

Luke 11 (Part 2): 14-54 • Confronting Unbelief

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We're in Luke chapter 11. So go ahead and open your Bible or turn your device on to that chapter, Luke chapter 11. So, we'll get into the Word here today. I sometimes raise some eyebrows when I'm talking to people who don't really know the Lord, and I tell them that I'm not a very religious person. And they're like, I thought you were a pastor. Yeah, I am but I'm not a very religious person, at least not from the standpoint that religion is defined as what Jesus was constantly having to correct.

What we have here in the latter part of Luke chapter 11 is Jesus addressing Himself to the Jewish religious leaders who had gotten caught up in a form of traditional ceremonial ritual religious practice that lacked any kind of meaning, any kind of genuineness, and they were just locked into this system that was meaningless and hypocritical. And so, Jesus called them on it in this passage. We're going to be beginning here in verse 14, and we'll read through the end of the chapter. It's quite a bunch of text, but I think we'll get through it. It says,

“Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. ¹⁵ But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,” ¹⁶ while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. ¹⁷ But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. ¹⁸ And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they will be your judges.

²⁰ But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; ²² but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. ²³ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ²⁴ “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’”

²⁵ And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first.” ²⁷ As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” ²⁸ But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

²⁹ When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, “This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹ The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

³² The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. ³³ “No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. ³⁵ Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness.

³⁶ If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.” ³⁷ While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. ³⁸ The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. 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. ⁴⁰ You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?

⁴¹ But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you. ⁴² “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ⁴³ Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴ Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it.” ⁴⁵ One of the lawyers answered him, “Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also.”

⁴⁶ 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. ⁴⁷ Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. ⁴⁸ So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' ⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,

⁵¹ 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. 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.' ⁵³ As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, ⁵⁴ lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.' (ESV)

Stop there. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we get into Your Word this morning, we pray that you would open our hearts to hear Your voice because that's the voice we desire to hear. For You are the teacher, the one who is above all.

Speak in this place, Lord God, and direct our hearts to your voice. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

This whole passage, this whole remainder of the chapter of Luke here, 11, is about the religious leaders rejecting Jesus even though He came and showed them many signs. In fact, it's interesting Luke would mention this first sign because you'll notice that he very significantly mentions the fact that there was a man who was mute.

And he specifically says he had a mute spirit. And in other words, this demonic spirit that invested this man could not speak, and therefore the man could not speak, and it says though, that the people marveled, and they were amazed when Jesus cast out the demon. Why so amazed? Well, you have to understand that the Jews had a belief that if you couldn't get the demon to say its name, you wouldn't have the ability to cast it out. So, when they exorcise demons, and they did from time to time, they would try to get the demon to say its name.

If they did, then they believed that they would have authority over that demon to cast it out of the person. Well, you can imagine the unfortunate circumstances of someone who is invested with a mute spirit. How do you get a mute spirit to say its name? It can't talk. So, the Jews reasoned that anybody with a mute spirit

was beyond hope because there was no way you could get the demon to say its name, therefore, you couldn't cast it out, therefore, the person would be forever lost in this abyss of demonic possession.

And so, Jesus doesn't ask the spirit for its name. He just simply casts it out of the person, and the man starts talking and the people are amazed. Why? Because Jesus did what they couldn't do. So, it's an interesting passage from the standpoint that Jesus has, once again, proven Himself in such a way to the people as what should have gotten their attention. And yet, these religious leaders, rather than saying, wow, that's amazing. They just come up with an excuse as to how Jesus could do it. They said, oh, we know what's going on. He's just in cahoots with the devil. This guy is casting out demons by the power of Satan. That's what's going on.

And of course, then Jesus goes on to begin to speak to the ridiculousness, I suppose, and the illogic of that sort of a statement. In verse 17, you'll notice that He begins to lay down this principle that says, *“every kingdom divided against itself,”* and that includes every household, which is a good thing to remember for people who are married. But every kingdom, or household, or nation, whatever, cannot stand if it is being divided against itself.

In other words, if there's fighting going on the inside, and whether it's a husband and wife, or whether it's a king who's literally, coming against his own army. Makes me think about the Democrats and the Republicans of the United States of America, and you wonder how long we're going to last. But the point is, there's a principle here that has been laid down, that every kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. And so, Jesus is basically saying, if Satan is divided against himself. In other words, if he's at cross differences with his purpose, then his kingdom is doomed, right?

And then He asks them a question. He says, well, and by the way, if I'm casting out Satan by Satan, if I'm casting out his demons by his power, then through whom do your sons cast out demons? And obviously He's bringing out the fact, or exposing, I guess I should say, the inconsistency of their argument, because they had never once breathed a word about the fact that their own people were casting out demons by the power of Satan. It was just because they didn't like Jesus. And He basically then makes this statement in verse 20.

If you look with me again there, he says, *“But, if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”* And what He's saying is, I've shown you how your comment is so stupid to think that I could be casting out demons by the power of Satan, and I've shown you how inconsistent

it is. I've really only left you with one conclusion, and that is that this man who stands before you now, able to speak, who was unable before, and who is under demonic possession, he has now been set free by the power of God.

And if, in fact, he has been set free by the power of God, then the Kingdom of God is here. But that is precisely what they refused to admit. And that's really what this latter part of Luke chapter 11 is all about. Their stubborn refusal to simply accept the fact that the Kingdom of God was among them in the person of Jesus, and that's why Jesus goes on in verse 21 and 22 to make another powerful statement. He says, "*When a strong man, (who is) fully armed, guards his own (stuff) his (stuff) is safe*" as long as he's guarding it, except there's only one threat, right?

What's that one threat? Somebody bigger and stronger comes along, and says, he's got a bigger gun, or a bigger army, or a bigger bomb, or whatever he's got. It's bigger, and he's stronger, and he says, give me your stuff. Well, the guy who was guarding his stuff has to say, well, you're bigger, you're stronger, alright. And he allows him, his enemy, to come and take whatever he wants. Alright, what's Jesus saying? He's saying Satan has a kingdom, and Satan, rather than being at cross purposes with his kingdom, he wants very much to continue to steal, kill, and destroy.

And he's not going to let anybody get in and take his stuff unless they're stronger. I present to you Exhibit A, this man who is standing right next to you today, who has been set free from demonic possession, and I submit to you that it is because I am stronger that I am able to go in and pummel the enemy and plunder his goods. Here's a man who was in the enemy's camp and in the enemy's chains and he is now free. I submit to you that I was able to set him free because I am stronger than the enemy.

That's the point of what He's saying. And then He goes on to make a very important statement in verse 23. Look what it says in your Bible. "*Whoever is not with me is against me and whoever does not gather with me scatters.*" And this is the Lord's way of saying there is no neutrality when it comes to the person of Jesus Christ. There's no neutrality. There's no situation where it's like, well Jesus is okay, I like Him. He's all right.

I'm not really sure He's exactly who He says He is but. I don't know how many of you guys have read the masterful book by C. S. Lewis called *Mere Christianity*, but he brings out an argument in that book about how ridiculous it is for somebody to say, I appreciate the teachings that Jesus brought, but I don't believe that He is who He said He was. He says, because there have been people

down through history who have said that. They've said, hey, Jesus was a great moral teacher. He wasn't God in human flesh, but He was a great moral teacher.

There was only one problem with that. Jesus claimed to be God in human flesh. So, if He isn't who He said He was, then Jesus is not a great moral teacher. You with me? You know why? Because great moral teachers don't lie. Jesus clearly said He, and we're going to do this in the "I Am study" that both the women and the men are going to be doing on Friday, but Jesus clearly declared Himself to be God in human flesh. If that wasn't true, He was either a deceiver or He was Himself deceived. Or He was who He said he is, right? And so, there's no neutrality.

He doesn't leave you with the option of saying, yea, He's a good guy. No, He's like God, or He's nobody, and nothing. And so that's why Jesus says here, "*Whoever is not with me is against me.*" There is not a neutral stance. And then Jesus goes on to give a picture of what happens to somebody when they fall into that attempt to be neutral about Him. He begins to tell this story and He says, "*When an unclean spirit comes out of a person for whatever reason,*" He says that, "*it passes through waterless places.*"

And we don't even know what that means. This is a spiritual reference. about something we're not even sure about. And He says that "*the spirit seeks rest, but it doesn't find it.*" And so, then it basically says, "*I'm going to go back and take up residence where I was before,*" which tells us that demonic spirits want very much to have a host. They want to live some kind of a host because somehow it does something for them. And then it says in verse 25 that, "*when the spirit comes back to the house,* which is the person that it previously inhabited, "*it finds that person,*" or you should say, "*the inside of that person, swept and put in order*" because the demon hasn't been there.

And demons bring disorder of every flavor. But it finds things put in order, so the demon finds it difficult to go in and enter in there because things have been put in order, so it says, "*I'm going to go find seven other demons even nastier than me, and we're going to go in and we're going to inhabit that person,*" and Jesus says that, "*the person ends up being worse than they were at first.*" And this is why there's no neutrality in the Kingdom of God related to Jesus. It's because Satan tolerates no neutrality either. See, the person who had the demon got rid of the demon, however it happened, but they didn't make a decision for Christ.

The house was put in order, yeah, but empty. It was empty. The fact of the matter is you see, when you and I come to know Christ as Savior, the Bible says

He gives his Holy Spirit to live inside of us. His spirit literally comes to take up residence in us. That's not an empty house. That's a full house, right?

And so if Satan comes along and finds an empty house, he's going to, or one of his demons, he's going to figure, hey, this is an easy entrance sort of a thing. And by the way, this is another reason why it is impossible for a born-again believer to be invested with a demon.

I don't care what you've heard. I don't care what you've read. I don't even care what you've experienced, because experience does not trump the Word of God. There is no evidence in the Bible to suggest that believers can be invested with the demonic spirit, and there's one significant reason why. You are already occupied with the Holy Spirit of God. Do you think a demon wants to take up residence in you with God? You think he wants to come in and live with God inside of you? What a ridiculous idea.

Listen, when Jesus used to go around during His public ministry, He'd confront a demoniac, and the demoniac would go, just freak out, go ballistic, start just screaming and yelling and falling at their feet. Demons don't want to be around God. They don't like Him very much. Okay? Do you understand people that the very Spirit of Jesus Christ now lives in you because you've put your faith in His finished work on the cross. He now lives in you. He's taken up residence in you if you are a believer. Satan doesn't want any part of that story.

There is nothing in the New Testament that would suggest that a believer can be invested with a demonic spirit. Nothing. Can Satan harass you? You betcha. Can he make life miserable for you? Absolutely. Can he indwell you? Not a chance. You're already indwelt. All right, so I know there are a bunch of books out there today, and all these other things telling people, Christians, how to get rid of the demons that are living inside of you. Well, I'm just here to tell you, it isn't true. Suddenly all this is going on, and then this woman speaks up.

There's this lady that just starts talking, and she yells out, and she said, "*Blessed is the womb that gives birth. and the breasts that nursed you,*" and so forth. And this is really an interesting statement. I find it very interesting that Jesus, He's still in the midst of his public ministry. He hasn't even gone to the cross yet, died for our sins, and people are already trying to magnify His mother. And this has been going on for a long time. And of course, you guys know that Roman Catholicism has done the biggest job, and I'm not here to throw stones at Roman Catholicism, some of you have come out of Roman Catholicism.

Some of you were influenced by it in many ways, shapes, and forms. And it's fine, you want to talk after the service, I'll talk to you, but this whole idea of magnifying Mary, this has been going on a long, long time. And I want you to hear what this woman says, and I want you to hear what Jesus says in response because she said, *"blessed is the woman!"* Now, she's talking about Mary, whether she knows Mary by name or not. She says, blessed is the woman. And I would respond by saying, yeah, Mary was pretty incredibly blessed. What an amazing woman. I'm looking forward to talking to her someday.

But I want you to notice how Jesus responds to this individual. In verse 28, look in your Bible. He says, *"Blessed, rather, are those who hear the Word of God and keep it,"* which is to mean obey it or to do it. So do you hear what Jesus is saying when he says blessed rather, He's saying blessed more. There is a greater blessing upon those who just hear the Word of God and keep it. So, let's not be magnifying human vessels here, right? It's not about magnifying, lifting up one another. It's about focusing our attention on God, His Word, and walking in obedience to that Word. I had somebody come up to me after first service and asked if I thought that Mary was grieved by all of the worship that has gone on toward her.

And I would have to say yes, if she's aware of it, I would say she's probably pretty grieved. I mean, Mary is right now before the throne of God, like all the other saints who died by faith, and she knows that there's no sharing of God's glory. She has seen the throne of her Creator, and she knows there's no sharing of that glory and honor. And yet people continue to extend it to her as the mother of Jesus, but, *"Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it."*

Now, Jesus is going to now address those people who were asking for a sign. Look at verse 29. It tells us that, as the people and the crowds were increasing, Jesus began to speak to them about how evil it is of that generation to actually seek a sign. And He tells them, He says, *"No sign is going to be given to you except the sign of Jonah."* He doesn't explain what the sign of Jonah is here, but elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel account, we actually learn what the sign of Jonah is. Let me put it on the screen for you from Matthew chapter 12. It says,

Mathew 12:40 (ESV)

For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

That's the sign of Jonah. Do you know what He's basically saying? The people are going, Jesus, just do something amazing, and we want to watch you, and then we'll believe. And Jesus is basically saying, first of all, that's a very wicked thing to desire that. Why? He'd been spending the entirety of His public ministry doing miracles. Miracles were not in short supply. Here was a man standing right there who once had a demon and now He doesn't, and they're already making excuses for how that happened. Oh, He's just in league with the enemy.

You see, the point is, if you don't want to believe, it doesn't matter what miracles you see, you're going to find a way to explain them away. Miracles don't change hearts. You can't pray, oh God, please do a miracle for my dad so he comes to know you. It's not going to make any difference. He's going to be, if his heart is hard, he's going to find a way to explain it away. And Jesus said, you know what, I will do one sign for you. Not what you're looking for, but I will give you a sign. I'm going to call it the sign of Jonah.

Just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish, the Son of man is going to be three days in the heart of the earth and then I will rise again, and you will know it, and you still won't believe it. Yeah, I'll give you a sign you're not going to believe that. What did they do about the resurrection? Oh, His disciples came in the night and took the body. The guards were asleep. So, they told us that his disciples came and took his body. Are you kidding me? If they were asleep, how did they know that? Dumbest argument in the world. Somebody brought that up in a court of law, they'd throw them out on their ear.

I have some testimony to give. I was sleeping, but could I still give my testimony? No. I mean, it's just about as dumb as you can imagine. So anyway, if somebody doesn't want to believe. Jesus emphasized the lack of willingness to simply respond to who He is in the coming verses.

Look at verse 31 and following. He first brings up the Queen of the South. He says, *“The Queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn it. For they came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And behold, someone, something greater than Solomon is here.”*

And then He brings up the example of the men of Nineveh. *“³² The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation who would condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”*

Alright, interesting. Two examples, and Gentiles. He says, first of all, the Queen of the South, which you may know from your Old Testament reading as the Queen of Sheba. She traveled a long distance to go hear Solomon because she wanted to hear his wisdom. She heard about it. She wanted to go hear it for herself.

And then He brings up the men of Nineveh. You guys understand who the Ninevites were? Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, and they were hated by the Jews because the Assyrians are the army that came in originally and literally obliterated the northern kingdom of Israel, and they would've made their way down into the southern kingdom of Judah and done the same, had the Babylonians not risen to power and obliterated the Ninevites or the Assyrians.

But Nineveh was a hated people of the Jews, and so Jesus is saying, the Queen of the South or the Queen of Sheba, a Gentile, and the men of Nineveh, hated Gentiles, are going to rise up and they're going to condemn you at the last day because they responded with no miracles. Solomon didn't do any miracles, he just simply spoke wisdom, and the queen of Sheba was so impressed, she got her entire group together and traveled over a long distance just to hear Solomon.

And the men of Nineveh, the people of Nineveh, they responded to the preaching of Jonah, which is crazy because his message was, there was no grace or mercy in it, it was a message of condemnation. Jonah got into Nineveh, and he didn't want to be there. But he started walking through Nineveh, and he started basically saying, you guys are dog meat. It's over for you. God's going to nuke this place in a very short period of time, so just wanted to let you know that. Goodbye. And he just walked out of there.

He didn't do any miracles. There was no sign from heaven. There was no fire. There was no booming voice from the heavenlies. He just simply said, you guys are dead. Good news, huh? Yeah, and you know what the people did? They repented. From the king on down, they repented. Not one single miracle, and they repented. Jonah must have been a mess. He'd been, just been three days in a fish. Can you imagine what he looked like?

We tend to look at people when they don't look very good, and they say something stupid like, the world is coming to an end, and we go, yeah, all right, fine. And it's just easy to just brush them off, isn't it? And you've got to imagine what Jonah probably looked like. He was probably a wreck, and they repented. Do you see why Jesus said these Gentiles who responded with no miracles are going to rise up at the last day and they're going to condemn you because not

only did you see miracles, but God in human flesh walked among you, and you didn't recognize Him.

And yet they're sitting here and telling Jesus, just do a miracle to prove you are who you say you are. And then He says this, verse 33, *“no one who is lighting a lamp, hides it, puts it in the basement or under a basket or something like that.”* And this is an enigmatic statement. Let me explain it to you.

He says, no, when you light a lamp, you put it in a place where people are going to see the light, and then he makes this weird kind of a statement in verse 34 saying that an eye, *“your eye is the lamp of your body. And when it's healthy, it lets the light in. But when it's bad, it doesn't let the light in, and you end up being full of darkness.”*

What's Jesus saying with those verses here? Well, He's continuing to respond to the people who say that he's in cahoots with the enemy. That's the context of this whole passage. And He's basically saying, you think that what I'm bringing is darkness. You've accused me of being part of the enemy and bringing darkness into you, but here's what's really going on. I'm bringing light. I'm bringing the light of God to you, but you can't see it because your eyes are dark and you refuse to look upon the light, and because of that, your whole life is full of darkness because you're just unwilling to see the light.

The light of God's Word, the light of God's glory the light that He shines for all of us to open our hearts to. And that's why He said, when your eye is bad, your body is full of darkness. In other words, your life is just consumed in darkness because you're just unwilling to see it. That's why, as Christians, we ought to be always praying, Lord, just open my eyes to see the light of your presence. Open my eyes to see the light of your Word. Open my eyes. I want to see, I want to see, I want to see. Give me light to see. Give me eyes to be open to see all that you are, and all that you're doing, and all that you have said to us.

I don't want to miss out. I don't want to close my eyes and say, no, I don't want to look at that, because that's going to only bring darkness into my life, and I don't want that in my life. And then in the final verses, Jesus begins to speak here directly to the Pharisees, and this section includes six woes, and it begins with Jesus getting an invitation from a Pharisee to go to his home and have dinner, and the first thing that happened, you've got to understand, the Pharisees used to engage in these elaborate hand washing traditions, and they believed that if you didn't wash your hands just so, then if you ate, because they didn't use utensils in those days, they just picked it up and dipped it in the stuff and ate it and that's the way they ate their meals.

They believed that if you didn't wash your hands just you would become unclean. And so, this Pharisee notices that Jesus doesn't engage in these elaborate Pharisaical hand washing traditions and he's just, amazed at this.

And so, in verse 39, Jesus begins to speak, *“And the Lord says to him, now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you're full of greed and wickedness. You fools, did not he who made the outside make the inside also?”*

And this is Jesus talking to a legalist because this is what legalism does. It's concerned about the outside. It's how I look to my fellow man. Do I look holy? Do I look righteous? That's the way I want to appear. Forget what's going on in the inside. I'm not going to talk about my heart because you can't see my heart. Right? God can. But we're just going to put that on the back burner. I just want to be concerned with what you see. Well, that was the life of the Pharisees. It was all about externals. How do I look? Do I look good? Do I look holy?

And Jesus confronts him, He says, you guys are just masters at cleaning the outside of the dish, as it were. But inside its gross. Have you ever gotten like a glass at a restaurant? And there was still like lemonade pulp, or something on the inside, and we're like, Yuck! And what do you do? You just go, Okay, no problem. No, you send it back, don't you? You pick it up, you know? You say, here, you need to put this through the washer again. That didn't come clean all the way. I mean, we consider it a really gross thing if like a plate, or a cup, or something like that has some goopy on the inside.

And Jesus is telling these guys, this is what you're doing because, you've got to care about the inside. And He says, didn't the God who make the outside make the inside too? Why are you not concerned about the inside? Well, it's because they didn't care about God.

And so, He begins to level these six woes at them. Verse 42 is the first one. *“Woe to you Pharisees.”* He says, *“for you tithe. You mint and rue and herbs. I'm going to give you, I'm going to give God 10 percent of my mint.”* He says, *“but you've neglected love of God.”* Why are you doing these duties and you're neglecting the love of God?”

And so, the first statement covers the essence of what I consider to be empty religious observance. We do it because it's tradition. We're supposed to do it. And that's what religion does, it causes people to become fixated on all of the little details of what they consider to be their religious duty, all the while

ignoring what's really important, which is how is my heart before God? How's my heart doing? Forget about the externals. How's my heart doing?

And He goes on. The second woe is in verse 43. He says, "*Woe to you Pharisees. You love the best seat in the synagogues and getting greetings in the marketplaces,*" because you see they would greet them using titles, that were honoring. And this is really all about using God to get me noticed. Good morning, Reverend. How are you today? Good to see you, reverend. Reverend? If you call me that, I'll smack you. Do you know what reverend means? It actually comes from Latin, and it refers to someone who is to be revered. What's all that about?

Well, I think it's skating awfully close to the edge of what Jesus is talking about here, if not over the line. And that was what the Pharisees loved. Calling them by special titles.

Next, verse 44. "*Woe to you for your like unmarked graves and people walk over them without knowing it.*" This is an interesting statement. It's actually in the book of Numbers. In the book of Numbers, God tells His people, if you touch a dead body, a corpse, or walk over the grave of a corpse without knowing it, or touch the tomb, you will be rendered ceremonially unclean.

What the Jews used to do is they used to mark their graves so people wouldn't accidentally walk close to them or touch them or walk over them. And they would paint them with like white or put something else, some kind of a marker that would make people aware of the fact that there's a dead person there. And so, Jesus says to the Pharisees, you guys are like unmarked graves.

In other words, people don't know that when they come near you, they're being made unclean. Why? Because you yourselves are unclean. You are just like that grave that is full of bones, and deterioration, and decay, and disease, spiritually speaking.

Obviously, it's not a very nice thing to say to Him, but He's being truthful. Verse 45, one of the experts in the law speaks up. He says, "*Teacher, in saying these things, you insult us also.*" Look out. And Jesus responds here in verse 46, "*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.*"

This is what, by the way, lawyer means expert in the law. They were tasked with the job of teaching the people the law of Moses.

And here's what Jesus is saying, and this is what legalism does. He says, you're just simply loading people up with rules. That's all you're doing. You load them up with rule, after rule, after rule, after rule, and you know what? You can't even keep them all. It's impossible. You can't even keep them all, and you load people up with rules that you yourself can't keep. You guys remember in the book of Acts when there was a group of Christians who wrongly believed that the Gentiles who are coming to faith needed to be circumcised, right?

And so, they had this confab in Jerusalem to talk about it, and they were saying, Yeah, the new believers, the Gentiles, they need to be circumcised. They need to first become Jews so then they can become Christians. And Peter stands up and he goes, why are we putting a burden on the people that we ourselves have not been able to bear? You see, he got it. He understood. And this is what Jesus is talking about because that's what legalism does. It puts rules on people, and it just creates this hypocritical sort of a situation.

Verse 47, *“Woe to you,”* He says, *“you build tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So, you're witnesses, and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them and you build their tombs.”*

And then He begins to speak about how. ⁴⁹ *“The wisdom of God spoke ahead of time saying, “I'll send them prophets and apostles some of whom they will kill...”* And then He says, so you know what? He says, 50, *“All of the blood that was shed murderously is going to come to you on this generation.”* What generation?

The one that was right there when He was talking. Why did Jesus say that? Why did Jesus say all of the blood that has been shed is going to come and be put on this generation? Here's why. Yeah, those other people killed prophets and of course we know that many of the apostles were killed for their faith and da, but this generation, they killed the One who sent them all. They killed the Lord of life. They sentenced Him to death. Do you see the much greater issue that's going on here, the much greater crime of this generation?

And then the last woe. Verse 52, *“Woe to you lawyers. You've taken away the key to knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you are hindered, or you hindered those who were entering. How ironic, isn't it that the teachers of the law who are the ones who are to give knowledge were actually withholding knowledge and the key to knowledge.”*

I mean, what a crazy sort of a thing is that. But once again, that's what legalism does because it takes understanding, and it substitutes it with a list of rules. You

want to serve God? Fine. Get your life, get your act together. Do this, do this, do this, and don't do those things.

But that doesn't pass along knowledge. That's just rules. It's just commandments. Do this, do this, do this, do this! You're not going to get to know God that way. Nobody gets to know God through legalism. Legalism doesn't foster a knowledge of God. It fosters a knowledge of rules, and that's all. And that's what Jesus is saying to these men.

You have taken away the key to knowledge, and you have replaced it with rules. And guys, it didn't stop with the Jews. Legalism, and this rule keeping mentality, has invaded the church many, many times throughout the course of, well, ever since the Church began back on the day of Pentecost.

But there are, so there are many people who would reduce our life. in Christ to just a set of rules, and it's easy to do that. We default fairly easily to rules, but we have learned, I hope we've learned that loving and serving and knowing God is not about keeping rules. It's about knowing the Lord personally. That's the cool thing, is that God can be known. God can be known in personal, intimate relationship, and it's all about the life that emerges from that knowledge.

Let me end with a passage, another one from Matthew chapter seven. Up on the screen for you. Jesus is speaking here. He says,

Mathew 7:21-23 (ESV)

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you’...”

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (But, He says) On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not (Do. See, this is what the legalist does. It’s all about what he does. It’s about doing. Did we not) prophesy in your name, (we did that you know! Did we not) and cast out demons in your name, (yeah, we were doing exorcisms all over the place) and (did we not) do many mighty works in your name? (And look what Jesus responds. He says) And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you’...”

Yeah, but Lord, didn't we do all these things? Yeah. Notice that He never denies that they actually did those things. He just comes back and says, I never

knew you. So, the legalist will tell you it's all about what you do, and Jesus tells you it's all about who you know. Do you know the Lord? We know Him not by keeping rules. We know Him by opening our heart to Him and saying, Lord, I want to know you. I want to know who you are. I want to live for you. Not following a list of rules but following your Spirit. I want to live for Jesus.

I want to make you number one in my life. So, Lord deliver me from the performance track of trying to please you by the things that I do. Help me Lord to love you with a whole heart because you love me and you gave your life for me, and you've invited me to be your child, and to get to know you personally, to talk to you, to pour out my heart to you, to tell you when I'm sad, to rejoice together when I'm happy, to talk with you about the ups and the downs and just to hang out with you and enjoy your presence. I want to know Christ, don't you? In true intimate experiential fellowship. We sang this morning, let us experience the glory of His presence.