HOW TO BE A HYPOCRITE
LUKE 11:37-54

As Jesus makes His way to Jerusalem, there is increasing resistance to Him. The crowds continue to gather, but not everyone who gathers is enamored with Christ. Some are skeptical. And increasingly, some are hostile. And that hostility will culminate when Jesus arrives in Jerusalem with a speedy trial and crucifixion (and resurrection, which was God's eternal plan, but wholly unanticipated by the crucifiers).

The tragic irony is that those who were most opposed to Christ should have been the ones that were most delighted in Him. They were the ones who studied, knew, and taught the Scriptures. They were committed to the Old Testament and they were rigorous in attempting to figure out appropriate application of biblical principles. These religious leaders were Pharisees — and their failure to maintain the standard to which they called others led to their name becoming synonymous with hypocrisy. To be a hypocrite is to be a Pharisee. The terms are used synonymously — even by unbelievers today. Talk about a failure.

And as their opposition to Christ increased, Jesus also increasingly and clearly confronted and exposed them. So after "piously" asking Jesus for more signs (after He cast a demon out of a demon-possessed man), and after asserting that Jesus' work and power was satanic, Jesus was invited to lunch by a Pharisee. That Pharisee continued the attack on Jesus' understanding and use of Scripture and Jesus confronted His hypocritical unbelief. But Jesus is not only confronting the Pharisees; He is warning the Twelve (12:1). And He is warning *us* what hypocrisy might look like in our own lives. From this extended confrontation (Lk. 11:37-54) we are warned —

AS YOU PURSUE GODLINESS, BEWARE OF BECOMING HYPOCRITICAL.

Beware of becoming a hypocrite. What does hypocrisy look like? It is not much different today than it was in Jesus' day. His confrontation reveals at least nine characteristics of pharisaism — nine ways to be a hypocrite; if you want to be a hypocrite, cultivate these nine characteristics:

1. **Pursue Ritualism at the Expense of Transformation (vv. 38-41)**
2. **Forget the Purposes of God's Word (v. 42)**
3. **Seek Personal Praise over Personal Piety (v. 43)**
4. **Disregard Your Heart (v. 44)**
5. **Don't Help Others with Their Spiritual Needs (v. 46)**
6. **Dishonor Those Who Honor God (vv. 47-48)**
7. **Claim Immunity from judgment (vv. 49-51)**
8. **Keep People from Knowing the Truth of God (v. 52) (inhibit and be a roadblock)**
9. **Be Defensive and Angry when Your Heart is Exposed (vv. 45, 53-54)**

1. Pursue Ritualism at the Expense of Transformation (vv. 38-41)

- Jesus' words of correction and confrontation (vv. 14-36) were barely out of His mouth when He received a ***lunch*** invitation — from a ***Pharisee***. It was unexpected, but Jesus went.
  - ✓ Who are the Pharisees? ***Pharisees*** originated around 150 B.C. as a religious and political group. They were mostly laypeople (non-priests) who were interested in the application of Scripture to the Jews; they used legalism to attempt to keep the nation faithful to the Mosaic Law — they used tradition and strict adherence to minute details of the Law. They were very influential (6000+).
  - ✓ There is some irony that the Pharisee asks Jesus to come to lunch since the Pharisees had conflict with Jesus over His company at meals several times (e.g., 5:30; 15:2).
  - ✓ The Pharisees have been critical of Jesus throughout His ministry (Mk. 7:5-8; Jn. 5:39-41). The opposition is now intensifying (v. 15). While some think the Pharisee might not have had a motive, that seems really unlikely. He had an agenda. He would have been critical of Christ. He was doing what everyone would do more openly at the end of this story — plotting (v. 54).

- The conflict between the Pharisee and Jesus arises even before they begin to eat: *Jesus didn't* ***wash***!
  - ✓ The Pharisee wasn't fussing because Jesus wasn't being hygienic. The Pharisee was questioning whether Jesus was ceremonially (religiously) clean. There *were* OT laws about ceremonial cleansing. And there were examples of washing at a meal (Gen. 18:4; Jn. 13:4-5), but not commanded.
  - ✓ Ritual washing for meals was a Pharisaic practice that was detailed in process (3x during meal).
  - ✓ Jesus' failure to wash ***surprised*** the Pharisee — "I'm amazed You aren't washing…" (it was intentional).
  - ✓ ***The Lord*** — don't rush past that name; Luke is reminding us of who He is — Master of all… (6:5).
  - ✓ Jesus said, ***You wash the cup and platter*** — not just hands and feet but utensils, too. Yet they didn't clean everything — it was all external: ***inside of you [is] robbery and wickedness.*** Not just "some," but ***full of robbery…*** They extort from others and are saturated with evil. They are depraved. And it is a reminder that their problem is internal, not external. There is nothing to commend them internally; all their outward activities couldn't fix their internal problem.

- Let's remember that in one way the Pharisees are no different than anyone else. Everyone is depraved; everyone is a sinner that is incapable of helping himself. But these religious teachers should have known.
  - ✓ Everyone's problem is internal (Lk. 6:43-45). My problem is inside me, in my heart.
  - ✓ No amount of external rituals can change my heart; only the Lord can transform us. And that is what He came to do (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). To avoid this is ***foolish*** (ignorance and blindness, v. 40).
  - ✓ Do acts of ***charity***, but let them flow from ***within***. Give your heart to God and then your cash to others.
  - ✓ Beware of rituals and habits that supplant genuine heart transformation. The Lord wants obedience — but obedience that is from a transformed heart. The heart matters (Rom. 2:29; 1 Sam. 16:7).

2. Forget the Purposes of God's Word (v. 42)

- Why do you read your Bible? Why do we make the Bible a priority in worship and ministry?
  - ✓ We read because it is an ingrained habit (and we like completing check boxes).
  - ✓ We read because the Bible is an instruction manual for life. We want to know what to do.
  - ✓ We read because our parents tell us to read and they make us read at the dinner table.
- Having laid the foundation of differences between Himself and the Pharisees, Jesus begins a series of three woes against the Pharisees. The first has to do with the Word of God (reinforcing vv. 29-36).
  - ✓ A ***woe*** (6x in this section) can be a lament (an expression of something displeasurable); but here it also contains a warning of coming judgment. It is designed to make the hearer stop and contemplate.
  - ✓ Jesus warns them of coming judgment because they are paying ***tithes*** (taxes to support both the "government" and the religious leaders). They did give a percentage from their crops, including ***mint***, but ***rue*** (another plant) and ***herbs***, neither of which needed to be tithed.
  - ✓ There was nothing wrong with tithing beyond what they needed to do (***you should have done…***).
  - ✓ The problem was they forgot the intent of the word of God — to cultivate ***justice*** and ***love of God***.
  - ✓ They "pass by" justice and the love of God. They "do the right thing" by fastidiously counting their herbs, they miss the heart of justice (their tithing is not enough to make them just). And they do not love God. (Nor do they love others, as the rest of the indictments will reveal.)

- The Bible is our guide — just like the OT was a tutor to lead until Christ came, so the Bible directs us and instructs us about how to live. But don't forget the main point. The Bible reveals the character of God to us so that we will learn to love Him.
  - ✓ In my closet I have a stack of letters from Raye Jeanne from the months that we dated and were engaged. If you were to read them sequentially, you would see a growing love. They may have related activities we were doing, but they were love letters designed to stimulate more love.
  - ✓ The Word of God is the same (except more) — it is God's love letter to us to invigorate our love.
  - ✓ Pharisees/hypocrites read the Bible (Jn. 5:39) — but they forget to love God (5:42). Do you love Him?

3. Seek Personal Praise over Personal Piety (v. 43)

- There is a second ***woe*** — and it expands and deepens the indictment. The Pharisees ***love the chief seats*** in the synagogues (seats surrounding the ark where the scrolls for teaching were kept). When the teacher for the day would receive the scroll everyone would see the Pharisees.
- They also loved ***respectful greetings*** — not just "Hi Rabbi," but elaborate rituals of greeting.
- Jesus is identifying that they loved their roles for the personal benefits contained in the role. They love adulation and acclaim. They love to be honored and respected. They *expect* honor.
- Ands while Jesus doesn't say it explicitly, it's clear that they forget that we come to Christ to give Him glory, not to get glory.

- ✓ It's appropriate to honor those who help us in our walk with Christ.
- ✓ But whether we get help or give help, we all want to live for His glory and not for our own pleasure.
- ✓ This woe "forces us to ask is this: Where is our glory? Which are we looking for in Scripture: the glory of God or our own glory?…All too often for us, heaven is approval by others and hell is being ignored, and so we master Scripture for the sake of parading our knowledge and pampering our sense of our own rightness…If we are to have integrity as people of Scripture, we must honor Scripture, not merely by looking at Scripture but by looking along the beam of divine revelation at the glory of God in the face of Christ." [Reeves, *Evangelical Pharisees*.]

4. Disregard Your Heart (v. 44)

- As we approach the end of the year, in a couple of months you may do some self-evaluation — how am I doing? What has been the effect and impact of my work this year? What did I accomplish? Good Q.
- The third ***woe*** is not so much an indictment of the behaviors or attitudes of the Pharisees, but the impact of their work. "This is the end product of what you've been doing." It's not a good evaluation.
  - ✓ ***You are like concealed tombs***. You might remember that to touch a corpse left one ceremonially unclean for seven days (Num. 19:16). So tombs were often marked with whitewashed paint to warn passersby of the danger.
  - ✓ Jesus is saying they are spiritually dead inside and they *aren't* whitewashed — there is no warning about their deadness and they are making unclean everyone with whom they come in contact.
  - ✓ It is a scathing indictment of both their hearts and the effect of their work. They are dead and they only contaminate others. They aren't a spiritual help to others; they hinder others spiritually.
  - ✓ Rather than leading people to Heaven, their false spirituality leads them to the grave and Hell.

- We often talk in discipleship about the heart — what is going on internally? What am I wanting? What are my motives and desires? We do that because there is danger in ignoring our hearts. "Without [the] reformation of hearts and lives through the gospel itself, we may find…that [we] are a 'sober, and orderly, and good sort of people' and yet [we] remain 'dry bones.'" [Reeves]
- When it was launched in 1936, the British ship the Queen Mary was the largest ocean-going passenger ship. It served for four decades including as a troop carrier in WWII. When it was retired in the 1970s, the massive smoke stacks, built of ¾-inch steel were taken down to be scraped and repainted. When they scraped off the 30 layers of paint the stacks crumbled. The steel had rusted and disintegrated. They looked fine on the ship, but inwardly, nothing was left. Likewise, we can order things externally and appear fine, but when we ignore our hearts, our lives will crumble.
- Guard your heart, from it flows the well-spring of life (Prov. 4:23). "Where is my heart?"

5. Don't Help Others with Their Spiritual Needs (v. 46)

- Jesus was clear about the state of the Pharisees (He held the religious leaders to a much higher standard of accountability than He did "ordinary" sinners since the leaders should have known).
  - ✓ A ***lawyer*** objected. They were also called ***scribes***; these were usually also Pharisees though they were "professional scholars" who were particularly knowledgeable about the Law. They often gave rulings on interpretative questions about the Law. They were often grouped with the Pharisees though they would have been a specialized subset of particularly "skilled" Pharisees.
  - ✓ ***"Teacher"*** — notice the difference between his address and Luke (v. 39, ***LORD***).
  - ✓ He is anticipating that Jesus will have a different assessment of him and the other lawyers because they aren't the same as the Pharisees (perhaps thinking, "*we* really are spiritual"? — even more pride?)
  - ✓ But they were of the same spiritual background as the Pharisees w/ same problems, so Jesus adds…

- Here are three more ***woes*** — this first is ***weighing men down with burdens hard to bear***.
  - ✓ There is difficulty to the spiritual life; it is work (Phil. 2:13; 1 Cor. 15:58). But it is not excessive and God has given us the resources so that we can endure and persist (1 Cor. 10:13).
  - ✓ But the Pharisees piled on regulations that were unfair — some 6000 laws that were not in the OT Law that they expected the people to keep. They couldn't.
  - ✓ But that isn't the worst of the problem. The real indictment is that they lacked compassion and they didn't help — ***will not even touch one of the burdens***… i.e., "you won't lift a finger to help."
  - ✓ God desires mercy and not sacrifice (Hos. 6:6); instead of helping the Lawyers make it harder.
  - ✓ It's the kind of attitude that says, "I don't have that problem and you shouldn't either and if you can't figure it out I'm not going to help."
  - ✓ It's almost trite, but the compassionate person says, "There, but by the grace of God, go I…"
  - ✓ God has put us into His family not to condemn our brothers, but to help (1 Cor. 12:25b-26).

6. Dishonor Those Who Honor God (vv. 47-48)

- Jesus further indicts the lawyer because hypocrites work against God's purposes by dishonoring those who worked to honor the Lord.
  - ✓ Many OT prophets were persecuted and killed by Israel (Neh. 9:26; Acts 7:52). E.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah; cf. Heb. 11:32-38.
  - ✓ The scribes apparently built tombs to honor and revere those prophets, yet by their rejection of Christ they were following in the same tradition of their spiritual ***fathers*** who killed the prophets.
  - ✓ It might even be that in building the tombs they want to "keep the prophets dead." In building the tombs they are "finishing the work of their fathers" — they are maintaining the "killing tradition."
  - ✓ "They killed the prophets, you make sure they stay dead."

- In their self-righteous and exalted view of themselves, they thought they were above the prophets.

- The scribes delighted when the prophets fell and died because it made them seem more important.
  - ✓ This was Saul (Paul) at Stephen's death (Acts 8:1) — though he later repented.
  - ✓ Do we rejoice in and are we thankful for those who say hard and "prophetic" things (reminding us, "thus says the Lord") that are for our good? Or do we seek to dishonor and discredit them?
  - ✓ When we think about the ministry of the OT prophets, we are thinking about revelatory ministry; it is akin to our receptivity to the Word of God. Do we honor (and submit to) this Word (1 Th. 2:13)?
  - ✓ Pharisees hold themselves as a higher authority ("we don't need the Word of the prophets") and refuse to submit to God's authority.

7. Claim Immunity from judgment (vv. 49-51)

- Because of their disdain for the prophetic voice of the prophets Jesus adds to this woe —
  - ✓ In His ***wisdom***, God ***sent them prophets and apostles*** — and some were ***killed*** and ***persecuted***. God's wisdom is that He sent prophets and apostles and though they were killed, God's plan was not compromised; He fulfilled His purposes in spite of rebellion (Acts 2:23-24).
  - ✓ ***This generation*** (the one alive at the time of Christ) had received more revelation than any other.
  - ✓ It had been given all the "prophets" of Scripture — from ***Abel*** (Gen. 4) to ***Zechariah*** (2 Chron. 24:22), the end of the Hebrew OT. And they spilled the ***blood*** and ***killed*** them all — as they would Christ.
  - ✓ And they would not escape God's judgment — ***it will be charged against*** them (2x; vv. 50, 51).
  - ✓ And it would be — in A.D. 70, that generation in Jerusalem suffered tragic loss — hundreds of thousands of Jews died under the Romans. Geldenhuys writes —

> "Never before did the judgment of God visit a nation as it did the Jews of Palestine—and particularly of Jerusalem during those years. Every possible calamity—fratricide, plague, famine, the Roman sword—came upon them. The erstwhile chosen people were displaced because they refused to believe in Christ, and they paid a heavy penalty for their murder of apostles and prophets, but especially for the murder of the Messiah."

- The hypocrite is so sure of his spiritual stature that he ignores the possibility of discipline or judgment.
  - ✓ He believes he is beyond correction and beyond consequences.
  - ✓ The ***Lord*** is warning the lawyer of coming consequences. They will be harsh.
  - ✓ Cf. Rom. 11:20-21 — If God disciplined Israel, He will also discipline us…

8. Keep People from Knowing the Truth of God (v. 52) (inhibit and be a roadblock)

- The final ***woe*** of Christ is again about the Scriptures. They not only added burdens and weights to the Israelites (v. 46), but they ***have taken away the key of knowledge*** — that is they obscured the meaning of the OT and they hid the truth of the Bible from the Israelites. They didn't "unlock" the Bible.
  - ✓ Even worse, they didn't unlock it for themselves to ***enter*** into the truth.
  - ✓ And still worse, they ***hindered those who were entering***. They blocked those who were coming to a

knowledge of the truth. Blind leaders were attempting to keep everyone else blind also with the end that they all fell into a pit of spiritual ignorance.

- ✓ "Christ had come to offer light, and the Pharisees had bound men in darkness." [Pentecost]

- The Pharisees primarily kept Israelites from truth by their ungodly interpretations of Scripture. But they also openly lived inconsistently with Scripture. That will also keep people away from truth.
  - ✓ As we teach, shepherd, instruct, we want to be careful to be wise, discerning, and accurate (Js. 3:1).
  - ✓ But we also want to live with consistency and not create a roadblock of heretical living.
  - ✓ (Recognize that there is some "hypocrisy" in all of us as we daily fight against the flesh; the person who consistently repents and pursues Christlikeness is not a hypocrite by character and nature.)

9. Be Defensive and Angry when Your Heart is Exposed (vv. 45, 53-54)

- The Pharisees and lawyer(s) didn't like what Jesus had to say. The lawyer complained that Jesus was ***insulting*** them (v. 45). He wasn't insulting; He wasn't treating them "shamefully." He was graciously warning and calling them to repentance. Instead of repenting they got defensive.
- And they got angry (vv. 53-54). Rather than repent, they rebelled, became ***hostile*** and began ***plotting*** to entrap Him in some sinful misstatement. That would soon be a plot to kill Him (Jn. 11:53; Mk. 14:1).
- Their anger revealed that Jesus was their enemy. They hated Him. For all their "good works" they were filled with animosity, hatred, and death. And they wanted death for Christ.
  - ✓ Anger reveals how far we will go to get what we want. That was the Pharisees.
  - ✓ When our hearts are exposed, God is being gracious to us to give us opportunity to repent.
  - ✓ We don't have to repent. We can be defensive and angry and hostile. And the extent of our anger and our lack of repentance will demonstrate the extent of our hypocritical pharisaism.

CONCLUSION: There you are. Do you want to cultivate hypocrisy in your life — that's how to do it.

I trust you want something better. Let's reverse the statements of hypocrisy — to be a humble and teachable follower of Jesus…

1. Pursue Transformation and Forsake Ritualism
2. Remember the Purpose of God's Word — to delight in Him
3. Seek Personal Piety Even When No One Sees and No One Praises
4. Guard Your Heart
5. Help Others with Their Spiritual Needs — they struggle like you do
6. Honor Those Who Honor God
7. Be humbly aware of the possibility of discipline and give thanks for freedom from judgment
8. Lead People to a Knowledge of the Truth of God (open the gateway)
9. Humbly Repent When Your Heart is Exposed

BENEDICTION: 2 Thess. 3:3-5