

Message #57**Luke 11:37-44**

A few weeks ago on the news there was a picture of a woman who had gone to a store to try and kidnap a child. The pictures on the security camera made the woman appear to be caring, loving and kind, but her goal was to steal a child. From all external appearances, this was a very polite, caring, loving woman, but in all reality she was diabolical, wicked and evil.

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, there was a group of dignified religious men who appeared to be so nice and polite. They appeared to be so concerned and so caring. They would come alongside people and try to convince them to follow them. These men appeared to be very spiritual and very pious. In all reality they were diabolical, wicked and evil. **These men were called Pharisees.**

No one ever wants to be called or classified as a Pharisee by Jesus Christ. It is one thing for people to call someone a hypocrite, it is quite another to have Jesus Christ identify one as a Pharisee.

The grandson of Dr. M. R. De Haan, the founder of Radio Bible Class, M. R. De Haan II, wrote these words:

“There aren’t many things I’m more afraid of being called than a Pharisee. Maybe that sounds like an overstatement. So let me put it this way: I’m not as afraid of being called an advocate of abortion on demand, or a student of evolutionary theory. I’m not even as edgy about being called a Marxist or a religious liberal. That’s because in these areas I’m secure. I know better. I know I’m not an advocate of abortion on demand, nor am I an evolutionist. There’s no question in my mind that I’m neither a Communist nor a religious liberal. But whether or not I am a Pharisee is a different story. It’s not settled so easily. I can’t rule it out. I know, in fact, that in principle a Pharisee does live in me, and the thought of being so characterized sure isn’t appealing.”

To be classified by God as a Pharisee is one of the worst classifications one could ever have. Make no mistake about this:

- 1) A Pharisee believes in the Bible.
- 2) A Pharisee believes in separation.
- 3) A Pharisee believes in being involved with people.
- 4) A Pharisee believes in being organized and detailed.
- 5) A Pharisee believes in following religious traditions.
- 6) A Pharisee believes in worship.

Pharisees have all of these qualities, but the one central problem with the Pharisee is his heart. His heart is not right with God and his heart has no true relationship with Jesus Christ.

Make no mistake about this, Jesus Christ hates Phariseeism. Jesus Christ hates religious hypocrisy. Jesus Christ hates cover-ups. Jesus Christ wants people to be real in their relationship with Him. That point is clear from this text.

JESUS CHRIST TEACHES THAT PHARISEES ARE WICKED IN THE SIGHT OF GOD AND THEY WILL ULTIMATELY FACE THE SEVERE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

The Apostle Paul was so afraid of being judged a Pharisee that he kept himself disciplined at all times (i.e. I Cor. 9:27). He never wanted God to judge him as one who said one thing and did another.

This is a masterpiece of a section dealing with Phariseeism. There are three Pharisaical points that Christ makes:

PHARISAICAL POINT #1 – Jesus Christ gives His characteristics of a Pharisee. 11:37-39

In these verses, Jesus Christ reveals three key characteristics of Pharisees:

Characteristic #1 - A Pharisee appears to be cordial and not hostile. 11:37

Keep in mind that these nice looking Pharisees had called Jesus Christ demonic (Luke 11:15/ Matt. 12:24). Deep down inside these Pharisees were very hostile and hateful to Jesus Christ, but they come across as so caring and concerned.

In this case, one of the Pharisees invited Christ to his home for lunch. Luke brings out that Jesus went head-to-head with Pharisees often at meals (5:29-32; 7:36-50; 11:37-44; 14:1-24). If a Pharisee invited Christ for a meal, he was in for an interesting event. In this case, Jesus has just completed His teaching about the need to examine self and commitment to Him and to the word of God.

When He was done, the Pharisee invited Christ to his house for a meal. It was probably about mid-day. When Christ went in, everything appeared to be so cordial. The Pharisee had a nice pleasant look about him and he seemed to be happy to have Christ in the home. There is no indication that there does not appear to be any negative hostility toward Christ. This all looks good. The problem was he was a hypocrite with a hateful heart not right with God. It won't be long until the Pharisee will tip his hand.

Marshall Shelly, in his book "*Well Intended Dragons*," said that the dragons he saw in ministry often began as appearing to be your biggest supporter, who ended up really being your worst enemy. He said that one minister said in 3 out of 5 ministries, the Pharisee turned out to be the one who picked him up first at the airport and befriended him.

Don't expect a Pharisee to show his true colors immediately. Pharisees have a nice, cordial, pleasant look about them but their hearts are dark.

Characteristic #2 - A Pharisee is more concerned with tradition than truth. 11:38

It doesn't take long before you will spot a Pharisee because he will eventually reveal that he is more interested in his religious traditions and opinions than he is the truth of God.

Christ accepted the invitation to eat with the Pharisee and He sat down to eat. The Pharisee noticed that He did not conform to their man-made religious traditions and rules regarding their ceremonial washings.

The idea of washing hands was a Jewish tradition, not commanded by God, and not found in the word of God. This was something the Pharisees invented that they believed made them cleaner in the sight of God (Mark 7:1-3). There was nothing Biblical about this. God did not ordain this. This was religious stuff made up by men.

Now the text says that the Pharisee was “surprised” that Christ didn’t wash His hands, which really is an attack against Christ’s spirituality. Jesus is being watched like a hawk and these Pharisees are looking and judging. These washings were all about ritual purity and Christ would have nothing to do with it.

A Pharisee gets more caught up with tradition rather than truth. We must be very careful here because religious traditions can easily replace truth and that is Pharisaical. The moment we are more interested in our traditional beliefs rather than the truth, we are a Pharisee and we are leading people away from God, not toward Him.

Characteristic #3 - A Pharisee looks good outwardly, but not inwardly. **11:39**

Notice what Luke says, “but the Lord said to him.” This Pharisee has the arrogant audacity to question and criticize the “Lord.” Pharisees look good outwardly, but they are hellish inwardly. Just imagine the stupidity of washing the outside of the cup and not the inside. Imagine the stupidity of pretending to be close to God outwardly, when inside you know your heart is not right with God.

Pharisees are concerned with cups and God is concerned with hearts. Pharisees are concerned with externals, God is concerned with internals. Inside a Pharisee is a dark heart that is full of wickedness. The Pharisee robs God of the glory He deserves.

Outwardly the Pharisee looks impressive; inwardly, as William Barclay said, “his heart is as black as hell.”

If a person is more interested in the outside than the inside, he is a fool.

PHARISAICAL POINT #2 – Jesus Christ gives His counsel to the Pharisee. **11:40-41**

Jesus Christ was not going to let this slide. He could have said, “Well I am a guest here so I better just keep quiet.” Well Christ was not about to keep quiet and didn’t care that He was in this guy’s home. Now Christ had two pieces of information that He wanted to give the Pharisees:

Piece of Information #1 - A Pharisee's heart is seen by God. **11:40**

If a Pharisee thinks he is fooling God, he needs to think again. God not only sees the outside, but He also sees the inside; in fact, He is the One who made both.

This is interesting theologically because the clear inference is that God not only designed the physical heart organ, but He is also the One who gives spiritual life to the heart. So He certainly knows every individual as to whether or not they have believed in His Son.

God designed the material part of man and the immaterial part of man and He sees both. The One who made the external, is the same One who made the internal. He sees both, He knows both and He certainly knows whether or not one is right with Him.

God sees the real person. God sees the heart. He is not impressed with the external. He looks at the internal.

Piece of Information #2 - A Pharisee needs to give his heart to God. **11:41**

What Christ is basically saying is that you are devoted to religious rules and legalism and what you need to do is give your heart to God. You need to take an honest look as to what is inside you. There are a couple of ways **verse 41** has been interpreted:

- 1) When a Pharisee gets to the place in which he desires to be charitable to others, he is clean inside.
- 2) When a Pharisee is willing to give his own heart to God, he will be clean.

External religious stuff does not make one clean. Being clean is a matter of the heart.

PHARISAICAL POINT #3 – Jesus Christ gives His condemnation of the Pharisee. **11:42-44**

Notice that the next three verses all begin with “woe.” Woe judgments are the worst kind of condemnatory judgments and Jesus pronounces three of them on Pharisees. Jesus Christ gives three reasons why a Pharisee is to be pitied and why he will be condemned:

Reason #1 - A Pharisee is focused on doing the external, but not the internal. **11:42**

There is no question that the O.T. law taught that God's people should tithe. They were to give a portion of their income and agricultural crops to God, which meant to give it to the temple and to the priests (Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:12; Deut. 12:6-9; 14:22-29; 26:12-15; Neh. 10:37-38; 12:44; 13:5,12; II Chr. 31:5-12; Mal. 3:8,10).

Pharisees are good, faithful tithers. They demanded tithes on everything, right down to garden herbs. The Pharisees were meticulous in their understanding of tithing, but they were not meticulous when it comes to the matter of their own heart.

They were not just and they did not love God. Pharisees pick and choose parts of the Bible but they are not interested in applying the whole counsel of God. They loved passages on tithing, but they neglected passages that dealt with justice, grace, love, forgiveness and mercy.

A person may be meticulous in their giving and be heading to hell.

Reason #2 - A Pharisee loves public recognition but is not right with God. **11:43**

Pharisees went to religious worship services to be seen by men and to exalt themselves. They were not interested in people being right with God, they were interested in getting publicly noticed and publicly praised.

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, He was after the recognition that He was the God/Savior/Messiah/King. The miracles He performed were for the purpose of identity. This is why He gave the disciples the ability to do the supernatural. He wanted them to point people to Him. He gave the “signs of apostles” for that very purpose.

Now some spiritual gifts are public gifts and they do demand some form of public recognition. The gift of pastor/teacher and evangelist are all public gifts.

The difference between a godly desire for recognition and the Pharisee’s desire for recognition was that the Pharisee wanted to draw people closer to himself. The God-honoring person wanted to draw people closer to God. Pharisees are out to glorify themselves, not God.

A Pharisee loves attention. A Pharisee is not in love with God, he is in love with himself. A Pharisee craves the limelight. A Pharisee wants to be seen and noticed.

Reason #3 - A Pharisee is a concealed tomb leading people to eternal death. **11:44**

A Pharisee is a religious grave. The tragedy is that a Pharisee does influence others. What Christ is saying is that Pharisees are like an unmarked grave. They defile people and prevent people from a true, living relationship with God. They destroy and contaminate with religion and lead people in the way of death.

The most damning thing one may do is to lead one into religion, but not into a relationship with Jesus Christ. A Pharisee is, as Dr. Bock said, “a death trap” (*Luke 9:51-24:53*, p. 1117).

The Pharisee really thinks he is right in leading people to death. A Pharisee loves religion, loves denomination, loves laws and rules, but does not have a heart that is right with Jesus Christ.

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, His greatest enemies were not sinners, but religious people. They loved their religion and they loved their rules. They were Pharisees. There is nothing so damning as having Jesus Christ classify a person as a Pharisee. Where are we in all of this?