

“Woe to You Pharisees: Part Two”

Luke 11:37-54

See **Luke 11:41**... Being charitable, merciful, and caring about others, are the attributes and actions that should be expressed in the lives of all those who belong to God, especially toward those who are in desperate need, like the poor, the fatherless, and the lost.

If a person is born of God, having been born-again by God's Spirit, that person will love others; in fact, if we genuinely love God, and have the love of God in us, we will fulfill the supreme commandment of God, which is (**Luke 10:27**) to, “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and [to love] your neighbor as yourself.”

Your “neighbor” is anyone who is in need of mercy and kindness.

Micah 6:8, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

When a person is living to love [*obey*] God and love [show mercy to] others, then all things are honorable, acceptable, permissible, even beneficial, because (**Romans 8:1-2**), “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”

As we studied last week (**Luke 11:37-41**), the Pharisees were external worshippers of God, they were not born-again of God's Spirit, so their worship was unspiritual, unpleasing to God. Therefore, Jesus confronted them, saying they were foolish and wicked men who were pretending to be righteous [right with God].

Read **Luke 11:42**.... This is the first of three woes directed to the Pharisees. Woes are a declaration of judgment (cf. **Isaiah 5:18-22; 29:15**). Jesus condemns the religious leaders of Israel with divine judgement, because they reject Him.

Jesus uses sarcasm here to express how these “religious” leaders complied with minor and obscure commands, while failing to honor God with their hearts.

Tithing, or giving one-tenth of something to the Lord, is clearly taught in the Old Testament (**Leviticus 27:30-33; Deuteronomy 14:22-29**): 1/10 of all seed, grain, fruit, livestock (herd and flock), was to be given to the Lord

Read **Luke 11:43-44**... The Pharisees love to show off and be honored by men. They expected to have the best seats, those reserved at the front of the room facing the congregants who had come to the synagogue to hear the Rabbi's teaching, most of whom would be sitting on the floor or standing at the back.

The Pharisees expected to be placed next to the host at banquets and weddings, wearing colorful and expensive robes, as if they were royalty. They also liked to be called Rabbi, although Jesus commanded (**Matthew 23:8-12**), “Do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call *anyone* on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, *that is*, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”

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Spiritual leaders are to serve with humility, for all Christians [believers and followers of Jesus Christ] our brothers & sisters; and although we may have different roles and functions, we are all equal in value, loved the same by God, and have the same ultimate purpose: to do justice, show kindness, and walk humbly as we love God and love others on His behalf.

As God’s children, we have one Father Who is in heaven, and we are not to give a title of spiritual superiority to any man.

Pharisees and scribes loved to be called “father” [*source of spiritual life*]; the Pope’s title “holy father,” is a designation that belongs to God alone.

The Pharisee’s prideful attitude was antithetical to true spiritual leadership.

The final woe to the Pharisees reveals their evil nature and influence, for Jesus compares their outward false humility and holiness to concealed tombs that people walk over without knowing it, making themselves unclean ceremonially. The graves in Israel were clearly marked so that no one would inadvertently touch them and so defile themselves, i.e., the Pharisees are like unmarked graves that defiled those who came into contact with them.

Read **Luke 11:45-46**... Jesus has just finished condemning the Pharisees, when one of the scribes or lawyers tells Him that what He said has also insulted the expert teachers of the Law. It was the lawyers who really developed the religious system in Israel, and it was the Pharisees who governed and applied these teachings for the people to follow.

Jesus now turns His attention to the lawyers with the first of three woes! Using the rabbinical interpretations of Moses’ teachings of the Law and the “traditions of the elders,” the lawyers imposed religious burdens upon the people that they themselves could not even keep.

The lawyers themselves were void of both mercy and grace, and they showed no love for the people who sincerely wanted to honor and worship God.

Jesus said (**Matthew 11:28-30**), “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

False religion can not bring people into a right relationship with God, for false teachers have no spiritual knowledge, but are like blind guides (**Luke 6:39**), “A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?”

The truth is, Pharisees and teachers of the law are blinded to the truth of God (**2Corinthians 4:4-6**), “The god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus ‘sake. For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

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The religious leaders of Israel, like all unbelievers (**Romans 3:12**), “have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.” Jesus said (**Luke 18:19**), “No one is good except God alone.”

Read **Luke 11:47-51**... These false teachers are (**Ephesians 2:1**), “dead in [their] trespasses and sins, and (**Romans 8:8**), “cannot please God!”

In both the Old/New Testament’s, unbelieving Israel rejected the prophets and the Messiah who they spoke of Who was to come in the person of Jesus Christ. The present generation, during Jesus’ life, rejected the teaching of the prophets concerning God’s Son, Messiah, and yet they decorated and beautified the tombs of these same prophets, and in so doing brought judgement upon themselves.

Matthew 23:29-30, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had been *living* in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in *shedding* the blood of the prophets.’”

The truth is, these religious leaders were even more guilty than their fathers, for the rejected, and then had the Savior put to death!

See again **Luke 11:49**... Jesus says, that God, in His wisdom sent forth prophets and apostles, knowing the religious leaders would persecute and kill them. Scripture records they did just that to John the Baptist (**Matthew 14:3-12**), Stephen (**Acts 7:58-60**), the apostle James, the brother of John (**Acts 12:1-2**), James the Lord’s brother (whose death was recorded by Josephus, a 1st century Jewish historian), and we know that Peter, John, Paul and the rest of the apostles were persecuted, just as the Old Testament prophets were, by the religious leaders!

See again **Luke 11:50-51**... Jesus says they are guilty of the shed blood of all the prophets from Abel, the first person to be murdered (*by his brother Cain, who was jealous that Abel obeyed and was accepted by God*), to Zechariah the prophet (**Matthew 23:35**), “the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.”

Jesus charges His own generation with the cumulative guilt for the deaths of all the Martyrs since the very beginning of time! The reason being, they have all the writings of the prophets, and yet they reject the One who was to come for the purpose of dying for their sins, so that they might believe in Him and be save; and yet, they rejected and killed the very One who had been sent to save them; therefore they are without excuse, they have condemned themselves.

Read **Luke 11:52-54**... The truth is, the teachers of the law, like the Pharisees, never had the Holy Spirit, therefore they were unable to interpret the Scriptures, as they did not have the “key of knowledge.”

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Not only were they unable to enter the kingdom of heaven themselves, but because of the lack of knowledge and their lack of a right relationship with God, they only hindered those who were genuinely seeking to have a right relationship with God the Father, through God the Son, made effectual by God the Holy Spirit.

The Pharisees and scribes rejected the warnings of Jesus, Who was giving them a last chance to repent and be saved; instead, they became very hostile [lit. Holding on to a grudge] because Jesus had exposed them for who they were (**verse 54**), “*plotting against Him to catch Him* in something He might say.”

Jesus was innocent of any crime, there was no deceit in Him and He was without sin, yet these wicked enemies of the gospel hated Him and ultimately were used by God to bring Jesus to the cross, where He would die for the sins of everyone who would believe in Him for salvation.

As Jesus began His ministry, John the Baptist declared (**John 1:29**), “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared (**Acts 2:22-24**), “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.” **36**, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Jesus Christ Crucified, Resurrected, and Coming Again, is the message we must continue to proclaim; for not is the only message from God that brings salvation.

Therefore, we must rebuke and remain vigilant to expose false teachers, for these are the men of whom Jude warns us (**Jude 4**), men who “have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” **16**, “These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage. **19-21**, “These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.” **24-25**, “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

Pastor Mike Hale