

## Hypocrisy Unveiled Luke 11:37-54

One of David's recent vocabulary words was hypocrite. Someone pretending to be something he is not. The dictionary adds that it is a person who pretends to be better than he really is, to pretend to be pious or virtuous without really being so.

In the Old Testament the word carries the meaning of hiding or clouding hence to defile or pollute. The word was used to describe the wicked or godless. Job 34:30 translates the word that way. "to keep a godless man from ruling, from laying snares for the people."

In the New Testament it is primarily used by Christ in His teachings especially about the Pharisees. In classical Greek the word described a person who was acting in a play. Generally, the meaning is acting a part, false, deceptive, formally and outwardly religious and good, but inwardly insincere and unrighteous.

Jesus had more reason to charge Pharisees with hypocrisy than any other group. In our passage we will take a look at the condemnation Jesus cast on the religious system of the day reflected in the lives and behavior of the Pharisees and the Scribes.

Now, it's easy to look at them and hurl the same condemnation without even considering whether or not we may be just like them. I think Jesus' words are appropriate that he who is without sin can cast the first stone, but then neither am I suggesting that we are all hypocrites in need of a wakeup call. That said, we do need to be careful in thinking that these verses don't apply to us. Let's be careful in thinking that we would never develop a spirit of Phariseeism.

As we go through this passage I want us to keep something in mind. On the surface it appears that Jesus had it in for the religious establishment where He sets out on a crusade to single-handedly change

the religious elite in order to bring them down and start something new. This is what I want us to keep in mind as Jesus speaks. His condemnation, while disapproving, was meant to stir their hearts to conviction and move them to repentance. Jesus came to seek and save the lost and I believe He chose to speak the truth in love. Were the Pharisees just as lost as the prostitutes and tax collectors He hung around with? Did He love the Pharisees any less or love others more? I think this is a lesson for us to be careful about what we think of ourselves and take to heart what Jesus says otherwise we'll end up just like the Pharisees – blinded by our own legalism placing unreasonable burdens on others in an attempt to bring them to Christ.

So, take your Bibles and turn to Luke 11:37-54.

The reaction of a surprised host  
Rebuking a serious hypocrisy  
Raising a strong hostility

### I. THE REACTION OF A SURPRISED HOST – v. 37-38

#### A. A Certain Person is Invited to Dine – v. 37

We read that Jesus had just finished speaking. We looked at that last week when Jesus drove out that demon and He was accused of doing so by the power of Satan himself. As the crowd was dispersing following Jesus' teaching a Pharisee came to Jesus and invited Him to a meal.

During the time of Jesus there were some 6,000 Pharisees. They were a prominent sect of the Jews primarily made up of men from the middle class having great influence in Israel as part of the Sanhedrin or the ruling court in the land. It would be similar to our Supreme Court but dealing with religious matters related to the law. They formed during the intertestamental period in order to retain the strict keeping of the law. When it came to matters of the law, they were separatists holding a strict view of anything that would make them

ceremonially unclean. Along with the Scribes, they began to interpret and enforce a strict keeping of the law including and especially regulations that were added as a result of their interpretation. For them tradition and ritualism had greater bearing on daily living. Oral tradition superseded the written law, but both were essential in meriting favor with God.

One of these 6,000 Pharisees invited Jesus to dine with him. The word in the original Greek referred to the meal following the morning prayer time and was the first of the two major meals of the day. We see from the verse that Jesus accepted the invitation and in one verse we move from the invitation to the table where they are now eating.

#### B. A Ceremonial Practice is Ignored Deliberately – v. 38

The practice of ritual hand washing came from the priestly service. Before the priest could enter the Temple to perform his service, he prepared himself by washing his hands and feet. Rabbi Wein explains that it wasn't only for hygienic purposes. Hand washing reminded the priest of the holiness inherent in Temple service being rendered there and helped him prepare for this service. While the priest was required to perform this ceremonial cleansing nowhere in the Law of Moses did it require hand washing before meals.

Rabbi Wein continues by noting that when a Jew washes his hands today, he symbolically prepares himself for daily service to God. According to Wein even the most mundane tasks, such as waking up and eating have a higher purpose.

Prior to eating a meal, a pitcher of water was poured on each hand. Water is first poured on the right hand twice and then on the left hand twice. In Jesus' day a servant would pour the water so that the person wouldn't contaminate the hand that had just been washed by touching the handle of the pitcher.

Today orthodox Jews will perform a ceremonial washing of their hands after they touch or scratch their scalp or after clipping their finger nails or touching your shoes.

Observing these traditions is important to them as a means of finding merit with God. Keeping the law was paramount.

Jesus sat down to the meal and began to eat and the host was very surprised that Jesus, who was supposed to be a Rabbi and know the law, didn't follow the custom of ceremonial hand washing.

Some suggest that Jesus' deliberate disregard for this ritual was a way of symbolically washing His hands of a religion steeped in ritualism rather than true righteousness. The Pharisees had developed a very complicated and ritualistic way of washing their hands and Jesus wasn't going to play their games. It was nothing more than a man-made regulation added to God's Word which became a standard for them to follow. It was more important to keep these regulations than obey God's Law and the Pharisee judged Jesus for ignoring this tradition. Jesus fell short of the man-made standard of holiness.

The church has generated its own list of man-made regulations over the years. Over Christmas while with family someone talked about a certain church and school associated with it. This person uses their negative experience with that church to keep them away from church. Every morning when they came in to school the girls had to kneel down to make sure their dress or skirt was the proper length. If not material was sewn into the hem of the garment.

When I was in college it was the length of hair, sideburns and moustache. Scott's moustache wouldn't have been allowed because it extends down past the corner of the mouth. Randy's would be okay. Art couldn't have a beard. Sideburns couldn't go past the ear lobe. Hair had to be above the color and off the ears.

Churches make up all kinds of man-made rules like the hand washing ritual of the Pharisees - which hymnal you sing out of or the order of service.

Barakel is located in a predominantly Mennonite and Amish community. When we didn't have campers we would attend the local Mennonite church. Mom established some very good friendships from the church, one who was raised in the town of Markham, Ontario just outside Toronto and attended Wideman Mennonite Church founded by an ancestor, Henry Wideman, in 1810. One of their traditions is for the women to wear a head covering also known as a prayer covering. Out of respect for her Mennonite friends, Mom would wear a covering when we attended. Let me ask you this: was she wrong in wearing a covering when she was in their service when she didn't any other time? Would she have been wrong if she didn't wear a prayer covering when attending?

Jesus chose not to wash not because He was being defiant, but because doing so would have been with the wrong motive. He refused to condone a man-made ritual that violated the commands of God especially when the person didn't do anything about the heart.

We see in these verses the reaction of a surprised host.

We also see in these verses rebuking a serious hypocrisy.

## II. REBUKING A SERIOUS HYPOCRISY – v. 39-52

Some of you might know the name Jeff Foxworthy. You might remember him as the guy who made up those one liners - "You might be a redneck if..."  
You might be a redneck if you ever cut your grass and found your car.

You might be a redneck if your stereo speakers used to belong to the drive in theater.

You might be a redneck if your boat hasn't left the yard in 15 years.

You might be a redneck if your beard attracts birds.

Jesus has a list as well. You might be a hypocrite if...and we see them here.

The first sign of a hypocrite Jesus gives is about reputation.

### A. Jesus Condemns the Hypocrisy of Reputation – v. 39-41

Reputation is defined as the estimation others have of you whether favorable or not. It's your character in the view of the public. Simply put it's how others view you. That's your reputation.

Jesus described them as being more interested in looking good for the crowd than in actually taking care of what really matters. It would be like painting the outside of a house that is in shambles on the inside. They were more concerned with looking holy than being holy. In fact, Jesus implies that if the inside was taken care of, the natural result will be a life that exhibited godliness. Jesus' point is that if the inside is clean, the outside will be as well.

He teaches that what is in the heart will eventually come out through the lips and the life. We shouldn't think that hypocrisy can be hidden.

Pharisees were more concerned about keeping up image than about being moral. Jesus described them as being greedy and wicked.

Jesus then tells the Pharisee an important truth we all too often forget – God made us, God knows us. He knows the intentions of the heart and is more concerned about that than about what others think of us. What He thinks of us is what matters. I Samuel 15:22 "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of

rams.”

What is the motivation of your actions? Is it to give the appearance of being spiritual, the pretense of piety, all the while neglecting to take care of the heart?

Jesus exhorted the Pharisee to give from what is inside the dish, a reference to his heart. He is not advocating that if one gives then He will be clean, but giving is a demonstration of what is on the inside. It reveals the true condition of the heart.

Paul wrote in Romans 2:28-29 “A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”

Godliness doesn't occur from an outward act of living morally or following prescribed rituals. Godliness begins from the heart in obedience to God's Word and is expressed in our actions. There will be many on the Day of Judgment who will stand surprised when they are condemned by the Lord because they thought their good deeds and ritualism, even in the name of the Lord, would merit eternal life. Our response is to take care of the heart. Trust in Christ as Savior and then demonstrate a changed heart through a changed life.

A hypocrite is more concerned about the outside than the inside. Jesus condemns the hypocrisy of reputation.

B. Jesus Condemns the Hypocrisy of Religion – v.  
42

He condemned the Pharisee for his devotion to what was of secondary importance. As a group they were more concerned about tithing the minutest amounts of garden herbs. The Old Testament law regarding tithing did not extend to such trivial things.

They were more concerned about tithing even the smallest items than they were in obeying the two greatest commands of loving God and loving one's neighbor.

Matthew 22:37-40 ““Jesus replied, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it; ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.””

The Pharisees had neglected care of their neighbor and loving God for the sake of tithing. Loving God is more than just fulfilling religious duties. Loving God is more than just showing up when the doors are open. Loving God is more than just tossing an envelope in the plate when it goes by.

What does loving God look like?

How about obedience to God's Word? Samuel said to Saul that disobedience is the same as rebellion.

How about a love for His Word?

How about a desire to be holy?

How about joy and praise and worship?

How about being characterized by the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control?

Loving God in this way extends to love for others.

John made it clear when he asked how is it we can say we love God if we don't love others?

What does loving others look like?

How about forgiveness?

How about compassion?

How about generosity?

How about unity?

How about showing care and being comforting?

How about it folks? Are we more interested in giving the pretense of religion than in loving God and caring for others? If so, we too, could be charged with hypocrisy for being religious instead of relational.

C. Jesus Condemns the Hypocrisy of Recognition –  
v. 43

This was the underlying motive for everything they did. Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18

They wanted others to notice them.

They wanted others to see what they did.

They wanted, they liked the recognition, the accolades, the praise.

Matthew 23:6 says they wanted recognition at banquets.

Verse 7 says they liked being called Rabbi.

Mark 12:38 says they wore long, beautiful robes that would bring them attention.

They were self-righteous, filled with pride, contemptuous of others wanting to be loved and recognized by the very people they disdained and whose possessions and souls they stole.

They intentionally went into the market place when it was busy so that they could be seen by others. And when the synagogue doors were open and the service was about to begin they would march in and sit in the front. That doesn't mean they sat in the front row. Instead, there were seats arranged behind the pulpit in a semi-circle where they would sit facing the congregation.

Imagine for a moment if we had these chairs up here and at the beginning of the service our deacons would all file up and take their place on the stage and face you.

There was no humility on the part of the Pharisees. They were conspicuously obvious in all they did and Jesus condemned them for it.

My college theology professor told of a man in a church who wanted to make a large contribution toward the building campaign but wanted the pastor to recognize him for the contribution. The pastor would not give the man the recognition he desired.

You might be a hypocrite if you do things to be recognized.

Some want recognition for teaching.

Some want recognition for singing.

Some want recognition for serving.

Some want recognition for giving.

Some want recognition for lofty prayers.

Some want recognition for contributions in a class. .

Folks, let's check the motivation of the heart and make sure we aren't guilty of seeking recognition, otherwise we'll be guilty of hypocrisy.

D. Jesus Condemns the Hypocrisy of Resemblance  
– v. 44

This was a final word of condemnation by Jesus on the Pharisees.

According to the Old Testament Law (Numbers 19:11-22) they were forbidden from touching a corpse or a grave. Anyone who did became ceremonially unclean for seven days. Graves were carefully marked out so that they wouldn't inadvertently walk on them and become defiled.

Jesus likens the Pharisees to unmarked graves that defile those who follow them because they lead people astray from the true intent of the Law. Instead of leading the people closer to God, the Pharisees were actually leading them to judgment. Instead of teaching hope in God, their teaching deceived others into following a salvation based on works.

How careful we must be to teach the Word of God and only the Word of God instead of teaching based on tradition or opinions. You might just be a hypocrite if you resemble an unmarked grave, something Jesus condemns.

E. Jesus Condemns the Hypocrisy of Repression –  
v. 45-46

By that I mean a system they imposed on others that restrained them from actually coming to God, one that held them back instead of moving them closer to God. It was a system that controlled its followers preventing them from actually growing in faith. It was a system of guilt not one of grace.

In this passage Jesus also had some things to say about the hypocrisy of the Scribes or experts in the law. Remember these are the guys who interpreted the Law and made up all those additional rules to follow. They made up the application to the interpretation.

John MacArthur writes “Since the lawyers developed the religious system the Pharisees practiced, to insult the Pharisees was to insult them too.” We would say its guilt by association.

Jesus used an illustration from the market place. In some places where merchants traveled, the gateway into the market place was too small or narrow for a camel or donkey to enter, so the merchant would have to unload the animal and carry the burden themselves into the market area.

This was a clear example of the heavy burden they placed on the backs of people to attempt to live by a law the Scribes could not nor would not keep themselves. The law has no power to relieve man of his sinful burden. The law is only to show man how sinful he is.

Isaiah 64:6 tells us that we are all unclean with even our righteous acts considered filthy rags.

Romans 3:20 tells us that no one has ever been declared righteous by observing the law, but rather that through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 7:7 tells us that the law shows us we are sinners.

Galatians 3:10 tells us that by observing the law we are under a curse.

The point is that the law only shows we are sinners and in need of a Savior and where the law falls short to save, there is only One who can deliver us

from the burden and penalty of sin. He is Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:11 says that the righteous live by faith. Romans 3:21- 25 “But now a righteousness from God, *apart from law*, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood.”

The Scribes placed tremendous religious burdens on others and Jesus came to lift them, but they found loopholes around the burdens they placed on others. For example, they taught that you couldn’t carry a burden on the Sabbath in your right hand or in your left hand or on your shoulder. But you could carry the same burden on the back of your hand or with a foot, in your mouth, in your ear, in your wallet or in the hem of your shirt.

Multiply that exponentially with all the laws they were required to keep and one can understand the great burden they carried and the guilt that came with the uncertainty of violating one. The Scribes knew all the loopholes that enabled them to do pretty much whatever they wanted.

Their brand of religion couldn’t move anyone closer to God, but the one who told us to bring our burdens to Him has the power to bring us into a right relationship with God because only He can remove the burden of sin.

You might be a hypocrite if you repress others from coming to God.

F. Jesus Condemns the Hypocrisy of False Repentance – v. 47-51

That generation went around honoring the prophets that their forefathers had persecuted and put to death. They thought they were better than the generations before them because they built tombs to honor the prophets. But instead their artificial homage was merely a façade. In Matthew 23 Jesus says that had they lived at the same time as their forefathers, they would have treated the prophets the same way. When you look at the Gospels and Acts we find this to be true. They had Jesus put to death, they stoned Stephen and incited Herod to persecute the Apostles. Paul, who had been one of their own, was victimized and then put to death.

From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, like their forefathers, they would stand in judgment for not listening to the voice of those who spoke for God. They refused to hear the call to repentance. Consequently their choice to refuse to listen would be met with retribution. They would be judged.

If they were to truly honor the prophets, they would have listened and heeded the call to repentance. They would have cried out like those in the Temple on the Day of Pentecost wanting to know how they could be saved.

You might be a hypocrite if you just give lip service to those who are the voice of God instead of truly repenting and turning to God.

#### G. Jesus Condemns the Hypocrisy of Restriction – v. 52

Here is the last woe. Instead of accurately interpreting and teaching the Word of God, which provides the key to understanding how they could have a right relationship with God, they actually took the key away. False teachers have no capacity to lead someone in the truth because they are not led by the Spirit, the only One who can teach the true meaning of God's Word. Because they were not right with God, they could not lead others into a right relationship with God. Their traditions

obscured the truth of the Scriptures. Unable to enter the kingdom of God themselves, they led others astray as well – blind guides leading the blind.

Their hypocrisy was evident by restricting others from finding God. They purposely kept them from the truth. We might be a hypocrite if we restrict others either by falsely teaching God's Word or from a life that is not obeying the same.

We have seen the reaction of a surprised host. We have seen the rebuke of a serious hypocrisy. Let's close by considering the raising of a strong hostility.

### III. THE RAISING OF A STRONG HOSTILITY – v. 53-54

#### A. It Was Severe – v. 53

From this point forward until His crucifixion Jesus faced severe opposition from them. It's the same word used of Herod's hatred for John the Baptist. The truth will be opposed, but we cannot let that opposition keep us from boldly proclaiming it. We must continue to fight for the truth. This notion of religious tolerance and co-existence is an attempt to get us to compromise our convictions about the truth and we must boldly stand on the authority of God's Word. So many churches today are caving in to cultural pressures that want us to placate those who advocate acceptance of behavior that the truth of God's Word says is still wrong today. But remember that the battle for truth will be severe. Jesus said that because we love Him, we can expect hostility just as He faced.

#### B. It Was a Snare – v. 54

The terms for plotting and catching are hunting terms. Plotting refers to waiting so as to ambush, while catching speaks of the actual hunt and capture of an animal. That's what they did with Jesus. Everything they did now was about snaring Him

through what He said that might give justification to bring valid charges against Him. They had no real love for God because they rejected His Son.

When it comes to godliness, remember that God looks at the heart and knows if we are just pretending to be religious as a show to others or if we have a true relationship with Him. Is our Christianity real or artificial?