

## **Addressing Hypocrisy**

### **Marks of Hypocrisy**

#### **Woes**

The portion of God's Word set before us today is a very important section. We will observe Jesus' condemnation of the religious system that the Pharisees and the Scribes had built over hundreds of years and was in place at the time of Jesus' ministry.

As we look to the condemnation of the religious leaders, let us be very careful that we do not write off these verses because we think that they do not apply to us. We all have a root of *Phariseeism* living within us. The human tendency to control and develop systems of works to gain salvation is still alive. We must be on guard to not allow this sinful natural human tendency to control and manage other people and God to creep into our lives. If we allow hypocrisy and legalism to dominate us, we will miss the Gospel and we will miss holiness.

These Pharisees were associated with God but He was not the center of their life. For them, God was simply one part among many things they worshipped. Instead of surrendering to God they had developed laws and rules to control – to control people, but also to control people's access to God. Just as the church that became the Roman Catholic Church did over time. Jesus shows us the other things that are not of God and then pronounces Divine judgment upon them. Jesus comes down extremely hard on these religious leaders and even declares six woes upon them collectively. The only people Jesus had this level of judgment for were the

religious leaders who should have known the nature of God from the scriptures and were hypocrites.

Now Jesus begins the woes. What is a woe? It is a cry for God's just judgment in light of an action that deserves a divine response. We get a better understanding if we go back to chapter 6 of Luke. Jesus had just given the Beatitudes or the 4 "blessed are." Reading beginning at verse 20, "**Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.** These are those who are meek or humble and seek God's kingdom instead of the material things of the world. <sup>21</sup> **Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.** Those who hunger for the Word of God will be satisfied no matter what life brings. **Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.** Those who weep for the lost people of the world will know laughter in their spirit through Jesus. <sup>22</sup> **Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!** <sup>23</sup> **Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.**" True believers will suffer persecution just as the generations prior to Jesus' time persecuted the prophets of God. Living a life faithful to God will have its struggles and even persecution, but it will be a life of blessing from God. Now, what about those who are the persecutors of God's people? Jesus says the following, which is germane to our passage of study this morning in Luke chapter 11, Jesus speaks of woes beginning in verse 24 of chapter 6, "**But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.** <sup>25</sup> **Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.** <sup>26</sup> **Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.**" (Luke 6:20-26) These may be religious people but their hearts belong to the prince of this world and their rewards are of the world and will end. Their desire is for

control, power and enjoying the physical things of the world, they have not given themselves to God and therefore are condemned.

As I work through Luke chapter 11, verses 37 to 54 I ask you to mentally place yourselves in the room and understand Jesus is speaking to you and to me, as well as the Pharisee. He points out our sinfulness as well as theirs. Understand the difference is we are not condemned with them but if we listen to Jesus' condemning words, we understand the grace he has given us. Our responsibility is to use the spotlight of Scripture and shine it into the dark reaches of our souls to see if there is any trace of *Phariseeism* within us.

Let begin our time of study in Prayer.

### **Judgmentalism**

In this rebuke of the Pharisees and the Scribes, Jesus shows us what we must guard against if we would be pleasing to God. He shows us the marks of a Pharisee or the marks of "Hypocrisy" – is saying one thing and living another, and the judging of others.

Reading at verse 37, "While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table.<sup>38</sup> The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner." To understand these two verses is to look back into the man-made tradition of ritual washing. Before they ate, the Pharisees invented a practice of a ritual hand washing. They would pour water on one hand with a pitcher and then take the pitcher in the other hand and pour the water on their other hand. Sometimes the water itself was not clean and the amount of water was not enough to actually wash. Later, the ritual required an attendant to hold the pitcher and pour the water because if the Pharisee held the pitcher to pour

on one hand, cleaning it, but when he switched hands and touched the pitcher with the hand that was just washed it was again unclean. It was simply a man-made tradition. The Muslims followed this ritual, but wanted to one-up the Jews, so they wash both their hands and feet upon entering the Mosque. Jews prayed 3 times a day and so Muslims decided on 5 times.

These Pharisees and religious leaders developed a very complicated and ritualistic way of washing their hands. Jesus was not playing along with the Pharisee's shallow ritual that may have impressed those around them, but certainly did not impress God; for God is concerned about the heart, not ritual. Judging others is a mark of a Pharisee. When man-made rituals are added to God's Word, the traditions of man always become the standards and not the Word of God. This can be observed in many churches of our day.

The Pharisee's man-made traditions had become a required work and so dominating in his life was this ritual that he even began to judge Jesus! Jesus fell short of man-made outward signs of holiness. He had no interest in man-made rules and laws, but his desire was to please God his Father. What rituals do you have in your life meant to impress others? We must evaluate the many tasks and routines in our life and ask who are they for?

## **Deception**

I again take up our passage beginning in verse 39, “**And the Lord said to him, ‘Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. <sup>40</sup> You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? <sup>41</sup> But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.’**” These religious leaders and in particular this Pharisee, was more concerned with looking holy than actually being holy. This

may, in fact, be the dish that the ritual hand washing was done in. It was shiny on the outside but inside it was filthy dirty. It is more important for the inside of a bowl or dish to be clean than the outside. Here the point is that if the inside is clean the outside will be clean as well. Do we judge a person by what we see or what is in their heart? To know what is in one's heart takes time to develop a relationship. These pharisees were concerned with outward appearances and because of their arrogance they had no interest in a relationship with God or men.

So, Jesus goes outside of the accepted religious boundaries marking Himself as an outsider to the Pharisaical system. Take note in verse 39 it is Luke who calls Jesus, Lord, not the Pharisee. This religious leader and Pharisee is not qualified to lead people because he is a hypocrite. The Pharisee, operated within the man-made laws and social norms but had not heart for God and His people, so, Jesus calls him a fool. A hypocritical fool is a person who outwardly looks the part, but in reality, they are only pretending to be something they are not. They may look good on the outside, but the truth is like the cup they are filthy on the inside. When I meet someone, who says they are a Christian, it does not mean I immediately trust; often I sit back and watch how they behave and what they value.

This brings the following questions to us; What about each of us, are we Christian? Does our heart, mind and soul belong to Jesus or are we more concerned about appearing Christian than actually living out the gospel in surrender to Jesus? Is our behavior and attitude and thoughts on Sunday different from the other 6 days of the week? Can the people in your life; co-workers, friends and family define the meaning of Christian as they observe your life? Do you and I lower our standards during the week because we are surrounded by unbelievers? Is there a difference between who we are in public and private? The Pharisees were very good about putting on a show and image in public. Jesus [“told this parable to some who trusted](#)

in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: <sup>10</sup> ‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: “God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.” <sup>13</sup> But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14) If you practice true worship and service on the inside, the outside will also worship God.

What about us? Are we more concerned with looking the part of a Christian or actually being a Christian? Are you as concerned with holiness on Monday as you are on Sunday? Are you a Christian example to your coworkers? Do you uphold biblical standards when around non-believers or are you more apt to act like them? Are you and am I humble or do we exalt ourselves?

### **Majoring on Minor Things**

Not only did the Pharisees exalt themselves above others, but Jesus now deals with what they are focused on and it is not on God or his people. Reading at verse 42, “**But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue (a seasoning and health benefit herb) and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.**” They were so careful as to tithe even on the small herbs that grew in their garden in order to be acknowledged by others. They majored on the minor things; as I just read from Luke chapter 18, the Pharisee bragged, “**I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.**” (v.12) Those involved in a works-based religion will always keep the technical aspects of

their man-made religion at the expense of the things ordained by God. They could count their pennies in front of everyone in order to be seen as faithful tithers but when it came time to show God's love and mercy to someone else, their worship came up empty. They did not show justice; which require the grace and the love of God, but they could throw their pennies into the coffer and be prideful.

Do we ever highlight minor things because we can accomplish those at the expense of true Christianity? Have we whittled down God's standards so that we can accomplish them without His help? They added to God's Word and then over time God's Word had been become less and for many it was forgotten and in place of truth came a man-made set of standards that could be accomplished by lost people. Do we not see this today?

### **Fear of Man**

For the Pharisees the end purpose of their religion was status, power and the approval by others. Reading verse 43, **“Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.”** They feared men rather than God. When people tell me that they do not like religion, I agree with them. Religion is man-made and relationship with God is different, it comes through surrendering to Jesus Christ. If these Pharisees had to make a choice between spending time in private prayer to seek God and grow closer to him or sitting in the front row at synagogue or a banquet or a public feast, they would pick the best seat. They loved when people saw them, elevated them and saw how special they were before God. They were fully religious, they lived in man-made systems that in truth did not worship the true God, but because of their egos and pride they served the “prince of this world.” They had not given their lives to God; they remained spiritually dead. For those who surrender to God it is as the prophet

Ezekiel wrote, God “will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 11:19) When one is dead laying on the stone slab in the morgue, what can they do? Nothing! If one is spiritually dead with a heart of stone what can they do spiritually? Nothing, except that which is man-made and not of God. This is why mankind works at false imitation of God; inventing traditions and works that make people think they are religious and that they can control their path to salvation – this approach of the world makes mankind big and God small. Do you know any people or churches with this attitude? The first thing I thought of is some of the TV evangelists who promote God by wanting people to believe how special God has made them. They are elevated Christians with the same goals as the Pharisees!

What about our own lives? Do we care more about what people think or what God thinks? My Lord and Savior, Jesus, refused to do the ritual of hand washing to appease men. Jesus wanted to please God the Father. Jesus did not want man-made religion but the deep relationship with God and Jesus offers this relationship to all who will surrender to him. I pray, my beloved, we live the gospel of Jesus and not the religion of men.

### **Falseness**

At the time of Jesus, the man-made teachings of the Pharisees were a burden upon the people that was not of God. Reading verse 44, “Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it.” To understand this verse we have to go back to the Book of Numbers and see how the Pharisees added to the scriptures. Numbers speaks of uncleanness from the dead, “Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days.”



(Numbers 19:11) At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees had embarked on a mission in Jerusalem and the surrounding area to find and mark all the unmarked graves. They were not attempting to honor the dead but expand the scripture. The Pharisees had determined for one to walk over an unmarked grave made them unclean. So, the Pharisees were controlling people and placing a burden on people in Jerusalem by telling them they were unclean, because there were many unmarked graves and walking over them made them unclean.

Jesus is saying, the truth is, that it is the Pharisees that are unmarked graves and unclean. Because of their false man-made religion, their elevating themselves above the people, the truth is, when the Jewish people come in contact with a Pharisee, they become unclean. The Pharisees tell people, that it is through them, it is they who lead people closer to God, but the truth is they are leading people to judgment. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees was like a disease that others were being infected with. People came to these religious leaders for help and teaching, and were taught lies and deceit. This is true, with false prophets and teachers, and false religions today – they give people a false sense of security but lead them to judgement. All works-based religions and belief systems are false. The real truth is, [“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”](#) (Ephesians 2:8-9) We must be careful that what we teach is the Word of God and only the Word of God. Opinions and traditions must never be placed on the level of the truth of Scripture. That is why Scripture must try everything. When we make statements concerning the truth of God, they must originate from Scripture not from our minds.

## Confusion

Man-made traditions confuse the faith God gives and add to what he requires. We continue in Luke chapter 11, verses 45, 46 and 52, “One of the lawyers answered him, “Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also.”<sup>46</sup> And he said, “Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. ... skip down to verse 52, Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.” God, our Creator has put his standards in the Bible and he expects those who are saved to live them out in their daily lives. Without God’s indwelling our souls as God the Holy Spirit one does not possess the power to overcome this corrupt and evil world. With God’s power we do battle with our sinful nature and God’s standards are achievable, although not easy at times. God does not want to burden his people with additional rules that are unattainable and makes their live difficult. God the Father and God the Son are calling us this morning to submit, to worship and to live for the triune God’s glory and no one else’s. The Pharisees of Jesus’ time and of every generation since laid heavy burdens on people for their own purposes and this is true to this very day.

The final “Woe” reveals another contradiction. The lawyers professed to expound the meaning of the Law and thus to be the teachers of the people, but in fact they had “taken away the key of knowledge”, they took away key that unlocks the meaning of Scripture. Man-made traditions confuse and added to what God requires and made faith difficult. God has a set of standards found in the Bible. These ethical requirements of God must be lived out in the lives of believers. When we understand that we live in a corrupt world and battle our own sinful nature, these godly standards are hard enough without adding to them. The

lawyer's methods were such that people could not get at the essential meaning of God's Word. Instead of opening up the treasures of knowledge, the lawyers closed them. They turned the Bible into a book of obscurities, a bundle of riddles which only the experts could understand.

The lawyers and Pharisees promoted the prophets and yet they were guilty as their forefathers who killed God's prophets and they refusing to accept the prophets of God and God's message that they brought. We finish this passage with verses 47 to 51, "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed.<sup>48</sup> So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs.<sup>49</sup> Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,'<sup>50</sup> so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,<sup>51</sup> from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation." The Pharisees' honored the prophets on the surface in order to look righteous. This was all meant to gain acceptance with the people, for they honored the prophets, but the Pharisees did not respect the prophets of God or what they taught and they did not follow God's words.

Jesus uses Abel who was killed by Cain in Genesis to the blood of innocents shed all the way to Zechariah in 2 Chronicles. Reading of king Joash's treachery against God and his prophet, "Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada (yeh·ho·yaw·daw) the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, 'Thus says God, "Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you."' <sup>21</sup> But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD." (2 Chronicles 24:20-21) Jesus

points out that in the scriptures from Genesis to Chronicles, the practice of religious leaders and the people had been to kill those God sent to bring them his truth. Because sinful man desires to make himself big and God small and because lost people can control man-made standards, but godly standards they do not desire or keep.

### **God's Solution to Hypocrisy**

The Pharisees believed that God sees as man sees; what they thought would impress God was what impressed the lost people around them. When the prophet of God, Samuel, came to anoint who would become king of Israel, “the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.’” (1 Samuel 16:7) To everyone’s surprise Samuel anointed David. The Pharisees were wrong, for God’s looks into a person heart and knows the nature of their soul – God sees what man cannot. Ask yourself, “Is my Christianity mainly for others to see or for God to see?”

My beloved, it is about God’s grace, not works and not man-made rules. Remember the parable from Luke chapter 18 about the tax collector and the Pharisee as they prayed, we read earlier, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (v.14) The Pharisee is puffed up and proud of his many accomplishments while the tax collector understands his wretchedness and pleads for God to be merciful. The Gospel of Grace is the best remedy for hypocrisy. My beloved, live God’s grace and give grace to others. Amen!