



“Going Public”  
 Luke 12:8-12

**Idea:** The Spirit of God leads and empowers believers to go public in their faith.

**Intro:** We hear a lot about identity today. It is a familiar concept in the culture of the present world. We might define identity simply as “the fact of being who or what a person is.” In other words, it is the idea of what distinguishes the individual. Many times, the thing or things that best identify who a person is are on full display. You can see them on the back glass of their car or on their license plate. For example, runners have a 13.1 or 26.2 decal. Mothers have one that displays the members of the family. Rednecks have the brand of their boat or bow in the back window (Skeeter/Matthews). Political junkies have a slogan about their favorite or least favorite politician. Those who have experienced a tragic loss have an epitaph for their loved one. Christians often will have a cross or local church sticker. Thankfully, the decals are easier to decipher than the vanity plates, but I do enjoy the challenge of breaking the code while setting at a redlight. One of the plates that I often see around here reads “MOM BOD.” Now, I know what it means, but what I do not know is whether this mom is embracing it or fighting against it. Regardless, she is public about it as are everyone else who displays some sort of decal or vanity plate.

Speaking of going public, in 1999 President Bill Clinton declared June to be Gay and Lesbian Pride Month. Therefore, for the last twenty-four years, those who identify in this way and those who support them display rainbow flags as a symbol of this identity throughout the month of June. Obviously, there is much we might say from a biblical standpoint about this display, but my point in bringing it up is to highlight the way in which this community has unashamedly gone public with their identity.

On this Sunday morning, I want you to think about what it is that best identifies you. If someone were to describe who you are, what would they say? What has this individual gleaned from the words that fill your conversations? What has he or she gleaned from the items you spend your money on? What has been gleaned from the events filling your calendar? And what has this individual gleaned from the priorities of your life? What is it that best identifies you?

As we have seen in our journey through Luke’s Gospel, Jesus consistently called His disciples to prioritize their lives around Him and His mission. He said in Luke 9:23, *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”* In chapter 12, the disciples were in danger of compromising their faith due to the growing crowds and the increasing threat of the religious leaders. As more and more people began to come out and see and hear from Jesus, the disciples faced the temptation either to gain popularity by pleasing the crowds or avoid trouble by pleasing the scribes and Pharisees. Whichever ditch they fell into, they would be hypocritical in their faith, claiming to believe one thing but displaying something much different. For this reason, Jesus called the disciples to possess a healthy fear, which is fearing God over and above men. He

called them to prioritize Him by going public with their faith. This ranking is exactly what we see in the passage we are studying today.

Read Luke 12:8-12.

**Inquiry:** The Lord Jesus makes it very clear here how important it is that He is prioritized over and above anything else. He issued two warnings to urge this prioritization. First, He warned about confessing one's faith before men. The one who does so will be acknowledged by Him before the angels of heaven, but the one who refuses to do so will be denied before the angels. The second warning was about blasphemy. What is blasphemy? It is the act or offense of speaking sacrilegiously against God or sacred things. Recently, we have seen in the news the blasphemy coming from the group known as the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. These men dress in drag and perform lewd acts in front of Christian symbols in an attempt to satirize their moral agenda. Many news anchors have tried to describe what this group is doing, but in my opinion, nothing describes it better than blasphemy.

In verse ten, Jesus makes it clear that blaspheming Him is a forgivable sin, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not forgivable. Why does Jesus make this distinction? Thankfully, we know from both Matthew and Mark as well as Luke's earlier passage that Jesus made this declaration after the scribes and Pharisees had attributed His cures to Beelzebul, the prince of devils (Matt 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29; Luke 11:14-26). In other words, they attributed the mighty work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, and Jesus said there is no forgiveness for this.

Jesus is not saying that blasphemy against Him is no big deal. It is sin, and sin condemns one before God. However, the sin of blasphemy against Jesus can be forgiven. When we think about this, we realize that many, if not all, people before coming to faith in Christ were blasphemers. They denied the identity and atoning sacrifice of Christ, but upon the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, they believed the gospel, repented of sin, and were redeemed. We see this in the life of the Apostle Paul who refused to believe on Jesus until His Damascus Road experience (Acts 9). Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is done when one attributes His work and witness to Satan, and this is damnable. This blasphemy is not so much a matter of blasphemous words as it is a conscious, persistent, and wicked rejection of the Spirit's witness. It is the setting of one's mind against the Spirit of God.

Jesus offered these warnings to those who professed to follow Him. They were meant to be a sobering shock to the hearts of those who were tempted to tone down their confession in hopes of escaping the impending trouble. Rather than living out one's faith in the closet, believers and followers of Jesus Christ are to be out front and public in the confession and witness. We discover in these verses that the Spirit of God leads and empowers believers to go public in their faith. Therefore, there are two things we need to do.

### **1. Follow the Spirit's leadership in your public profession of faith.**

Read Luke 12:8-9.

There is a clear call for a person who hears and believes the gospel for salvation to make his or her decision to follow Christ public. This call was on full display when Jesus called the twelve disciples to follow Him. James, John, Simon, and Andrew were all fishermen whom Jesus called to lay down their nets to follow Him (Luke 5:11). Something similar was said to Levi (Matthew) the tax collector. On that day, he walked out of the tax booth, leaving everything behind to follow Jesus (Luke 5:28). There was no denying that these men were followers of Jesus because they publicly altered their lives to follow Him.

The New Testament precedent for this public profession of faith is seen in the act of baptism. When a person who has heard and believed the gospel message for salvation is baptized, he or she is bearing

witness before a watching world that Jesus is Lord of their life. In the early church and in most places around the world today, baptism was and is done in the open air. People are baptized in the public for all to see. Therefore, by being baptized they are identifying with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. By doing so, they are declaring that they no longer identify with their previous belief system. For example, the Hindus that we and our partners in South Asia lead to faith in Christ are declaring in baptism that Jesus is now Lord of their lives. They are no longer Hindu but Christian. Their baptisms are performed in the rivers and lakes in front of their community members; therefore, there is no hiding their commitment to follow Jesus. It is a public profession of faith, and they are led to follow Jesus through the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

Today, Jesus' words in this passage call us to follow the Spirit's leading to be public in our profession of faith. There are three things involved:

1) Sharing your decision

In Acts 2, we read that at Pentecost when Peter preached the gospel, those who heard him "*were cut to the heart*" and wanted to know how they should respond. Peter told them they must repent of their sin and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The people that day received Peter's instruction. They responded affirmatively with a public confession of their sins and belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

While we are not specifically told just how this scene played out, it is not a stretch to imagine the people saying, "I believe in Jesus. He is Messiah. Therefore, I turn from my sin, my self, and my religion and I turn to Him as Lord and Savior. This same public profession is one way that we need to follow the Spirit's leading in our lives. It is why we offer a time for responding to the gospel each Sunday during our services. Have you shared your decision to follow Jesus with others? If not, then why not do so today?"

2) Baptism

In Acts 2, those who responded to Peter's preaching of the gospel were baptized. Again, in doing so, they were publicly identifying with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. They were also breaking their ties with the Jewish faith. Judaism was part of their old life, but now as Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "*the old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*"

Baptism is not a mode of salvation. You are not saved by being baptized. Baptism is a word picture of your salvation. It is a water sermon declaring your salvation. It is a beautiful way for you to declare, "I am with Jesus and proud of it."

Have you been baptized? If not, then why not make the decision to follow Jesus in baptism today?

3) Gospel Conversations

Paul continues his explanation of this new life in Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 by declaring that believers must engage in gospel conversations with others. He says, "*we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" You see, acknowledging Jesus before others involves us telling others how He has changed our lives and can do the same for them. It is calling men, women, and children to repentance and faith in Christ.

As we think about Jesus' words calling for us to confess Him before others, let's keep in mind that true faith always moves from the heart to the lips. On the flip side, false faith possesses no desire to confess Christ before others. If you say you have believed on Jesus but are unwilling to share your decision with others, you are unwilling to be baptized, or you have no desire to tell others how they too can be saved,

can you really call yourself a Christian? Let's go public with our faith by following the Spirit's leadership in our public profession of faith.

## 2. Trust the Spirit's empowerment in your public defense of the faith.

Having given these chilling warnings regarding blasphemy against the Spirit, Jesus wanted His followers to embrace the great positive fact that the Holy Spirit is the believer's Helper (vs. 11-12). We dare not read into these verses a call for preachers and teachers to not prepare. Spirit-led preaching is rarely extemporaneous preaching. It can be, but spirit-led preaching is usually preaching done after much prayer and study. No, this is an invitation for the Lord's embattled servants to lean into the wonderful provision of the Holy Spirit in the time of persecution.

Last Sunday, I shared with you how Peter and John responded to the threats coming against them from the religious rulers after the lame beggar was healed. These leaders interrogated Peter and John as to how they performed this miracle. Peter responded in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 4:8-13.

Peter's response was not his own. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. This "filling" was different from the "filling" experienced when the Spirit came at Pentecost (Acts 2:4). At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit took up residence in the lives of believers. The filling of the Spirit in Peter in Acts 4 involved his trust in the Spirit's empowerment. It was an emptying of self-reliance and a filling of God-reliance.

Today, many of us know nothing of standing on trial for our faith. Our physical lives are not hanging in the balance over our profession of faith. However, many times we may feel the pressure to conform our beliefs and practices in order to not be an outcast in society or to be marginalized in the office. In those situations where we are tempted to compromise or be silent about the gospel, may we lean into and trust the Holy Spirit's empowerment in our public defense of the faith.

**Conclusion:** In who or what is your identity found? In many ways, the things you speak of, spend your money on, and obligate your time to are the things that most identify you. Have you figured out how someone would describe you based upon your priorities? Better yet, have you heard from God's Spirit today on this issue? The Bible calls us as believers to go public with our faith in Jesus Christ. Is your faith public? Have you shared your decision with others? Have you followed the Lord in baptism? Are you actively sharing the gospel with others in your circles of influence? Are you trusting the Spirit to help you remain faithful when it would be easy to compromise?