is covered that will not be revealed. Nor hidden that will not be known.

I don't want to get into too many details again about preachers who have recently been exposed. And yet, it is such a reality that we must face. And that is, when you look at some of these preachers who have been hailed as great names, great men of God, who have commanded thousands in their audiences, and yet then have been exposed.

When I look at that, I have no sympathy for the hypocrite who can stand on the platform and preach one thing, and the moment he leaves the platform, he turns into a monster. I have no sympathy for them. But I have sympathy for their wives, for their children, who have to live with the shame of what their father and husband really was.

And for one day, everything is going to be opened. And those people that you tried to please, whether they be family members or whether they be the pastor, whether they be other Christians or your colleagues, how are they going to deal with the reality? In all of the nonsense of Mr. Zacharias, my heart goes out to the victims, but my heart goes out particularly to his daughter, who has to carry on the ministry. And thank God she has made a decision to close the ministry.

But how does she deal with this? The problem is that we can be hypocrites even within our own homes, before our husbands and before our wives. We can act as though we're something, when in fact we're something totally different inside. Because remember, that's what we dealt with in the previous chapter.

Jesus says, you look good on the outside, but you wash the outside of the cup, but the inside is pulsing. Nothing is going to be concealed on that day. There is nothing, nothing covered that will not be revealed, even our thoughts.

And we all struggle to keep our thoughts right. We all struggle to keep our minds right before God. We may not sin so much on the outside, but we all sin on the inside.

So we need to keep a short account and say, Lord, please help me, please forgive me, please cleanse me, because I don't want my kids to know what goes on in my mind sometimes. And I may be the chiefest of sinners, but Lord, keep me humble. Keep me in a place where there are no skeletons in the closet.

Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light. I think we've all seen the chaos that happens when a politician or a celebrity speaks on a hot mic. They think the mic is off, nobody can hear what they're saying, and yet the whole world is listening.

There is nothing spoken in the dark that will not be heard in the light. And what you have spoken in the ear, in the inner rooms, will be proclaimed on the housetops. Notice the language is going from the small to the big.

This is a common Jewish way of writing. While Luke is not Jewish, he is using those ways. And so he's saying the smallest thing you say, what you whisper in the inner room, in the bedroom, in the ear, is going to be shouted off the housetops.

It's not just going to be said in the church. It's going to be said in the community. It's going to be said in the world.

Everyone's going to hear what has been said. We're going to give an account for every idle word. And so we need to guard our speech, even when we're speaking to ourselves.

Look, there are things that we say to ourselves that ought not to be said. And it's all being recorded. Now obviously we thank God for the grace of the Lord Jesus.

We thank Him for the blood that cleanses us of all unrighteousness. And if we keep that short account, those things are cleansed and those things are washed. But here's the problem of hypocrisy is that it doesn't feel the need to keep a short account.

It doesn't feel the need to constantly plead for forgiveness and cleansing that the Lord may keep us in the right place. And so it continues. And we're going to come back to this idea when we speak about the unpardonable sin next week.

But we need to keep that short account. We need to keep our hearts right. We need to keep our minds right.

Because the words begin in the mind. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. And so you can try and keep, and again sorry for the politicians, but they try and they try to say the right things.

They try to be politically correct. But what's in the heart comes out. And in a moment of anger or a moment of passion the word slips out and everybody gets to see what's really inside of the heart.

And so what is spoken in the dark will be heard in the light. What is spoken in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. This is the difference between hypocrisy and reality.

When we are real with God we're careful. I spoke last week about the fact that there are many people who live, many Christians, many pastors who live as though God doesn't know. God doesn't see.

And yet He knows and sees everything. And so I need to live my life with that awareness. And again it's not because of Him trying to terrorize me into living the right kind of life.

But because there's a need for us to be real with Him. Here's the problem with hypocrisy is that it becomes more than just a show for other people. You see the problem with leaven is that it permeates the whole lump.

You can't take a little bit of yeast and put it into one part of the lump. So you have a lump and you take 5% and you say I'm going to put a little bit of yeast in here. I'm going to leave it.

In fact I've seen demonstrations where they do exactly that. And within a few hours that leaven has spread through the whole lump. That's why Paul says you have to deal with sin in the church.

Because if you allow that sin to continue it spreads to everyone. The problem with hypocrisy is that it eventually spreads to every fiber of my being. And I become fake.

Not just to others but to myself. I begin to believe my own lies. I begin to believe my own hypocrisy.

And I begin to believe that God believes my hypocrisy. Oh Lord help me to be truthful. Help me to be real.

Above all help me to be real with myself. The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can know it. And as I've said so many times before the terrible thing about the deceitful heart of man is not that it deceives others but that it deceives themselves.

Now we come to the good news. So you can tune in again. Now remember we've been emphasizing the fact that none of these passages are freestanding.

So Jesus now says, 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. So what does that have to do with hypocrisy? Is there a connection? Yes there very clearly is a connection. In fact all twelve verses that we read this morning are connected.

And the connection is Jesus is understanding that the Pharisees are hunting him down. They're lying in wait. But Jesus now for the first time beginning to reveal to his disciples that they too will suffer for the faith.

Up to now he has said nothing about it. Now you're going to see it come out in Luke over and over and over the closer he gets to the cross. And so when Jesus says don't be afraid of those who kill the body, who does he have in mind? Who's going to kill the body? The Pharisees.

The very people he was speaking about and the Sadducees and obviously the Romans. And not just they but some in that very crowd will cry crucify him, crucify him. We have no king but Caesar.

But Jesus says don't be afraid. And folks we've said this before and this is becoming more and more real every year and that is that we will face persecution in this country. We are not yet.

There are preachers who are saying that we are being persecuted and I'm not going to get into that. We are not yet. And if it is it's very, very, very small and very, very light.

But real persecution is coming. I don't know when. I hope not in my lifetime.

I think not in my lifetime. But certainly those who are younger amongst us it will be in your lifetime. Remember I said this.

I'm not a prophet. But it's clear. Don't be afraid.

Don't be afraid of those who can kill the body. There are many Christians dying for their faith today. Right now.

And really what Jesus is saying may seem to be macabre. It seems to be grotesque. It seems to be insensitive.

But what he's really saying if we have to paraphrase it is all they can do is kill you. That's not very encouraging. But he brings the other side of the coin because there is something more than physical death.

There is a life after death. And that's where the issue is. Death is a one-time event.

And it may be protracted if you're being tortured as Christians are. But it cannot be compared to eternity. Paul speaks of our light affliction which is but for a season in comparison to the eternal weight of glory in the presence of the Lord.

What he's doing is he's saying get your mind right. This life is not what it's all about. There is far more to life than this life.

And yet all of our thinking is based around this life so often. He says don't be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. I often think about the martyrs particularly the martyrs in times past and I don't like to go there but sometimes my mind does and I think what would I do if I was in that position? How would I deal with being tied to that stake and the fire being made under me? And yet when I look at those men and I look at their testimony I realize that they saw something far more than the temporary suffering.

They saw an eternal weight of glory. But here Jesus is now going to bring a different angle and I want you to see the point that he's making. So he says don't be afraid and then in verse 5, but I will show you whom you should fear.

Fear him who after he is killed has power to cast him to hell yes I say to you fear him. Many of us are driven by the fear of men. Maybe not that they'll kill us but what they'll say of us.

Will they cancel us? Will they unfriend us? Will they block us? These are all the things that people fear today. Jesus says don't fear that. Fear him and obviously this is God who after he is killed has power to cast him to hell yes I say to you fear him.

This is a message we don't like to think about today. We don't like to preach today because we want to speak about God's love. We want to speak about his grace and his mercy and his goodness and his kindness and yes those things are all real and those are all part of who God is.

As I've reminded you so many times Paul says behold therefore the goodness and the severity of God. Yes he is good on those who fear him. He is severe on those who reject him.

They are simply two sides of the same coin. It's the same God. There's not two different gods.

A God of you know Father Christmas God and a big stick God. No it's the same God. It's not a different God in the Old Testament and a new God in the New Testament who's all loving and kind and gentle.

This is the same God and those people who think that God changed between the Old Testament and the New Testament obviously haven't read this verse because when he speaks about hell that's what we understand to be hell. The word there Gehenna which is where the Jews originally sacrificed to Molech their children. Terrible place of shame and when they stopped that practice after the Babylonian captivity they had no other use for the place but to turn it into a rubbish dump and the fires there would burn constantly all the time.

Remember they didn't have ways of dealing with trash as we have today with landfills and things so they would just take the trash out there and burn it but that's also where they would take people to stone them and they would stone them and burn them. He has the power. Now folks here is the answer to the fear of man.

I think we all fear to some degree or the other. Some more and some less. How do I deal with the fear of man? How do I get rid of it? Because clearly the fear of man is not a good thing.

It's going to result in hypocrisy. Why are they being hypocrites? Because they fear what people will say if people knew who they really were. Why did Peter deny Jesus? Because he feared man.

And Jesus is saying no if you fear God the fear of man goes. I love the story of Martin Luther and while there are aspects of Luther's theology that I don't agree with and of his practice but when Luther first presided over the Eucharist, remember he started as a Catholic, he was in a terrible state for days before and at the time when he had to lift the bread because he was so afraid of offending God. He was not a Christian then but he feared God.

And he almost ran away. He almost never served his first communion because of his fear of God. And then years later when he was brought before the council because of what he was teaching, which was contrary to Rome but in line with Scripture, he was asked to give an unequivocal answer, not a padded answer in their language without teeth.

He was to simply give an answer. Does he recant what he has taught, what he has believed concerning grace and salvation through faith and all of those things? He was naturally a timid man and so he said give me 24 hours. And for 24 hours he prayed with the men that he worked with.

And after 24 hours he took the stand and he says, I cannot recant. And to paraphrase his statement, I fear God more than I fear the Pope. Did he fear the Pope? Did the Pope have real power? Yes, the Pope had real power.

The Pope could banish him. The Pope could even have him executed. The Pope could strip him of all of his life's work.

But he says, I fear God more. He was not a bold man. He was a timid man.

I wouldn't call him scared, but pretty close. But when he saw God, his fear of man disappeared. Don't fear man, fear him.

Now here's even better news. Are not two sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. You see now, here again we have these little headings in our Bibles and we read this little section and we say, well that's great.

But what is the context? The context is hypocrisy, persecution, the fear of man, the fear of God, but God cares for the sparrows. So here's the other side, and I've used this expression now the third time this morning, the other side of this coin. On the one side, the fear of God, but on the other side, an understanding of his loving care.

Same God, same coin. Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? The copper coin here is a sixteenth of a penny, sixteenth of a denarius, so sixteenth of a day's wage. It's really nothing.

I was remembering during the night that when I was growing up in South Africa, because we were under British rule, we had pounds, shillings and pennies. And you had a a farthing, a farthing. Not a father, John, a farthing.

And a farthing was a quarter of a penny. Can you imagine? Today people throw pennies in the street. They just throw them away.

Those days we had quarter pennies and we had half pennies. And the quarter penny had two sparrows on it. Referring back to Matthew.

I'm going to come back to Matthew in a moment. When you think about it, what is a quarter penny? And this is a quarter of a quarter penny. It is nothing.

So Matthew says two sparrows are sold for a copper coin, sixteenth of a penny. Luke says five sparrows are sold for two. Now I'm sure you know the answer.

Unfortunately, the theologians don't know the answer. The theologians say, well, one of the two is wrong. No, they're both right, clearly.

And there are theologians who see things the right way. Clearly, if you bought two pennies worth, you get one free bulk discount. The point is they're nothing.

I don't even know if five sparrows can feed a man for a day. I doubt that you can survive on five sparrows. The little bit of meat you can get out of five sparrows.

It's nothing. And again, he's arguing from the lesser to the greater, from the small to the big. Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins and not one of them is forgotten before God? Now, folk, we must believe the Scriptures.

We all say we believe the Bible. And if I asked for a show of hands, there would not be one this morning who would say, I don't believe every word in the Bible. And yet I don't believe that most Christians believe this verse.

The point is not the coins and the sparrows and how many you get for a copper coin. The point is that not one of those sparrows is forgotten before God. How many birds died today? I don't even think the scientists can calculate it.

Millions of birds died all over the world today. And yet my Bible says, and I believe it with all of my heart, that every single one of those birds God knew about, He cares for them. Now, folk, either that is true, or you may as well throw the whole Bible out.

Here's the problem with the Bible, is that if you reject one part, you have to reject the whole. You don't get to pick and choose like some people do. And when the Bible says that every bird is remembered by God, I believe that.

And it's no problem for God. It's a problem for me. I can't remember from one day to the next what I did the previous day.

But God has so much mental power that it's nothing for Him to keep track of every bird. Now here's the point. The very hairs of your head are numbered.

You're going to come back. Do not fear, therefore. You are of more value than many sparrows.

We know the value of a sparrow now. It's a sixteenth of a penny. What is the value of you? Now, setting aside hypocrisy and the fact that we think that we're great, we're not great.

And yet God has placed a value on your life. What has a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? In other words, the whole world with all of its money and its power and its gold and whatever it's got, cannot buy one human soul. And if God then cares for the birds that are sold for a copper coin, how much more does He not care for those who cannot be bought with the whole world? But we're indeed bought, not with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of His Son.

Not because we're worth anything, but because He attached the value to us, just because of His grace. Jesus never died for the sparrows, but He died for you and for me. But He cares for the sparrows.

How much more then does He not care for us? And then in the same vein He says, but the very hairs of your head are numbered. I'm over time, but I'll finish in the next half an hour. The very hairs of your head are numbered.

How many hairs on the head? Well, some of us like Henry don't have too much. And some of us are losing every day. And depending on the color of your skin, apparently, I read up on this this week, depends on the color of your skin, the lighter your skin, the more hair you have.

So if you're light skinned, you can have up to 140,000 hairs. 140,000! Think about that. And He says every one of them is counted.

Numbered means counted. And this morning when I showered, I don't even know how many went down the drain. But some did.

And the Bible says God knew about the hair that went down the drain when I showered this morning. I'm just telling you I do shower in the morning. No, God subtracted the ones that went down the drain this morning from the total, and He knows exactly how many hairs are on my head right now.

And the same for every one of us. And again, the point is that if He keeps track of how many, how many of you keep track of how many hairs on your head? Obviously a ridiculous question. We don't bother about it much until we start losing it.

But even then, we don't count and say, well, 985, 984, 900. But He does. And if He's concerned, if He counts how many hairs are on our heads, does He not know about the things that we struggle with? Does He not know about, particularly in this context, our suffering? Is there anything in your life that He is not intimately aware of? And here it's not that He's aware of it.

Remember when it says that He knows everything, and that everything that is hidden and secret is going to be declared, that's in a negative sense. But this is in a positive sense. So again, He's coming back to the same argument.

That which is small is big, or from the small to the big. So if He knows exactly how many hairs are on our heads, doesn't He know the frustrations that you're dealing with in your life? Doesn't He know the pain you may be dealing with? And clearly in the context, if you are brought to trial for the faith, will He not know every detail of that? The point is that He cares. He takes note.

And I think that sometimes, particularly when things get hard, we live our lives and we say, well, does God really know? Does God really care? And we spoke about the fact that some people live as though God doesn't know when it comes to sinning. But I think that sometimes we think that God doesn't really know when it comes to the hard things in our lives. But He does know.

And He does care. And if He cares about the hairs on your head, does He not care about your eternal destiny? And has He not proven that by sending Jesus to die in your place on the cross? You are of more value than many sparrows. Father, we thank You for Your goodness and grace, Lord.

We are worthless. And yet You loved us and attached a value to us, the value of the blood of Your own precious Son. Lord, as we've covered much ground this morning and we've spoken about hypocrisy, I pray, Lord, that You would help us just to be real with You, to be real with one another.

Lord, and this is not an excuse for us to be uncouth, but Lord, it's a motivation for us to be on the inside who we profess to be on the outside. And Lord, I confess before You that as a preacher, this is my daily challenge, is to live what I preach and to put into practice the very things that I've said this morning. I pray, Lord, that we may be those who are the same on the inside and the outside.

Lord, that the person that our family sees, the person our spouses see, may be the same person You see. Lord, I pray that You would help us to be real. But Lord, also help us to walk in total awareness of Your love and of Your care and Your concern for us.

Lord, that there is nothing about us You don't know. And Lord, it's not that You just know them as a fact, but that the Lord Jesus became human in order that He might sympathize with us in our weaknesses and in our struggles. And so we thank You, Lord, that You know experientially, because You've experienced suffering, You've experienced temptation, You've experienced tiredness, You've experienced pain.

And so You know what it is that we deal with, and You care. And so Lord, I pray that You'd help us to get our perspective right, to have this eternal perspective, to have the God perspective. Not to see ourselves from the way that we want to see ourselves, and Lord, not to see our problems as being insurmountable, but always to be aware of You, knowing that You see everything.

Lord, You see our failures, but You see our struggles. And Lord, in all of these things, You are a faithful high priest, Jesus, who intercedes for us, ever living to make intercession for us. And so Lord, I pray that You'd help us to be real, above all, to be real with You, to confess our weaknesses to You, or that Your strength might be made perfect in our weakness.

And so I pray, Lord, that You'd go with us now, keep us, protect us. Lord, grant that Your Spirit may continue to teach these things and make them real to us. And Lord, if there's things that we've said this morning that are hard to understand, I pray that by Your Spirit, You would break it down into two, and that it may become real in our hearts and in our minds.

I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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