

The Gospel According to  
**Luke**

**“The Sheep Whisperer”**  
Chapter 12:1-12

Introduction

First Century synagogues did not have electronic sound systems, but they did have a loudspeaker system. It was a *living loudspeaker*. Allow me to explain.

The sermon was given in the synagogue each Sabbath and on festivals by a man called the *Darshan*. To show his respect for God's Word, the Darshan did not speak in a loud voice. He communicated his words in a low voice or whisper to another man, called the *Amora*. The Amora then broadcast the sermon to the congregation – acting as a living loudspeaker system.<sup>1</sup>

This living loudspeaker system is the background of Jesus' comments to His disciples. When Jesus said, **what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops**, His disciples would have thought of the whispers of the Darshan being broadcast by the Amora.

What I'm suggesting is a little clearer in a parallel passage from the Gospel of Matthew. I'll read from chapter ten; listen to the words of Jesus, and note the similarities with the Gospel of Luke:

**Matthew 10:17** ...beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.

**Matthew 10:18** You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

**Matthew 10:19** But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak...

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.jtsa.edu/davidson/melton/bestof/darshan.shtml> Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education web article. (See also John MacArthur's commentary at Matthew Ten).

Matthew 10:26 ...Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

Matthew 10:27 “Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.

Jesus was giving His disciples an illustration. He would be their Darshan, whispering to them what to say through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They were His Amora – broadcasting His message wherever they went.

These verses seemed a little harsh at first – as if Jesus was telling you that you are no better than a Pharisee, and that He’s going to expose your hypocrisy for all the world to see.

*Not at all!* These verses are hopeful – Jesus is going to whisper His Word and His words to you, to strengthen you as His witness in a hostile world.

We’ll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Jesus Whispers In Your Ear To Prepare You As His Witness, and #2 Jesus Whispers In Your Ear When You Present His Witness.

#1 Jesus Whispers In Your Ear  
To Prepare You As His Witness  
(v1-7)

I think *The Horse Whisperer* came first – at least in our popular culture. It was a book, made into a movie, about a guy who could make connections with disturbed horses. After that, a number of others began to use the phrase to describe their training techniques:

1. There is a dog whisperer.
2. There is a bird whisperer.
3. There is even a series of parenting books called *Secrets of The Baby Whisperer*.

**Jesus preceded all of them!** We could respectfully call Him *The Sheep Whisperer*. He once said, **My sheep hear My voice** (John 10:27). Believers are His sheep, and we hear the voice of our Shepherd.

This idea of whispering, borrowed from the synagogue service, gives Jesus' comments a personal, intimate quality. A whisper is a gentle, loving communication between you and the Lord.

Jesus wanted to encourage His disciples – not bust them for their secret hypocrisy. Let's see His encouragement.

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 His disciples first *of all*, "**Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.**"

In the midst of an innumerable multitude of people, Jesus was concerned for His disciples first of all. **You** are first of all, first and foremost, the one Jesus cares for.

His care is not restricted to believers. Believers are in a world in which there are an innumerable multitude of people who need to hear about Jesus. The Lord wants to reach them through you.

Jesus whispers to you about His care for you, and His concern for the lost.

Jesus whispered a warning about the **Pharisees**. He had just been exposing the Pharisees as men who looked good outside, but were corrupt and perverse inside. They had a formal religion, but no relationship with God.

In chapter eleven, Jesus compared the Pharisees to graves. Outside, they were well-kept and manicured; but inside, a grave is filled with death and decay. Jesus gave two more illustrations that say the same thing:

1. **Leaven** is the word for yeast. You can't see the yeast. Yeast works inside the dough – corrupting and rotting it so it will rise and swell.
2. **Hypocrisy** is a word that means *to wear a mask*. Actors on a stage would wear a mask to play their character. Once again, there was an outward show, while what was inside was hidden.

It would not remain hidden:

Luke 12:2 For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.

God knows every heart. Eventually, every heart will be revealed. He knows if you have religion, or relationship. The **Pharisees** were offering the death, the **leaven**, the **hypocrisy**, of religion. Jesus' disciples – including you and I – witness to the life-giving power of a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. You can therefore expect to experience conflict and confrontation. Jesus' first whisper is a warning that you are in for some trouble from the people who promote religion.

I suggest to you that the verses that follow are an encouragement that the Sheep Whisperer will stand by you, to empower your witness in a hostile world.

Luke 12:3 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.

Typically we read this and understand that hypocrisy exists and will be revealed. That's true – *but that is not what Jesus means here*. Again, I remind you of the parallel passage, where Jesus said, **Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops**. Jesus was like a Darshan, whispering His Word to the Amora. Then, those who were His Amora would themselves go forth preaching the Word. They would (in a sense) become Darshan to others, through their witness, who would then spread the Word.

Jesus was giving a picture of the broadcasting of God's Word, person-to-person, through the centuries. Think of it: Without modern technology, or electronics, the Gospel has indeed spread just that way, as men and women repeat the whispers of Jesus to others, and so-on and so-on.

The spreading of the Gospel would bring conflict and confrontation. It would bring persecution. Some would, and still will, be called upon to be martyred.

Luke 12:4 “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.

Luke 12:5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!

*It must be frustrating for persecutors!* The worst they can do is kill believers. But believers look forward, past martyrdom, to entering heaven! Read the story of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, in the Book of Acts. While the stones were pelting his body, he was praying for his persecutors, seeing a vision of heaven opening for him, and Jesus ready to receive him!

Have you ever seen a movie where the hero is hopelessly outnumbered and overwhelmed, but he looks at his adversaries and gives them one last chance to surrender? It’s a good picture of your Christian witness when persecuted.

The ones who should fear are the persecutors! Unless they receive the witness of those they murder, they will be lost forever – **cast into hell**.

Think of these next words as if you are the one facing persecution, about to be killed in some heinous way, and Jesus is whispering in your ear:

Luke 12:6 “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God.

Luke 12:7 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

While the stones are pelting you; while the fire is licking at you; as the executioner’s axe is falling; Jesus is reaffirming His love for you. **You** are the reason that God took on human flesh. **You** are the person Jesus died for, to give eternal life. God cares for every **sparrow**. How much more does He care for you? He knows you so intimately that *He keeps an inventory of your hairs!*

Your persecution is in His plan, for you to draw even closer to Him by sharing in the fellowship of His sufferings.

It's not just those who are about to be martyred who experience the whispers of Jesus. Every moment of your life, after you become a Christian, Jesus is whispering in your ear, to reaffirm His love. He promised you that, once He ascended into heaven, He would send the Holy Spirit, to be your comforter and constant companion. His still, small voice is the whisper of your Lord and Savior. Listen *for* it; listen *to* it.

#2 Jesus Whispers In Your Ear  
When You Present His Witness  
(v8-12)

These next verses make the most sense if you keep them in our context. Jesus was telling His disciples they would go forth witnessing, but meet with persecution. Why preach to persecutors? Why risk martyrdom?

**Because, unless they believe, the persecutors will be lost, in hell, for all eternity.** These next verses encourage you to witness, despite the conflict, despite the confrontation, out of compassion for those who are perishing.

Let me put it this way: These verses are not about you somehow blaspheming the Holy Spirit and forfeiting your salvation. They are about the unsaved, those you witness to, who go on rejecting the Gospel. It is the unbeliever who risks eventually blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Let's read verses eleven and twelve first; they set the scene Jesus was describing.

Luke 12:11 "Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say.

Luke 12:12 For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

The disciples would be dragged before the religious leaders and questioned about their preaching, and the power behind it. In those moments, **in that very hour** of need, they would be taught what to say.

**The Holy Spirit**, Who lives within every believer, would whisper the Word and words of Jesus to them.

The Book of Acts is filled with proofs of this promise! We already mentioned Stephen, the first martyr. Preceding his death, he gave an incredible spontaneous sermon. Another time, when Peter and John had been taken into custody for healing the lame man at the Temple Gate, Peter gave a masterful sermon. It was so full of God that the Jewish leaders did not know what to do! Their reaction was recorded in Acts 4:13,

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

By the way, this is *not* an excuse to be unprepared as a teacher of God's Word. It is not more spiritual to be spontaneous. If you are taken into custody; or spontaneously called upon to give a witness; then you will be given the words to say. If you are called upon to teach, and you have time to prepare, *then you'd better study!*

That's the scene Jesus was describing: A confrontation with religious authorities because of the witness given by the disciples. Now verses eight, nine, and ten will make better sense.

Luke 12:8 **“Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God.**

Luke 12:9 **But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.**

I don't think Jesus was warning His disciples about forfeiting their salvation. I think He was reminding them of the consequences if their persecutors rejected their witness. A disciple is witnessing to hostile unbelievers, using empowered words that are whispered to him or her by the Holy Spirit. If the persecutor will believe and **confess** Jesus **before men**, Jesus will save him! If the persecutor will not believe, then he is denying Jesus, and will remain lost.

Jesus then said,

Luke 12:10 “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.

Again, it is the persecutor who is in view. The very nature of the scene implies that the persecutor is **against the Son of Man**.

In the Book of Acts, after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, the Jewish authorities tried to silence and stifle the witness of the apostles and disciples. They spoke **against** Jesus. Still, they were repeatedly offered salvation – both as individuals, and as a nation. There came a point, however, where they had finally and fully rejected the witness God provided them. At the end of the Book of Acts, you read,

Acts 28:24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

Acts 28:25 So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers,

Acts 28:26 saying,

*‘Go to this people and say: “Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive;*

*Acts 28:27 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.”’*

Acts 28:28 “Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!”

On a national level, the Jewish leaders had fully and finally rejected the witness of the apostles and disciples of Jesus. Individual Jews could still be saved, as well as Gentiles. But the nation as a whole was headed into a time of judgment that continues to the present day.

The religious leaders, the persecutors of Jesus and His followers, had done more than **speak... against the Son of Man**. They had **blasphemed against the Holy Spirit**.

Every sin can be forgiven. As Dennis Agajanian is fond of reminding you, “Jesus is a greater Savior than you are a sinner.” This blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is fully and finally rejecting Jesus



as your Lord and Savior. Refusing the forgiveness of your sins is the sin that cannot be forgiven!

If you refuse the forgiveness of your sins; if you reject Jesus as your Savior; and you die in your sins; then you have rejected the witness given to you by those empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit – to die in your sins, denying His witness of your need for salvation, and God’s providing salvation by grace through faith in Jesus.

Let me put it another way: **Believers cannot commit the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit because it involves unbelief!**

These verses are to remind believers of the high stakes involved in their witness before hostile persecutors. Their persecutors may have the power and authority on earth to arrest, imprison, and kill; but they risk blaspheming the Holy Spirit and spending eternity in **hell**. What they might do to you pales in comparison to what will happen to them.

You and I are not being dragged before magistrates and questioned about our faith in Jesus. *At least, not yet!* You and I are sometimes questioned about the Lord. Even though the stakes for us are not as high, the stakes for unbelievers remain just as serious. More-and-more we ought to believe that Jesus will whisper to us, giving us words to say, to share the joy and peace and power of a relationship with Him.

Conclusion

*Jesus is not as mean as we sometimes think!* I say that with all due respect. We read these verses as if Jesus can hardly wait to deny us in heaven because of some fault or failing on our part here on earth. We read these verses as if the Lord is testing each word with His blasphemy-meter.

Instead, He is our Shepherd; we are His sheep. He is the Sheep Whisperer, the one who knows us intimately, who makes a spiritual connection with us, who leads us and guides us into all things good and glorious, if we are tuned to His voice.