Skies, Signs, and Salvation

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Date: 29 June 2025

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Next month, I turn 52, and all 52 years of my life have been lived right here in this area.

The house Mars and I live in today is about 12 miles from the house I grew up in where my parents still live today. So if there's one thing that I have been familiar with, it's Oklahoma in the springtime. I'm familiar with storms in the state. I've got a couple of friends who moved to Oklahoma recently. One of them I was talking to back this spring, he moved here in March, and he said to me, he was older than I am but never lived in Oklahoma, he said, so are there just tornadoes like every day in the spring?
And so I had to explain to him how that works. I am a unpaid professional meteorologist, which means like you, I go outside and look and see what's going on in the sky as it happens.
I love weather. A lot of people who live in Oklahoma learn to love weather. I know the difference between a tornado watch and warning.
[1:25] I hope you do. I know the difference in a EF1 or an EF3 tornado. I can explain a wedge tornado or a rope tornado.

I can recognize a hook echo. I could even explain to you what a QLCS tornado is. Do you know what a QLCS tornado is?
It's a quasi-linear convective system. Most tornadoes form because of isolated supercells. But as those isolated supercells, sometimes they merge together and they form a large boundary line. You don't normally get tornadoes with a large line of thunderstorms. They like to be isolated. But every once in a while along the leading edge of a boundary line, you get a quick spin-up of a quasi-linear convective system.
They spin up fast, they drop, they dissipate quickly, and they're incredibly hard to predict where they're going to occur. Have I convinced you I like the weather?
[2:32] So what happens is when you live in the spring in Oklahoma, you need to be good at understanding the weather. Little did I know 33 years ago when I started in full-time ministry that part of my job would be to be a meteorologist.

They ought to teach this in seminary. Because I spend a lot of my time in the spring with our staff looking at radar, texting, trying to figure out, is it safe to have people here?
Does this event need to be canceled? Can we do this? All these kinds of things. But no matter how efficient you get at reading a radar, no matter how skilled you may get in understanding the signs of a tornado, the most important thing for you is not to predict where a tornado is going to be.
The most important thing for you is if a tornado is coming your way to seek shelter. What good would it do? If you watch the news and you look at the radar and you receive the warnings, and if you can discern the nuances of the weather, and you understand a tornado is forming, and it's coming right your direction, what good would it do even if you could with certainty forecast exactly where it's going to fall if you yourself can't take shelter?
The most important part of a tornado, when it's in your area, is do you have a safe place to go if it comes to your town?
[4:21] In Luke chapter 12, Jesus is going to use something similar to drive home the point of how important it is to have a place of safety.

People in Jesus' day were able to look at the clouds and the skies and to discern the signs of certain storms, and He uses that as a picture and an analogy to remind them that judgment is coming and they must be ready.

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If you've lived here for a while, you know what I'm talking about in the spring when you walk outside and some days just feel like a severe weather day.
They just have a look, don't they? I mean, sometimes even on the weather, you'll hear them talk about this could be a severe weather day, but you walk outside and you say, I don't see it.
I don't feel it. There's a look. If you've lived here a while, there's just a look the sky has. There's just a feel in the air. And I encourage you to have a radar on your phone in addition to that.
[5:37] But the longer you live here, the more you can just look at the skies and you can just feel it and get a sense. Is this one of those days or is this not one of those days?

Well, that's not unique to us. People forever have looked at the skies to determine the signs of the weather to see what that means.
At the end of Luke 12, verses 54 to 59, Jesus uses such an illustration to help communicate the significance of knowing that a storm of judgment is coming and more importantly to ask the question, do you have a place of shelter when a storm of judgment comes?
Verse 54 says, He also said to the crowds, when you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, a shower is coming and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say there will be scorching heat.
And it happens. You hypocrites. You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?
[6:55] Jesus gives these two analogies, verses 54 to 56, and then again in 57 to 59. And as we prepare to take the Lord's Supper this morning, let's look at this, these two closing paragraphs here in Luke 12 with two headings.

Number one, the warning against unbelief. It's verses 54 to 56. The warning against unbelief. In each of these paragraphs, he gives an analogy, and then he makes a charge, an accusation, and then he gives the explanation of it.
So we'll let that be our outline for both of these points. Number one, the warning against unbelief. And here first are the analogies he uses. First, he says, you look at the skies, and you see a cloud rising in the west, and you say, a shower is coming, and so it happens.
He says, then another occasion, you can feel, you sense, you see the effects of the south wind blowing, and you discern, there's going to be scorching heat, and that happens.
Well, similar to how you and I could go outside on the spring day, and we could look at the skies, and we could look at the effects of what's going on around us, and we could discern, and sense, and feel what may or may not be coming.
[8:17] So in Jesus' day, the people knew, if there were clouds rising in the west, off that Mediterranean Sea, that likely meant rain.

They also knew, if the winds were blowing from the south, what you would call Sirocco winds, when those winds come up there from the south and southeast, that brings a heat wave.
And Jesus uses these analogies to make the point that you are skillful at discerning the signs and the skies. But here's the charge against them.
Here's the accusation against them. He says, verse 56, you hypocrites. Now, why does he give them that accusation?
He's making the point that their spirituality was all for show. Their hope was in themselves, in their knowledge, in their ability to interpret events.
[9:30] And he says, you are so skillful that using your eyes and your senses and your mind to discern the skies and the signs of the weather, and yet, spiritually speaking, he refused to run to safety.

They were hypocrites. They didn't need more evidence. Their problem was not lack of evidence. Their problem was unbelief. They refused to acknowledge their sin, to repent of their sin, and to place saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
They understood how to recognize the dangers and threats in the skies, but refused to acknowledge the judgment that was coming for them from heaven against their sin.
He goes on to give an explanation of this. He says, you know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?
You're able to discern when a storm is coming, but do you not know that a spiritual storm is headed your way and you refuse to seek a refuge?

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[11:01] to summarize, he was saying, you know how to make sense of the stars, but you don't know how to get to heaven because they refuse to believe.

They refuse to repent. Now, why this charge of hypocrisy? What have they done that warrants him leveling this charge at them?
I want to show you just a couple of places here from the Gospel of Luke. So keep Luke 12 marked. Turn back with me to Luke chapter 4. I'll show you just a couple of places.
We can look at others, but just give you a couple of insights here into why Jesus levels this charge that they were spiritually hypocrites.
Luke chapter 4, verse 17, Jesus here at the synagogue in Nazareth, the scroll, the prophet Isaiah was given to him.
[12:15] He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written. Verse 18, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

This was Jesus reading the Word of God to the people in the synagogue in his hometown. Verse 28, When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath and they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built so that they could throw him down the cliff.
They have Jesus in Luke 4 right in front of them eye to eye face to face the living Word reading the written Word and their response to the presence and the preaching of Jesus was to try to take him to the edge of a cliff and kill him.
He says, You who are so smart at discerning the skies and the signs have no sense to flee to safety for the judgment that is to come.
We see another example. Go to chapter 11. Another example of their hypocrisy and just their spiritual unbelief in chapter 11 verse 14.
[14:18] Now he was casting out a demon that was mute and when the demon had gone out the mute man spoke and the people marveled.

But some of them said he cast out demons by Beelzebul the prince of demons. In Luke 4 they heard his preaching and said we want to kill him.
In Luke 11 they witnessed his miracles and they can't deny his supernatural power. But because of unbelief they refused to confess him as God and so what they do instead is conclude what he does the miracles he performs he does by the power of Satan.
Their problem wasn't lack of evidence. it was the sin of unbelief. To his message they tried to kill him.
To his miracles they declare him to be satanic. This is the warning he gives against their unbelief.
[15:39] faith. You could summarize it by the words of Romans 1.22 claiming to be wise they became fools. If ever there is a word for our world today it's Romans 1.22.

People who are experts on all things politics experts on all things sports experts on all things entertainment experts experts on all things financial and yet completely foolish in terms of considering what will happen one second after you die.
After the warning against unbelief there is a second paragraph here at the end of chapter 12 and here Jesus speaks of the wage for unrepentance the wage for unrepentance again there is an analogy and then a charge and then an explanation let's look first at the analogy verse 57 and why do you not judge for yourselves what is right as you go with your accuser before the magistrate make an effort to settle with him on the way quick word of explanation of the background and culture that would help you to understand what Jesus is saying here in Jesus day you had what was called a magistrate he would have been some kind of an official and what he would do is he would hear the case it would be in our world what we think of as a preliminary hearing and this magistrate would hear the charge hear the argument and if that magistrate deemed that the charge against a party was sufficient for possible guilt he would then refer that case on up to the judge the idea in verse 57 and verse 58 in this analogy is the person who is being charged is actually guilty and Jesus says if you're headed for the judge you need to settle before judgment strikes if you're guilty and the evidence is clear that you're guilty you better find some way to settle this before it gets to the judge and the judge takes away all of your freedom for all time we see this as you keep reading why do you not judge for yourselves what is right as you go with your accuser before the magistrate

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make an effort to settle with him on the way lest he drag you to the judge and the judge hand you over to the officer here's the charge the charge is you're guilty in the analogy the subject is guilty we know that because in the analogy Jesus says that the judge hands you over to the officer and the officer puts you in prison so he says you're like people who can look at clouds rising and discern when a rain storm is coming you can sense the direction of the wind and know when a heat wave is coming but you're so hypocritical in your unbelief you have no plan for one second after you die and then he says you're like someone who is being taken to court and the magistrate finds you guilty and he's going to hand you over to the judge and if there's not some kind of settlement you will be cast in prison verse 59

I tell you you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny the wage of your unrepentance is your life now when he says you're going to pay this to the very last penny the point he's making is at this point once judgment has been given there are no deals to be made the Bible is clear that we're sinners and that the punishment for our sin is judgment from God but in Christ God has made a way those who would believe in Jesus Christ who has lived a perfect life died in our place offered his life for those who would believe who would call upon the name of the [20:53] Lord and be saved the Lord has made a way through grace for sinners to be forgiven for your debt to be cleared but one second after you die if you stand before the Lord with an unrepentant heart there are no deals to be made and you see this in a nuance in the text in verse 59 you don't get out until every last penny is paid the idea here is to let you know that you're without hope at this point that you can't just get close and be set free in first century in

Jesus day they had different coins they would use they had what was called a drachma it was the silver coin that was used in Luke 15 I've got one from the first century they used I know it's kind of hard to see but just to give you an idea if you can this is a real drachma from Jesus day it's what it looked like this is one of their coins Jesus says you have to pay to the last penny he wasn't speaking of a drachma there was something smaller than a drachma known as a denarius and he wasn't just saying to that point because there was a coin smaller than a denarius known as an Assyrian that's not the word used here either there was a smaller coin known as a quadrant one fourth of an

Assyrian that's used in Matthew 5 that's not the word that's used here the word used here is the coin known as the leptone it is one half of a quadrant a quadrant which is one fourth of an Assyrian which is smaller than a denarius or a drachma in mark 12 you see the word leptone to describe the widow's might she gave down to the last penny a leptone it's the smallest coin used in jesus day i've got one of those two really really hard to see but just to give you an idea it's known as the thin one you can barely see it it's hard even to hold because of how tiny it is this is the word jesus uses this is jesus essentially saying not just you have to pay to your last dollar not just you've got to pay down to the last quarter not just you've got to pay down even to the last nickel this is paying 100 percent the equivalent of the widow's mite

I just showed you the leptone is one eighth of a penny in other words jesus says there are no deals to cut and jesus speaking to this these people is saying to them you who are so skillful at using your mind and your intellect and your heart and your reasoning you understand how to discern the skies and the signs but you are completely ignorant of your need for salvation and he says back to verse 56 why do you not know how to interpret the present time you don't even recognize what and who right in front of you the long awaited messiah that the prophet spoke of that the psalmist sang of that the law points to he says

I'm here and right now at the present time because of your unbelief you don't even recognize that you can't even discern the present time of who it is that's right in front of you you know when clouds rise over the Mediterranean rain's coming and you take shelter you know when the winds blow from the southeast over the desert heat's coming and you take shelter but the judgment and wrath of God that awaits you is more certain than anything you see in the skies and yet you don't seek shelter and he says you're guilty and the judge is going to declare you guilty and there will be no shortcut deals this is

[27:03] Jesus speaking with staggering conviction clarity speaking in a way that every one of them hears exactly the point he's making and yet most will hear his warnings dismiss them and walk away that sadly true in our world today where the gospel is proclaimed over and over and even for many of you who have heard the gospel so many times you hear it you consider it and yet sadly still there are those who walk away Jesus point in these two paragraphs is that you are skilled

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at knowing some truth while neglecting the most important things in your life people today who have time for all the news and time to keep up with everything and entertainment and everything going on around them and yet have no time to spend with the

Lord or as one author so articulately put it one of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove on the last day that prayerlessness was not for lack of time we've come through tornado season Oklahoma but it will come again and you'll see it you'll feel it you'll watch it but the most important part when it comes back again is going to be do you have a place of safety at my house we're not real afraid of tornadoes we have a shelter
I've been in the tornado shelter maybe twice in my life we have one I like knowing it's there my wife this year said to me when tornadoes were going off and sirens going off one evening it was late at night and she said I'm going to go to sleep wake me up if you need me and I'm like how can you do this I've got radar to watch I've got channels to flip back and forth to I've got to keep the world spinning Marcia says I'm going to sleep if you think I need to go in the shelter wake me up and we'll go I'm like I'm just I'm just starting my shift I never woke her up we never went to the shelter but if if that radar shows that that tornado is headed for whispering oaks terrace we have a place to run to we have a place to flee to a tornado striking your house the odds are very very small very very small even if it does the odds of it being deadly are far smaller and yet people in our state will lose their minds every spring while paying no attention to the certain reality of the judgment that awaits them one second after they die this passage is an invitation to flee to
Jesus for safety the one who said that in him is life that if you would believe he is the son of God the one crucified buried and resurrected if you would believe in him you shall be saved said of those who flee to Christ in Romans 8 there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus if the tunnel strikes your house you need to be in your safe space when the wrath of God is poured out upon sin you better be found in Christ and for those who would confess their sin repent and turn from their sin and flee to
Christ they shall be saved amen and that invitation is open to you even this day we're going to prepare to receive the Lord's supper as the picture of what Christ has done for us I'd like to ask you as a church to take just a moment if you would to bow your head and close your eyes and prepare your heart while the deacons of our church join me here at the front Lord we thank you for your word today we pray!
[33:25] that it would take root in our hearts we pray Lord that it would bring salvation to those who need it provide security for those who need it we trust in you and thank you for the cross and for your grace and pray that we even this day would ensure that we are found in your son safe and secure because of the work he has done it's in his name that we pray amen thank you so much for joining us via live stream this morning if you have any questions whatsoever about our church or the ministries that our church provides please visit us at fbcmustang.org we would love to follow up with you and get to know you better as always we try to emphasize if at all possible if you could be here physically present with us we would love that and that would be a joy to serve you in that way but thank you again for joining us via live stream today have a great day retra

Thank you.

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