

Unmasking Hypocrisy Pt. 1

Luke 11:37-44 (12-01-19)

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Luke 11:37, Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined at the table.

What's it like to have lunch with Jesus? You'd expect some really awesome truths and gems of wisdom to pour from His lips as you enjoyed the meal together. But lunch with Jesus at this Pharisee's house turned out to be completely different than he expected. In fact, Jesus' fiery table talk that day so blistered the Pharisee and the other religious leaders he'd invited that their hostility only increased and their efforts to destroy Him escalated (see verse 53-54).

Who were these Pharisees, anyway? They were the Jewish religious separatists that developed over the last couple hundred years before Christ, during the time of the Maccabees. The word "Pharisee" means "separated one." They separated themselves from the Greek culture to the study and application of the traditions of the elders. They stood out like odd ducks from the rest of Jewish society garbed with small black leather boxes strapped to their foreheads and arms and long blue tassels dangling from the bottom of their garments. These leather boxes were called phylacteries and contained scrolls of parchment inscribed with Torah verses. The long blue tassels tied to four corners of the bottom of their garments were to be a reminder of God's commandments.

Rabbis identified seven different types of Pharisees. The "shoulder Pharisee" carried his good deeds around for all to see. The "wait-a-little Pharisee" made others wait while he did a good deed. The "bruised or bleeding Pharisee" shut his eyes to avoid looking at a woman and walked right into a wall. The "pestle Pharisee" faked his humility by walking with his head down. The "ever-reckoning Pharisee" was forever counting up his good deeds to see if they cancelled out his failures. The "fearful Pharisee" lived in terror of God. And the "God-loving Pharisee" truly loved God like Abraham did. So they were a mixed bag. Some were sincere like Nicodemus, but for the most part they were consummate hypocrites. In Luke 12:1 Jesus warned about the leaven of the Pharisees, their leaven of hypocrisy.

Now, why did this Pharisee invite Jesus to lunch? It was "when He had spoken," so maybe he wanted to ask Jesus about his message on the light and darkness in verse 35. But before they could even begin dining, there was a huge problem. When Jesus arrived, he walked right past the stone jar containing the water for ceremonial washing and immediately reclined to eat.

Luke 11:38, When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.

Kids, this is not what your mom means when she says, "Wash your hands for supper!" This was a ritual or ceremonial washing of hands to be sure there weren't any Gentile or other defilements on their hands. If you didn't wash this way, it was a sin equal to committing fornication. Some claimed demons sat on unwashed hands and to eat without washing was like eating excrement. To wash ceremonially they would use enough water to fill one and a half egg shells. Holding hands with finger tips upward, they would rinse from the finger tips to the wrists, and use their fists to rub the opposite hands. Then they would point hands downward and pour water from the wrists down off the finger tips to rinse off any contaminated water.

No sooner had this thought about ceremonial washing passed through the Pharisee's mind than Jesus, able to read his host's mind, fired off four rounds of rebuke that exposed the hypocrisy of all those sitting there that day. Here's the gist of what He is going to say, "You Pharisees are all about ceremonies and externals, but your hearts are far from God." Isaiah said the same thing.

Isaiah 29:13, *Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote.*

Now we're not going to preach to the Pharisees this morning. They aren't here. But we're here! And let me assure you that if you know your own heart, you know that a Pharisee or two or maybe three live there. We are all plagued by this leaven of the Pharisees, hypocrisy. We all want to impress others with our good deeds.

Let me warn you, Jesus' words are a sharp sword and this may hurt. But you would rather have your masks of hypocrisy ripped off by Jesus than continue trying to fake everyone out and then go into Christ's presence and hearing, "Depart from Me. I never knew you!" This applies to believers as well. We all have a sneaky desire to impress others, to do our deeds to be noticed by others, to blow a trumpet and impress people with our religious activity. Those thoughts creep up more than we want to admit. And it hurts to have our hypocrisy exposed. But that's what Jesus does. Jesus goes after four areas of hypocrisy with the Pharisees.

Appearance: being more concerned about your outward behavior than about your heart.

Luke 11:39-41, *But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. 40 "You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also? 41 "But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you.*

Imagine going to someone's house for lunch and sitting on the table are these really beautiful gilded plates and cups and saucers, but when you look inside you see spiders and maggots and bits of rotting food clinging to the sides. The outside shines, but the inside is filthy. This is how many people live out their religious lives. They put on this beautiful, shiny front. They look good. They do good things. They go to church and profess to be Christians, but their hearts are full of this world. They really don't love Christ and God's people. They love money, even if it means cheating other people to get it. They enjoy indulging their lusts and their wickedness. They may gorge themselves on sensual movies, tell their dirty jokes, or look with lusting eyes at other women. They love hearing and telling the latest gossip and criticize others. But they hardly ever read their Bible with an attitude that will draw close to God and sanctify their lives. They really look good on the outside, but inside their hearts are far from God.

This is a hypocrite; just playing the part. A hypocrite means an actor, playing the part of someone else. You may go to a movie and watch someone act out a part to the point you will be in tears. Sometimes you may almost forget the people in the movie are just actors playing a role. It's all a show. It's not real. It's like fake apples and oranges. Our capacity to mask our sinful hearts is scary. Pastors have preached series of sermons on marriage, all the while in an adulterous relationship. The pastor of the largest church in the world in Korea spent three years in jail for embezzlement. popular preacher in Chicago was removed from his church for his dirty talk on a live mic and bilking the church treasury of millions to finance his own lifestyle. They were just playing the role of being spiritual leaders without any genuine relationship with God.

Here is what Jesus says to these Pharisees and to us, "You foolish, unthinking, mindless ones. Do you think God only made your body, and didn't make your heart also?" Your heart is the important thing; it's your heart that God is after. God actually gives you a new heart when you come to Christ and He intends you allow Him to rule your heart from then on. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from your heart flow all the issues of your life." In other words, it isn't the externals that count with God; He is looking at your heart. James 4:8, "Purify your hearts, you double-minded."

Here comes Mr. and Mrs. Believer arguing their way to church on a Sunday morning. By the time they get there, their hearts are far from God. But out they step, "Hey, Brother Bill, great morning, aye? Praise

God and Hallelujah too! God's been so good." Mrs. is thinking, yeah, right. They go right into worship impressing everyone around them, but their hearts are full of anger and pride. They look and even sound good on the outside, but where are their hearts? Jesus said before you worship, if your brother has something against you, go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and worship. How easy to put on a front but hide a heart that isn't right with God or others! Just playing the part without the heart deadens the heart.

You can give and pray and fast and even do good things for others, but God is after your heart. Examine your heart. Ask God to make you all in, real, genuine, not a fake. Ask Him to rip off the mask of hypocrisy so you are real. Spurgeon prayed, "Lord, make me sincere. If I am deceived, undeceive me." Then you can give, and you'll be giving out of a genuine, God-loving heart. 2 Cor. 9:7, "God loves a cheerful giver." That's a Christian giver whose heart fully desires to please God, not just playing the part. A genuine heart repents and confesses sin. Psalm 87:11 says, "Give me an undivided heart." God wants your whole heart.

Legalism: being more concerned about keeping rules than loving God and others.

Luke 11:42, "But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others."

This is laughable. There they are, bending over all their garden produce including seeds, and meticulously separating one out of ten of everything and then blowing trumpets when they throw their tithes into the receptacle, loving to be recognized. True, God called the Jews to various tithes, but these guys made a mockery of it all. For them, their relationship to God was totally legalistic, trying to impress God with all of their rules keeping. Kind of like us sometimes. For some people, church and religion can be just keeping rules in an attempt to earn God's acceptance and impress others. These attempts seldom impress others and never earn God's acceptance.

Like so many religious people, these Pharisees know nothing of their desperate need for Christ who endured God's wrath in the place of sinners. They aren't even concerned about other people's spiritual needs. They aren't aware of God's justice and people's need for God's grace and mercy and forgiveness through Christ and the cross. The Pharisees' deeds were done only to be seen of men.

Every cult and false religion thrives on this kind of legalism. Roman Catholicism certainly does with all its Hail Marys, Our Fathers, lighting candles, genuflections, masses, and confessions. But many Protestants also think fulfilling their religious duties earn them favor with God. But God isn't impressed with our performances, especially if they aren't coming from a true believing humbled heart that has been changed by His grace. A true heart will love God above all and be concerned about treating others well, especially for their spiritual well-being.

Self-importance: taking great pride in your titles or status and lacking the humility of Christ.

Luke 11:43, "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places."

Pride and self-importance just ooze out of these characters. The cult of personality, celebrity-level names, all the books, all the degrees, all the fawning adulation – all this feed egos. People filled with self-importance love to be shown to the front seat at the conferences or asked to sit up on the platform so everyone can see how important they are. It's a good morning when the crowd claps when he is finished speaking. He feels accomplished when hearing, "Wow, he was awesome. My, what a performance he put on. How brilliant he is." Even in the restaurant or at the local shops, you can just see his preening pride and arrogance as he makes his way among the common yahoos and normals. One of these self-important preachers strode to the pulpit full of obvious self-confidence. He thoroughly blew it when he got

there. He knew it and walked down totally humiliated. A wise godly man came up to encourage him, "If you would have gone up the way you came down, you'd have come down the way you went up."

Early in my ministry I ordered John MacArthur's messages on cassettes. You could order four, listen to them, send them back, and get four more. In one of his messages he talked about sitting up front on a pastor's throne waiting to preach. He decided to quit that practice and sit down with everyone else before preaching. That seemed right to me and that's when I stopped sitting up on the platform and sat with everyone else before the message. In our celebrity Christian culture there are plenty of self-important egos. Remember that you are what you are purely by the grace of God. You have nothing to be puffed up about. You've done nothing to fuel your pride. Humble your hearts before God and live out of a joyful, thankful spirit that God even thought about you and me. There is no room for lust for recognition in the body of Christ!

Deadly influence: leading others in the wrong path by your false influence.

Luke 11:44, "Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it."

According to the traditions of the Pharisees, touching a grave or walking over a grave or even if your shadow crossed a tomb was defiling. So the Jews white-washed tombs regularly so people would know where a tomb was and avoid it. These Pharisees were false teachers with a false, damning message, and people ignorantly followed them which led them straight to hell. That's why Jesus fires away at these Pharisees so severely. They are the religious authorities and the people ignorantly looked to them for answers about how to get to God. But their teaching was false and deadly.

We can all apply this. What influence are you having on others for Christ and eternity? God help us to stay firmly committed to the truth of the Bible, all of it, and hold back on nothing, even if it offends the culture. That's why Paul exhorted Timothy to keep on preaching the Word, even though the culture will want their ears tickled by myths and falsehood. There have been many, many false teachers in this world and there are many spouting their damning messages today. Liberal preachers no longer believe in the substitutionary atonement of Christ. They don't even believe in the virgin birth and the deity of Christ. They don't believe a person has to be born again through faith in Christ alone in order to get to heaven. They believe everyone is going to heaven or at least all the sincere religious people, no matter what religion they are of. Many have tossed aside eternal punishment. They have rejected the biblical teaching of two distinct genders and heterosexual marriage in their desire to be accepted by the culture. They defile and damn their followers like an unmarked tomb would defile people ceremonially. And just like Jesus says here, people are unaware that they are walking over these damning tombs. They sit and listen to their preachers or priests or mullah or whatever their leaders are called. This is why false teachers of all false religions with their deadly influence face the most severe judgment of all in the end.

SO WHAT? So what do we take with us from this?

Ask God to strip away any hypocritical mask you may be wearing. Remember, God is dealing with your heart. It's not the externals that matter most, or legalism, or your status. What matters most is where is your heart? Your heart is who you are. That's where God is looking, that hidden person of the heart. Are you genuine and the real thing or just playing the part to impress other people?

When Jesus talks, listen and don't wear your feelings on your sleeves. Don't be easily offended. The issue isn't your feelings. The issue is learning the truth. Sometimes Jesus' table talk is severe. John MacArthur offended the Christian world by saying Beth Moore should "Go home." Let me tell you, this Christian world would totally attack Jesus for what He says here to the Pharisees. "He's too strong. He's too severe. He's unloving, even hateful." But Jesus spoke the truth and didn't tone it down. Next week we'll see how He insulted the lawyers, too. There are times we have to be bold in our conversations. Our speech needs to be full of grace and love, but more than anything we need to tell the truth.

Finally, thank God that Jesus came to save repentant hypocrites. Only He can change a hypocrite's heart into a genuine God-loving heart. And that happens as we humble ourselves and submit our hearts to Him every day. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in me (Psalm 51:10). Purify your hearts, you double-minded (James 4:8). Guard your heart with all diligence, for from your heart pours out who you really are (Prov. 4:23).