

# OpenTheo

## Fear of Man and Fear of God (Part 1)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the importance of prioritizing listening to God over serving Him. He uses the story of Mary and Martha to illustrate this point, stating that Martha's focus on serving took precedence over listening to Jesus, while Mary's willingness to listen was praised by Jesus. Gregg emphasizes the idea that serving God and listening to Him are not opposing forces but rather go hand in hand. The talk also touches upon the concept of fearing God and not fearing man or material possessions.

### **Transcript**

Verses 38-42, and after we've talked about that, we'll turn to another passage in Luke. We have to cover quite a few verses today, although much of the material has parallels elsewhere. For example, some of the things that we studied in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew have parallels in part of the material we're going to be looking at later in this session.

So, I'm hoping that means we won't have to drag a deep net through it to gather everything out of it. We've talked about it before. We'll try to pass lightly over the material that we've talked about before, although it's important stuff.

But at the end of Luke chapter 10, beginning at verse 38, it says, As they went, he entered a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me.

And Jesus answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her. Now, I don't know why this story is left as vague as it is in some respects. For example, Luke says that Jesus entered a certain village.

Well, I think we can deduce that that village was Bethany, since that was where Mary and Martha presumably lived. We are familiar with them from the story of Lazarus, their brother, dying. I say we're familiar with them from that story, although we haven't

covered that story yet in this particular time through the Gospels, but I'm sure that most of us are familiar with that story.

They lived in Bethany, a few miles outside of Jerusalem, and I don't know whether we should understand this story to have fallen in this particular place chronologically or not. If Jesus was in or near Jerusalem at this time, it would be hard to know for sure, but it doesn't matter because the Gospels do not necessarily profess to put things in their chronological order, but this comes up next in the arrangement of the life of Christ that we're following, which is from Robertson's study. Well, Jesus and his disciples come to Bethany, and apparently they had a regular home that they stayed in there.

It was not their home, but it was that belonging to Mary and Martha, and although not mentioned here, they had a brother named Lazarus who presumably lived with them also. I say presumably, maybe he didn't live with them. Maybe they were just found together at the home after he died because they came to his home.

I don't know. But Mary and Martha are known from other stories in the Gospels. This is a very short story, and it is mainly there to underscore the difference between Martha and Mary.

Martha was one who got busy about serving when there were guests in the house, and that's a very reasonable thing to do, a very hospitable thing to do. And there's nothing wrong with doing that. On the other hand, Mary got distracted by Jesus, and she then became not very useful around the house.

And this bothered Martha, as we can see, and so she asked Jesus to redress the situation and to get Mary involved in the kitchen with Martha. Now, it seems as if Martha had a valid complaint. It's not every day that 13 guests come to stay at your house, and the woman in the kitchen would have an extra workload because of the guests, and Mary would seem to be insensitive to leave her sister to do all the extra serving and just sit around and enjoy the company of Jesus.

And yet Jesus stands up for Mary and says that she's the one making the right choice, not necessarily Martha. Now, I don't think that Jesus had anything against a woman showing hospitality to guests in her home, and for Martha to be cooking as she was and preparing in some situations would have been the right thing. In fact, it might have even been okay for her to be doing that now.

Jesus does not necessarily tell her that preparing a meal is the wrong thing to do. It's possible that she only gets rebuked because she wanted Jesus to rebuke Mary, and Jesus comes to Mary's assistance, to Mary's defense. But from Jesus' words, it looks as if Martha wasn't pleasing to him in what she was doing.

Now, it's not ever made clear exactly why she should not be serving, but you can deduce

it, I suppose. In most cases, it would be the loving and hospitable thing for a woman to devote herself to the fixing of the meal for her guests, but when your guest is Jesus, it's best to find out what he wants first, rather than assuming that you know what Jesus would want and then going about to do it and then complaining if others are not also doing it with you. It's wiser to sit at the feet of Jesus at least long enough to get some guidance from him, some idea of what he prefers, some idea of what his will is.

And I think Martha here is sort of a picture of the average religious person. She loved Jesus, there's no doubt about that, and she no doubt wanted to make the meal the best it could be for him and his friends. In fact, she probably was preparing the best meal she had ever prepared.

Having someone as wonderful as Jesus in the house, she wanted to make it great. She found herself overburdened with the task, and there was another lady in the house who should have been helping, she thought, and wasn't. Now what Mary was doing was listening to Jesus.

We are to suppose, I guess, that Mary was listening closely enough that if Jesus had wanted her to do something other than what she was doing, she would have caught it in something he would have said, he would have told her. But he didn't rebuke her, he didn't tell her to get into the kitchen and help her sister. In fact, if Martha had listened or had asked, Jesus might have said, listen, let's forget about dinner, there's more important things to attend to, like me teaching you about the things of God, you learning from me what I desire, what's important to me.

You remember that when Jesus entered Samaria in John chapter 4, his disciples went into the town to buy food. I believe it is said that he sent them to do so, but it ended up being food for them and not for him. Because when they came back, they found Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman, and when she ran off to get her friends, the disciples offered food to Jesus, and he said, I have food that you don't know about.

And they said, has anyone brought him something to eat? He said, my need is to do the will of my father and to finish his work. In other words, Jesus didn't care half as much about his meal as he did about being about his father's business. In fact, this was even true after he'd fasted for 40 days and Satan tempted him to turn rocks into bread so that he might satisfy his hunger, which had returned at the end of the fast.

Eating at that point was arguably a very essential thing for him to do. It's not always essential for us to eat when we do. We could go a lot longer between meals probably than we often do, but at the point when Jesus was in the wilderness having fasted 40 days, his hunger having returned to him, he was at the point of starvation.

And at that time, Satan said, why don't you turn these rocks into bread? It seems like an innocuous suggestion, a harmless thing to do, nothing immoral about doing such a thing

as that, except that it wasn't necessarily what the father wanted him to do. And Jesus said, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the father's mouth, or out of the mouth of God. In other words, Jesus would not turn rocks into bread, not because there was anything innately wrong about doing so, but that just wasn't what his father was telling him to do.

He didn't just feed himself because it was mealtime. In fact, he didn't even just feed himself because he was starving to death. Neither the coming around of the regular mealtime, nor even starvation, was sufficient cause for him to break his fast or to eat.

He would eat when his father wanted him to eat, no other time. And the only way he would know what his father wanted was by a word proceeding out of the mouth of God. And he had received no such word, therefore he did not succumb to the temptation.

Now, Mary was listening to every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God, or at least out of the mouth of Jesus, who was God in the flesh, speaking the words of God, and she also was not concerned about food. Now, this might seem selfless enough, except that perhaps she would be expected to be involved feeding others, even if she didn't want anything to eat. Perhaps she should have been more hospitable to her guests.

But, on the other hand, her principal guest was Jesus, and listening to his words was the priority, so that she might know exactly what would please him. She apparently did not get the impression, listening to him, that his priorities at that moment were that he be fed or that a meal be prepared for him and his friends. In fact, he preferred what she was doing.

She was listening. She was enthralled with Jesus. She was... It's hard to know what right word to use, because the Bible itself doesn't use words where you simply read between the lines.

And she apparently was captivated by his teaching and could not even think of doing something else. In fact, she probably forgot altogether that anything else was going on in the house, except that Jesus was there. Now, if Jesus had wanted her to prepare a meal, I'm sure Mary would have been glad to do so.

I don't think it's right to blame Mary for being lazy or unthoughtful. It's just that she wanted to do whatever proceeded out of the mouth of God. And Jesus did not ever show himself to be as concerned about eating food as he was about ministering the word of God.

And so she apparently picked that up and felt that he'd be more interested in her listening to what he had to say and learning the things of God from him, than going out and preparing food. Now, Martha could have picked that up too if she'd stayed around

and listened. But she assumed she knew the right thing to do.

Conventional wisdom told her what to do. And after all, everything she was doing in the kitchen was of service to Jesus. She was doing it unto the Lord and to his body, the church.

And in that respect, like I said a moment ago, she's a lot like the basic religious person who assumes they know what the right thing to do is because there's traditional ways of doing things. It's assumed that Christians should do certain things. They should go to church at certain times.

They should have Sunday school classes. They should have choirs in the church. They should take up offerings and promote tithing and so forth.

And a lot of things that people have just picked up by tradition, that they assume God wants to be done, they're very busy about doing. And even those who aren't very traditional can still assume they know what God wants them to do. I'm certainly in danger of this.

Every time I'm invited to do something, my first impulse is to accept. And eventually my schedule gets so full that I can't do everything well. In fact, it could get so full I can't do anything well.

Or even if I do some things well, they may not be the most important things. And I have to reassess continuously and say, well, am I doing this particular ministry that I'm in because God has told me to or simply because there was an opening and someone asked me to do it and I had time free? Sometimes, by doing the thing that seems right, that seems to be the best service to God or to his church, we can end up doing something that isn't really what matters to God that much and neglect the thing that does matter, communion with him, waiting before him, listening for instructions from him. And therefore, worship takes priority over work.

Hearing God takes priority over serving God, although the two go together. It's simply that you must hear God before you can serve him and worship him before you become an acceptable worker. You have to be an acceptable worshiper.

And here is the distinction between Mary and Martha. And this happens all the time in our lives. I suppose that for most of us, the tendency is to be like Martha.

And if we aren't like Martha, we're probably more like what Mary was accused by her sister of being, lazy. I mean, there are people who love to go out and get busy and work hard and those would tend to be tempted to be like Martha, running off ahead of the Lord and doing things that he hasn't really asked to be done or doesn't even care to be done, but which just seem like the right thing to do. It just seems like you see a need and you fill it.

Those who are not like that have an opposite temptation. That's to do nothing, to be unconcerned, to be apathetic and just sit around and let important things go undone. And that's what, of course, Martha was accusing Mary of doing, though Mary was doing neither.

She was doing the right thing. She had chosen the better part, Jesus said. She was pursuing the one thing needful.

Now, Jesus doesn't say what the one thing needed is. He just says there's only one thing needed and that Martha was bothered and worried about many things that were apparently not needed. Well, what was not needed? Well, apparently for her to cook the meal wasn't necessary.

For her to set the table wasn't necessary. For her to clean the house and the kitchen wasn't necessary, at least not on this occasion. Probably was necessary on some occasions, but that wasn't what was needed right now.

The one thing that was needed was to listen to Jesus. The one thing that was needed was to be aware of what was on his heart and to be doing whatever he wanted done. And this is, of course, what Mary was doing.

She had chosen to do just that. And when you don't do that, when you run off ahead and decide you know the religious thing to do, you know the needful service to perform, and you haven't heard from God, but you go anyway, there is the tendency to get worried and nervous and even critical of people that are not joining you in the task. Now, there are times... I don't want to make you feel guilty about doing things that you haven't heard a direct word from God on because many times you won't get a direct word from God such as we might imagine getting, you know, where in the place of prayer you get it like a lightning bolt and you hear the voice of God speaking clearly that you should go up and do such and such a thing.

I'm not saying that you should always wait for that kind of a voice from God or a word from God before you do anything. There's plenty in the Bible that's already said that he wants you to do, and if you're waiting for God to give you some new instructions, you can keep busy doing the things he's already told you to do. But you'll know if you're making the same mistake Martha is by whether you have the same attitude she does.

We had in Bandon at our school one time someone on staff who decided that the school would benefit from a chicken coop. Someone had offered some free chickens to the school, and we didn't have a coop for them, but this brother was handy. He was a very busy kind of guy, loved to serve, and he decided that to get some chickens to lay eggs for the school would be a blessing to the school.

And he even asked at a board meeting or a staff meeting whether that would be okay if

he built a chicken coop and got these chickens and collected the eggs. The rest of the staff felt that was all right if he wanted to do that. So he did.

He built a chicken coop. He built a very lovely and elaborate chicken coop. He didn't just build a box with chicken wire.

He built one with separate compartments that were quite nicely made. But he worked on it for days, and we didn't know at the time, but we later found out because he told us that he resented almost everybody else in the whole school because he had to make the coop himself. He basically said that he was out there slaving and picking at the ground with a pick and building and hammering and loading the materials and stuff, and everybody else was going about their business, not helping him at all.

Now, I can see possibly that there may have been some people who had leisure time that could have helped him, but his attitude, I felt, and we told him so, was quite wrong. If he was doing this unto the Lord, then he should be able to do it with joy, even if he had no help at all. Because serving the Lord is a joyful thing.

If you're doing it begrudgingly, and if you're concerned that no one else is sharing in this joy with you, that's a strange attitude for one who loves the Lord and is doing what they believe God is telling them to do. Jesus said, He that has my commandments and does them, he it is that loves me. And it says in 1 John 5 that this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.

If we love Jesus and we do what he tells us to do, it won't be burdensome, because we'll be doing what he knows, what we know he wants us to do. And if no one else is enjoying it, if nobody else is doing it with us, then all the sadder for them, unless they're also doing what God has called them to do. Of course, the problem in this particular case I'm telling you about was that it was his idea from start to finish to build the coop.

He got permission from the rest of us, who were already quite busy doing other things full time. He happened to have some time on his hands to build the coop, so he did. But there's many people who feel that once they've got a vision for a project, that everybody else ought to have the same vision for the same work.

And Martha was apparently of that opinion. She had a vision for laying out some kind of an impressive meal for her guests, and she felt Mary should have that same vision. I remember sitting in a leadership meeting in a church once, where the directors of the Sunday School Department complained.

I may have told you this before. They were complaining that there weren't enough volunteers to teach all the Sunday School classes in the church. I don't remember how many classes there were, but apparently they'd put out several appeals from the pulpit saying they needed volunteers to man the Sunday School.

And in fact, they even leaned on parents. They said, if you put your children in Sunday School, then you should be on a rotating roster to work at a Sunday School. Well, we never put our kids in Sunday School, and therefore we never volunteered to help at Sunday School either.

We were never sure that Sunday School was necessary in a church. Still don't believe necessarily it is. But I remember when they were groaning and complaining, we heard them do this week after week, and at one particular leadership meeting, I just proffered the suggestion.

It seemed reasonable to me. Well, you know, if God isn't putting it on the heart of more people to run the Sunday School, or as many as are needed to run it, maybe God doesn't want us to have a Sunday School. Of course, I'm a little more liberated from the traditional ideas about Sunday School than some people are, and I don't even, you know, like I said, when there is a Sunday School, we don't use it, so maybe I wasn't considered an objective witness as to whether God wanted us to have a Sunday School or not.

But it just seemed natural to me, even if my children were in Sunday School, that if God was not providing the people to do the work, if there weren't people gladly stepping forward and sensing that this is what God was calling them to do, then either those who were called to do it should do it themselves, maybe reorganize the Sunday School in such a way so there's fewer classes and they can do it themselves, or maybe reconsider that perhaps God isn't in it. Maybe God doesn't care that there's a Sunday School in this church. Churches didn't have Sunday Schools throughout history.

I mean, that came up just about a century or so ago, for the first time, and yet now, you know, the church isn't a church without it. But that's just what I'm saying, is people assume that they know what a church ought to have. They know what kind of service they ought to perform.

They assume that certain things are necessary, and they get worried and troubled about many things, and many times, sadly, have lost sight of the one thing needful, like, does God want this? Has God said anything about this? Has God given any instructions that we should have a Sunday School at this time? So these are the... This problem that Martha has seems to be very, very, very... pretty much a universal temptation for everybody. You do the thing that you think is good, but if you're doing it with a religious spirit, rather than out of love for God and awareness that you're doing His will, you will be resentful of people who aren't helping you when the job gets loaded, when you find yourself taking on every task that the church has to be done, and you're just the kind of person that always volunteers. I remember when I had first entered the ministry, when I was just... I suppose I was about 17 at this time.

There was an older guy in ministry that was something of a mentor for me, and I was young enough that I was unknown in the ministry, and I was just looking for



opportunities to serve anywhere I could. And so I was in a Christian band. We were playing in coffeehouses quite a bit, and then I was also drawing tracks for another Christian organization, two tracks a week, and put out about 50, 40 of them for them, I guess.

And I was teaching Bible studies on high school campuses at lunchtime and at coffeehouses in the evenings and stuff, and I was keeping real busy, which I liked to do, and I was young enough, I wasn't getting worn out by it yet. And I remember talking to this older fellow who was a mentor in the ministry to me of sorts. He said, you know, Steve, the body of Christ has only a certain small percentage of its members that really want to work hard.

And when they find somebody who's willing to be a pack mule, they'll load just about everything, all available work on them, you know. And he warned me not to take on everything that would come my way. Well, frankly, I never had any problem when I was single taking everything that came my way.

I wanted to keep busy. I had nothing else I wanted to do, so I did take everything and very seldom had occasion to regret it. But I can see that set of pattern in my life that I have to be careful about taking on commitments outside of the things that God has called me to.

I know He's called me to teach the school, and there's a few other things I feel strongly He's called me to do, but there's quite a few other things that are kind of hanging out there as possibilities and invitations to do things that I just, I really have to weigh them and say, is this what God wants? And so do you if you're one of those pack horse, pack mule type Christians, you know, that just looking for something to do for Jesus. There's plenty to do out there, and the laborers are few, Jesus said. And the harvest is plentiful.

But be careful that you don't go running off to some area of the harvest where you haven't received any instructions from the Lord of the harvest to go. And I think there is a danger of that in some cases. There are, of course, Christians who get, and you've heard me talk about this before, but it's so appropriate in view of what we're talking about in this story.

I'll bring it up again, that many people who've seen the Keith Green Memorial Concerts decide that, you know, they ought to be on the mission field this time next week. Even if they've never felt a call before, they feel guilty about staying in America because there's one worker in America for every 245 people, and, you know, one Christian in the Muslim world for every 5 million people or something like that, you know. So, I mean, obviously it's wrong to be here in America.

If you're a Christian, you should be going somewhere else. And there's many people who've gotten that impression. Danny Lehman told me that while at the YWAM base that

he leads, there are surges and dips in attendance at their schools.

For instance, I'm going to go teach a DTS in Honolulu next month that has seven students in it. Small. But I've also taught DTS at that same base.

I had 50. And Danny told me the largest surge of students enrolling to enter YWAM was in those months that the Keith Green Memorial Concerts were going around the country because people would just get all turned on for missions and they'd rush off to go through a DTS, some of whom didn't remain on the mission field and shouldn't have. Some of them, in fact, shouldn't have even gone on the mission field short term, as it turns out, because they just weren't going for the right motives.

They were going by guilt. It was a religious activity that someone had imposed upon them by a guilt trip and they just didn't belong there. No doubt some people were truly called to the mission field through those concerts.

I don't deny that. But it is common enough for people to see a need and say, well, Lord, here am I. I'll send me, you know, instead of waiting for God to send you. And that's what Martha apparently had done.

Now Mary, on the other hand, had chosen the good part, the good thing to do. The one thing needed was to listen to Jesus. Obviously, if Jesus had something for her to do, he would have told her and she would have done it.

But he said what she has chosen will not be taken from her. If you're worried and troubled about many things, and yet the things you're busy about and worried about are the things of God, ministry things, service to others, then you might step back and take a look and say, well, am I critical of people who aren't doing this with me? Am I critical? Am I worried about the outcome of things? Am I troubled by all this? Is this a burden to me? If that's true, then maybe you haven't done the one thing needed and that's to just wait on God and listen to Jesus and see if he has that for you to do or not. You might want to start cutting back on some things.

Martha, I presume, did after this. Let's turn over to Luke chapter 12 now. We'll skip chapter 11 because in the chronological arrangement of Robertson's Harmony, which is what we're following, the events of chapter 11 happen later.

We come now to chapter 12, and it's basically just a chapter full of teaching. Not much movement in the story, just teachings of Jesus on a variety of things. And at first glance, it may look like the things Jesus teaches about are really miscellaneous, but in fact, there is a predominant theme, it would appear, through the entire teaching.

Let me read to you. Perhaps I'll even read the whole chapter, and then we'll go back and comment on parts that we have not previously encountered in the Sermon on the Mount or elsewhere. Luke 12, 1. In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people

had gathered together so that they trampled one another, he began to say to the 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 the inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetop. And I say to you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more they can do, but I will show you whom you should 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 numbered. Do not fear, therefore, for you are of more value than many sparrows.

Also I say to you, whoever confesses me before men, him, the Son of Man, also 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, it 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 should answer or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. Then one from the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. But he said to him, Man, who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you? And he said to them, Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.

Then he spoke a parable to them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do since I have no room to store my crops? So he said, I will do this. I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, You fool, this night your soul will be required of you.

Then whose will those things be which you have provided? So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. And he said to his disciples, Therefore I say to you, Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.

Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn, and God feeds them. How much more value are you than the birds? And which of

you, by worrying, can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin, and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind, for all these things the nations of the world seek after. And your Father knows that you need these things, but seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Sell what you have, and give all. Provide yourselves money bags, which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning, and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat and will come and serve them.

And if he should come in the second watch or come in the third watch and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Then Peter said to him, Lord, do you speak this parable only to us or to all people? And the Lord said, who then is that faithful and wise servant, steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, my master is delaying his coming and begins to beat the men's servants and maid's servants and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour when he is not aware and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

And that servant who knew his master's will and did not prepare himself or do according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know yet committed things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required.

And to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more. I came to send

fire on the earth and how I wish it were already kindled. But I have a baptism to be baptized with.

And how distressed I am till it is accomplished. Do you suppose that I came to give peace on the earth? I tell you not at all, but rather division. For from now on, five in one house will be divided three against two and two against three.

Father will be divided against son and son against father. Mother against daughter and daughter against mother. Mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Then he also said to the multitude, When you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say a shower is coming. And so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, There will be hot weather.

And there is. Hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky and of the earth. But how is it you do not discern this time? Yes, and why even of yourselves do you not judge what is right? When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.

I tell you, you shall not depart from there until you have paid the very last mite. Now, one reason I read the whole thing is so that you could see how much of the material is familiar to you already. We have observed that in Matthew's gospel, which this is not, Matthew has arranged the teachings of Jesus given on various occasions.

into topical arrangements. One of those topical arrangements is the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 through 7. Some of the material in the Sermon on the Mount is taken from the material in these chapters, in this chapter. For example, the teaching about worrying here in verses 22 through 31 is found in Matthew chapter 6 in the Sermon on the Mount.

Likewise, these last couple of verses, verses 58 and 59, have their parallel in Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount. But in addition to that, some of the things in this chapter have their parallel in what Matthew has as the missionary discourse of Matthew 10. In Matthew 10, we have another composite discourse of Jesus, which Matthew gives on the occasion of his sending out the twelve.

But as we pointed out when we studied that before, only the very first part of that discourse really would be relevant to the sending out of that short mission. Much of that chapter is relevant to their activities after the ascension of Christ in the book of Acts. Their ministry among the Gentiles, standing before kings and rulers, some of them being put to death, and so forth.

I mean, none of that happened on the short-term mission that he was sending them out

on in Matthew 10. And so we see that Matthew has gathered data from other places, among them this chapter. Because where Jesus says, don't fear those who can kill the body and can do no more, here in verses 4 through 7, but fear God, this is found in the missionary discourse in Matthew 10.

Likewise, there are some other things here that are from that particular discourse. Like verses 49 through 53 here. Especially, I shouldn't say 49, but 51 through 53.

These verses are also picked up in Matthew 10 in the missionary discourse. Then there's the material in this chapter that's picked up by Matthew in the Olivet Discourse. The Olivet Discourse in Matthew is chapters 24 and 25.

Now, Matthew makes the Olivet Discourse at least a chapter longer than Luke or Mark do. You know that the Olivet Discourse in Mark is Mark chapter 13 and in Luke is Luke 21. But in Matthew, it's two chapters long, two long chapters.

In fact, Matthew 24 by itself combines the material from two of Luke's chapters, Luke 17 and Luke 21. And then, Matthew adds another chapter of three long parables about the second coming of Christ, apparently. Now, Matthew, therefore, has gathered information from other sources that were not part of the original Olivet Discourse, but which Jesus gave on other occasions.

And because Matthew wished to arrange it topically, brought them into the Olivet Discourse as he presented it. Much of that, for instance, is in Luke 17. More still is found in Luke 21.

But some of it is here in this passage. Especially from verse 35 through verse 46. Verses 35 through 46 have almost exact parallels in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew, but not in Luke because Luke has it here instead.

But Matthew chapter 24, near the end of that chapter, has all of this material. In fact, the parable of the ten virgins, which is found in Matthew 25, makes sort of the same points as do the opening verses here, verses 35 through 38, when it says, have your lamps burning, in verse 35, and wait like people who are waiting for the Master. And when the Master comes, blessed are they who are watching because then they will open the door to him and they'll be blessed and so forth.

This is very much like the imagery of the ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom with their lamps burning, although some of them ran out of oil, and they were there to welcome the bridegroom into the house. So there is a parallel in thought here. So what I'm saying is, although this is a very long chapter, and were we required to comment on every verse, it would take more time than we have available, yet we've commented on much of it in other places, in the Sermon on the Mount, in the Missionary Discourse of Matthew 10, and also in the Olivet Discourse, which we've talked about in our topical studies at

the beginning of the year.

Okay. That means that we can talk about the parts here that aren't in those other places, and I may tie in some of the stuff that we've talked about before to show how it ties into the unique material here. I said that at first glance this looks like a teaching on a miscellany of topics, but actually there seems to be one overriding subject, and that would seem to be summarized in verses 4 through 7, or more particularly 4 and 5. Namely, that you should not fear man, but you should fear God.

Very simple. You should not fear man, but you should fear God. Now, we can see that in almost all the teachings here.

Not only not fear man, but don't fear anything that can just hurt your body. Let's put it that way, because he also talks about not worrying about finances. People do worry about poverty, and that's not exactly the same thing as the fear of man, unless it really is fear of their creditors, you know, coming after them if they don't have money, which is fear of man, I suppose, too.

But let's just say people do fear that they won't have enough to sustain their lives. And therefore, Jesus is saying, don't fear anything that can have no eternal impact on you. Don't fear any of those things that can only hurt your body, whether it be shortages of food and clothing, whether it be men who are against you, even those of your own family who rise up against you, even standing before magistrates and so forth, those are things, all in this chapter, that could easily be seen as things that people fear, the fear of man or the fear of bodily harm.

But much in the chapter is about the need to fear God, and that is part of his teaching there, too, verse 5, I'll show you whom you should fear. Fear him who, after he is killed, has no power, excuse me, has power to cast him to hell. Yes, I say to you, fear him.

This is the emphasis of the chapter, is fear God. Now, fearing God makes it no longer necessary to fear man. I might somewhat artificially connect this to the story of Mary and Martha that we were talking about a moment ago, because Martha would be a good example of someone who is operating in the fear of man.

That is, she would never wish to neglect any of those duties that man considered to be the traditional duties of hospitality. She could never show her face in town again if it was ever said that she had gas in her home and she didn't prepare a meal. And she didn't show them hospitality in the Middle East as well as the Orient.

Hospitality is a very important thing. It's a sacred duty. And yet it's not imposed by God upon these people.

It's basically the custom. It's the tradition. It's the fact that people would speak evil of you if you didn't show traditional hospitality.

Martha was operating not in love of Jesus, but in fear of man. And that's why she was upset about it and worried and troubled. Worry is a form of fear.

And yet Mary was clearly not at all experiencing the fear of man because she was entirely unmindful of those things which man would impose on her. And she was even getting criticism from her own sister. But as near as we can tell, her sister's disapproval or anybody else's disapproval for that matter didn't matter to her.

She just wanted to hear what Jesus had to say and do what he wanted. Therefore we see the distinction between the fear of man and the fear of God even in that story we just studied at the end of Luke chapter 10. Now we have it more in the form of various teachings.

And as I say, we won't have to speak in detail about all of these because we have before. But let's go through the chapter and at least try to sort out how each portion is contributing to this thought. First of all, let me just say it's quite clear, I hope, that beginning at verse 35, he talks mainly about apparently his second coming and the need to be diligent in service to him for fear of being caught by him not doing what he wants you to do.

This is a good incentive to the fear of God is that you may be caught by surprise if Jesus comes and doesn't find you doing the thing he's appointed you to do. You should be motivated by this desire to be found doing the right thing in the sight of God. And that's what most of the second half of the chapter is about.

But in the beginning there's some of the fear of God enjoined too, including the first verse. 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 the inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. Now, the people were coming in great numbers, even trampling upon each other. There's occasions, we hear of it, for instance, sometimes at rock concerts, where the crowd is in such a frenzy they trample each other to death.

I don't know whether the frenzy was quite that great, but it does say they began to trample on one another, or at least were in danger of doing so. Yet Jesus didn't say to his disciples, Beware of getting trampled on by the crowd. He said, Beware of being like the scribes and Pharisees, hypocritical.

Why? The hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees was far more threatening in the eternal scheme of things than physical harm that could come to them, even from the dangers of



being in a frenzied crowd, that were about to trample on each other. He didn't say, Now watch out for the crowd. Watch out for those feet.

Don't get yourself stepped on here. But he said, Watch out for hypocrisy. Watch your spirit.

Pay attention to what's going on in your spirit. Now, hypocrisy takes many forms, of course. Hypocrisy means play-acting.

And hypocrisy is found in circles outside of religious circles, too. It is not only religious people who practice hypocrisy. Virtually everybody puts on airs in some society or other, whether it's someone boasting of exploits he's never done down at the bar room, or whether it's a person being on good behavior when they're dating, somebody that they hope to impress and not showing their uglier side, or whatever.

Or the fact that the person would be shouting and screaming at their kids, and the phone rings, and they answer sweetly, Hello? And, you know, they've just been screaming their lungs out at their kids. I mean, hypocrisy is all over the place. It's not just found among religious types.

It's just religious people who are most often accused of it. And perhaps rightly so, not because religious people do it more, but because it's more inexcusable when they do. Religious people are presumably living their lives to please God.

Therefore, since God sees them at all times, one would think it totally inappropriate for them to behave differently when people aren't looking than they act when people are looking. To put on airs when there are people around, when in fact they show themselves to be something else in private where God can see them anyway. It's particularly inappropriate for people who profess to be living their lives before God, in the fear of God, to cater to the fear of man so much as to be a hypocrite.

And that's what hypocrisy is. It's the fear of man. You don't want the person you answer the phone on the other end to hear the way you talk to your kids.

Who knows? Maybe they'll call the CSD and have you reported for mental cruelty to your children. You don't want the girl you're dating or the guy you're dating to see what you're really like for fear of rejection. By the way, I'm not saying that dating is a good thing.

I'm not really favorable for that type of courting, but the point is it's the way people act that we're talking about. The fear of man. The fear of rejection by man.

The fear of repercussions from man. That is inappropriate. Hypocrisy is the fear of man expressed in behavior.