

Diagnosing Hypocrisy, Part 1

Luke 11:42-44

You'll want to turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 11. It's the end of the chapter that we're in. There's this confrontation with Jewish spiritual leaders. The Pharisees, their partners, the lawyers. Jesus sees and has seen in all of his growing up and then especially in his ministry, Jesus has seen this Pharisaic system as a poisonous influence in Israel. It's like a huge noxious weed that dominated the land of Israel. It's deeply rooted. It's producing bad fruit with its tendrils shooting out to take over the lives of others who are unaware of the danger.

Look at Luke 11:37. "While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at the table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. 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. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within. Behold, everything is clean for you.'"

There in verse 41, as we mentioned at the end of last week's service, Jesus pointed the Pharisees to true purity. He's gracious here in teaching them and instructing them and confronting them. And he's pointing them to true internal cleanness. It's not through some external formal handwashing ceremony. But it's by giving what is within is literally how it's said there. Giving from the inside, giving the heart, giving the inward things.

Things like compassion for others. Kindness toward human need. Care about human suffering. A love for neighbor. A heart of generosity. And then he says, the promise there, "Behold, if you do that, if you give what is on the inside, if your whole heart is all in, behold, everything is clean for you." And that makes sense, doesn't it, when we read the rest of, especially the New Testament. We can see this in all though the Old Testament, as well.

But when virtue occupies the heart, it drives out all greed and all wickedness. The two cannot remain in the same space. And that is the evidence of the spirit. It's evidence in, in the fruit that he causes to grow. Drives out all greed, all malice, all wickedness, all slander, all ugliness on the inside and it causes as his true fruit grows.

Jesus surveys the guests that are seated at the table. He knows among these men how deeply rooted their hypocrisy is. He knows how their hearts are so full of greed and wickedness. How their hearts are, are so ugly on the inside, so filled with rottenness that he pronounces woes upon them as he's diagnosing their hypocrisy. He starts in verse 42 with the evidence of their hypocrisy. He moves down to the heart and gets to the heart of their hypocrisy in verse 43. And then in verse 44, he gets to the consequences, the effects of their hypocrisy.

So follow along. We'll cover this passage this morning, verses 42 to 44. "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. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."

There are three more woes to come in this section addressed to the lawyers in verses 46 to 52. But today, we're gonna stick with the Pharisees. We're gonna think about applying this in two ways. As we go through this text, I want you to think about applying this in two ways. First, we want to think carefully about ourselves. For each one of us to think about ourselves, to

think about our conduct, to think about the way, what our way of living reveals about our hearts. Because the sins that lead to hypocrisy reside within our own sin nature. And if we're not making a regular habit of self-examination and practicing repentance, listen, tolerating sin can result in this very hypocrisy that Jesus condemns. We need to be very careful for ourselves.

The origin of the term hypocrisy, it's *hypokrites*. It came from originally came from Greek rhetoric. The Greek stage, it was actually not originally just a negative, pejorative term. It was actually a term that could be either positive or negative. It just, it was a descriptive term to describe what was happening in rhetoric or in the Greek stage as the actor gave audible and visible expression to Greek poetry, myths, stories up on a stage. He's a performer. And so he would use affected speech, exaggerated mime, and action to help the crowd to feel and to sense the poetry, to help them to appreciate it. One source describes it this way, that the actor's job is to present the drama assigned to him by artistic reciting, accompanied by mime and gestures. The art of the actor, and literally, the hypocrite, the art of the hypocrite is that from the moment he dons the mask his whole conduct on stage should be in keeping

with his allotted role. The stage is a sham world. And the actor, a deceiver.

Looking at Hollywood, we're like, Yeah, I, I understand that. That's exactly what's going on. It's called playing a part. It's wearing a mask. It's displaying on the outside what is useful for the performance in the moment, what's expected for the role. In the church, hypocrites are not merely sinners. We're all sinners. Hypocrites are not merely inconsistent in their lives in how they live out their religion. We're all somewhat inconsistent. We don't want to be. We want true believers, truly pious people, want to live with integrity. They don't want any gap to exist between what we know and what we profess to be true from Scripture and then how we live and speak and behave.

Hypocrites are something else altogether. Hypocrites are those who not only fail to do and to pursue God's will, but they conceal their failures behind a pious face. They live behind a mask. They could be very gently spoken, very outgoing, shake a lot of hands, kiss a lot of babies. They're playing a part. They're acting. Because they're after something else. Now Christians can be guilty of the sin of hypocrisy and yet not be

hypocrites as a characterization, as a, as a broad brush painted over their entire life.

Think about Peter, Galatians chapter 2. Peter acted one way with the Christians and especially the Gentile Christians, freely eating the things that were not kosher. But then he changed his behavior in front of the circumcision party because he was afraid of his reputation in front of others. He changed his behavior. He even led Barnabas and others into that same hypocrisy. And Paul confronted him openly because he was not acting in integrity. As well he should've. But those who, so Christians can be guilty of the sin of hypocrisy without being full-fledged hypocrites. Those who practice hypocrisy, though, as a lifestyle. Those people are not Christians. Which brings us to a second way to apply this text.

First of all, think about yourself as we go through this. But secondly, apply this text by growing in discernment. Grow in discernment. We need to learn here to watch out for false spiritual leadership and we need to warn others against following hypocrites. So we need to watch out for ourselves, but we also need to warn other people. It's not enough just for you to protect yourself and then say nothing else to anybody else. You need to protect other people because spiritual hypocrisy,

well, like Jesus said, "It's like leaven that leavens the whole lump of dough." And the effects are grave. In a country like ours, false gospels have proliferated and thrived. True spirituality is so, so hard to find and false leadership abounds.

Hypocrites are in positions of pastoral leadership. And that's more common than we ought, when, when we'd like to think. I hate seeing it. It, it really grabs at the soul and just causes me as a, as a leader. I mean those guys taking the mantle of spiritual leadership in the church, they give everybody else a bad name. And even your good actions are interpreted wrongly because of their actions, their words. It's so common, even in places where truth is taught, where truth is written about, where it's preached from the pulpit. Even, even within our own doctrinally tighter circles, spiritual hypocrisy can live in the heart of an elder, a pastor, a leader, and it can poison an entire congregation. It can dull the senses and dull the discernment of all the people underneath that man's leadership and that man's ministry.

And that's why Jesus gives so many warnings about spiritual hypocrisy. He exposes it. He confronts it in the leadership of Israel among the Pharisees and the Sadducees. It's, it's in the

scribes, the lawyers, it's in the elders, the chief priests. All of them, but particularly among the Pharisees. Hypocrisy was the sin de jour. It's the characteristic sin that thrived and lived and bred inside their hearts and then spread out to infect everybody else and that is why Jesus pronounced woes upon the Pharisees. Words strong, strong words of lament and judgment. By saying that word, woe, it's an onomatopoeic word. It sounds like what it means. He's, he's giving this audible expression to this internal sense of pain and sadness and anguish that he feels for these men as he's sitting around a meal with them.

Because he can see ahead to the consequences. They're, they're so clear because it's written about in Scripture. Everybody's gonna stand before God. And all that hypocrisy, it's gonna wither away. The masks that you put on, it's going to burn before his holy gaze. He sees ahead. He knows about the judgment that's about rain down upon them for their sins and he knows how their hypocrisy, it's, it's leavening the whole nation. It's misleading everybody. In fact, they're all gonna cry out at the end, "His blood be upon us and our children!" They're so led astray by the hypocrisy of their leadership. They can't even recognize their true king.



So for the sake of hypocrites and disciples alike, Jesus pulls back the façade on false religion, shows its hypocrisy for what it is. And he reveals the evidence of hypocrisy. This is what we're going to see first; to diagnose the heart of hypocrisy, the essence of it. In the next verse, in verse 43. And then he warns of its detrimental effects. That's the pattern. He moves from the outward to the inward and then to the effects. He goes from the outward evidence in verse 42, the concrete behavior that everybody can see, but not everybody discerns the reality of it.

Diagnoses that, talks about that. Then he gets to the, goes from the concrete behavior down to the essence in the heart in verse 43. And then, as I said, the external effect in verse 44. Those are the points: evidence, essence, effect of hypocrisy. Evidence, essence, effect. I'm gonna spend most of the time on the first point.

First point, the evidence of hypocrisy. The evidence of hypocrisy, look again at the first half of verse 42. You may have heard the saying, He majors on the minors, and he minors on the majors, that colloquialism in our own language. Jesus says the Pharisees, they major on the minors and then they go on to completely ignore the majors altogether. "Woe to you Pharisees!

For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God.” To neglect, there is basically saying you ignore it all together. You bypass it. You just walk right past.

So to come up with a concrete illustration of their hypocrisy, Jesus doesn’t need to look any further than the table. And the, the food that’s on the table. The condiments on the lunch table, the mint, the rue, and the herbs, that’s what he’s looking at. And he’s drawing from what’s immediately in front of them and says, oh here’s an example. We’re familiar with mint, it’s a pretty common herb. We use it, square shape stem, symmetrical, serrated leaves. People like to add that cool, sweet flavor of mint to salads and side dishes, main dishes, sometimes even crush it and put it into, into drinks. Very flavorful.

Rue may be lest, less known to us. It’s at the opposite end of the taste spectrum than mint. It’s called *ruta graveolens*, garden rue, common rue. Thick fleshy leaves, bluish green in color and rue evidently has a distinct aroma, one that one sources calls a penetrating odor, a, a disagreeable smell and that is matched by the taste, which is strong and bitter. But evidently used in small doses, it’s, it’s a flavor enhancing

kind of an herb like, maybe like horse radish or cayenne pepper that we might use.

Might be the reason this rue, being such a, kind of a disagreeable smell, might be the reason that the Mishna excluded rue from the tithe. The Mishna explicitly excluded rue from having to tithe it, because of its penetrating odor. No priest evidently wanted the rue to be in the temple spice rack. It just small space, bad smell, not good. So the Pharisees, though, they said, Oh, no, let's add that back in. Let's, let's tithe everything. They're trying to take the Mishna, this Jewish oral tradition, they want to great, to take it to greater heights of fidelity in tithing. You need to be consistent. Can't just tithe one herb while excluding another herb, can we? Gotta be consistent. Gotta tithe it all.

So mint, you might say, is on one end of the taste spectrum and rue is on the other. And then Jesus widens the scope to include every herb. It's kind of like our idiom, from A to Z and everything in between. From soup to nuts and everything in between. The, the, that's what he's saying about the Pharisees. Look, men, listen, take notice, you're tithing condiments. You're tithing your salt and pepper. Is this not stupid? Is this not ridiculous? They're so preoccupied with the show of

righteousness. They're like playing dress up like holy men. They're so attentive to this supposed outward perception of holiness that they, they, they even go so far as to give God a tenth of their chopped-up leaves. It's absolutely ridiculous.

As attentive as they seem to be about tithing their salt and their pepper, it is unforgiveable that they seem utterly oblivious about the things that actually concern God. Woe, to you Pharisees! You're tithing what is insignificant and small, and you're neglecting big things like justice. You're neglecting big, big things like the love of God. You need to lo, look no further than the just the immediate context. Jesus had just cast a demon out of man, right, verse 14. This allowed the man to speak again. He hadn't been able to speak. He was mute. He was shut down, could not communicate. Jesus cast out the demon, expelled the demon. The man can speak.

Pharisees completely ignored the compassion that he just demonstrated in his miracle. Instead, they tried to censure Jesus. They tried to smear his ministry by associating him with demonic cruelty. He's in league with them. He's just as cruel as they are. And they completely ignored the incongruity of what he just did and what they're saying. There's no, there's no, that's not just that contradiction. They not only treated Jesus

unjustly, they failed to love God. They didn't thank him for showing mercy to this man. They didn't care anything about this man.

Backing up to something we covered before in Luke chapter 10. Luke 10:25, remember there a lawyer tried to test Jesus. That lawyer rightly distilled, because he's a, he's a smart guy, well-educated, schooled, studying. He distilled the law of Moses down to two great commands: love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself and Jesus then responded to him, "You want to know how to inherit eternal life?" That was the lawyer's original question. Do that and you'll live. Do this and you shall live.

Now for the truly pious, for true believers, they hear that, if they're spiritually sensitive, they hear Jesus' command, "Do this and you will live," and it would cause them to fall down on their face and ask for mercy. Lord, I failed to love God. I'm failing right now to love God. My heart isn't right; let alone my neighbor. I walk past my neighbor's need all the time, my hearts not moved, affected. Not that I'm indifferent. What is there for me? How can I be pardoned? How can I find forgiveness with God so I'm not condemned along with the rest of the wicked? That's what the pious say.

But instead of being humbled to the dust, instead of asking Jesus how he might be forgiven for these same sins, heart-level sins, thinking about how often he violated love for God, love for neighbor, the lawyer completely ignored the majors. Justice, love for God. He turned, he turned this instead into a discussion of semantics because he wanted to justify himself. "Oh, and who is my neighbor?" Uh, Jesus, got to get definitions down cuz after all, if everybody's a neighbor, I'm going to be worn out. So, let's, let's tighten the circle up a little bit, okay? Cuz I think I'm doing pretty good with this, too.

No. Again, he's straining out a gnat, definition, semantics, while he's swallowing a camel. He doesn't even see how far field he is from true piety, true righteousness. Folks, this is demonic. This is demon religion. These men are leading the nation. These men are held up as examples and they have a demon-inspired religion that they're practicing and teaching and spreading to others. They're propped up as examples. They're the kinds of people you want to have over. They're the people you want to do a conference with because they're so intelligent. They're so gifted. They're sitting in positions of power and authority. They're wielding massive influence. They are so out of step with the most seminal, fundamental portions of

Scripture, which are clear and obvious to any genuine sincere reader. We read these things all the time.

True believers respond the same way to the text I'm about to read you. God revealed his work and his character to Moses early on, Exodus chapter 34. You can write this down. Exodus 34:6 and 7. The Lord, God revealed himself to Moses this way. He said, "The Lord, the Lord," a g, and that's Yahweh, the name, the divine name. "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty."

Just a summary statement of God's ways. And Moses witnessed this. He heard this. He watched this happen throughout Israel's history that he's right in the center of. Shouldn't spiritual leaders seek to imitate God's mercy and grace? Shouldn't they imitate his patience with sinners, knowing God's patience with they themselves, that they're wicked, they're sinners, that they're inconsistent and how often God has been kind and gracious and forgiving to them?

Should these leaders not seek to be conduits of God's steadfast love and faithfulness to people? Should they not be

pointing people to the free offer of forgiveness by God to those who repent and believe? Shouldn't spiritual leaders, also, by the way, warn people about the consequences of sin? Of their guilt? Shouldn't they speak clearly about iniquity and transgression and sin and inconsistency and hypocrisy?

False spiritual leaders live by flattery. False spiritual leaders only confront rivals to their power and influence. They ignore iniquity, transgression, and sin that is not causing them trouble. Oh, they'll pounce on it if it's causing them trouble. But if it's not causing them any trouble, they let it go. True spiritual leaders, though, risk the offense because they fear the Lord. They know that they're going to give an account at the end to God who sees all things and who loves justice and mercy and righteousness. True spiritual leaders risk the offense. They fear God. They practice justice. Not perfectly. No man is perfect. Every man sins. But they practice justice. They practice loving God more than seeking the approval of men. Why? Because they, they dearly love God. They fear him.

The psalmist says plainly that "God loves righteousness and justice," Psalm 33:5. "The earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord." God has been so kind, spread his grace and his kindness and his goodness over the entire earth and they see



that. And they long to do what is righteous and just before God because that's what God delights in. In the prophets, God says, "I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, righteousness in the earth," Jeremiah 9:24. "For in these things I delight." You see the grace of God and the goodness of God, and you think, How can I repay a God like that? I can't. But can I mimic his ways? Hmm. What is it that pleases God? What is it that gives him delight and pleasure? Justice. Righteousness. I'm gonna do that.

In light of God's character, there's a duty placed upon all of mankind. Not just those who are named by God's name, but all of mankind and all of mankind will give an account for what I'm about to read, Micah 6:8. "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly before your God?" Listen, you know this. I'm not saying anything new to you, but that is not a burden for us, is it? For us who know the Lord, that is not a burden, that is not something to grumble and complain about. For the truly pious, it is a, it is a deep joy. It produces great satisfaction and contentedness to love justice and to do justice, to love kindness, to walk humbly before God.

And that's why it is so, so offensive to God when spiritual leaders ignore such instruction. When they replace true piety with this false outward show of this religious seriousness. I'm so serious, I tithe even a tenth of my mint. Giving God a tenth of their table condiments and calling that holy. Even worse, even worse than that is to teach others to do the same thing. That tithing your salt and pepper is more important to God than getting justice and love right.

That's why God says, Amos 5:21 to 24. He sees all this hypocrisy in the land, and he says, "I hate, I despise your feasts, I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings, grain offerings. I will not accept them; the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs:" Don't sing another chorus to me at all. "The melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." That's the stuff of true piety. That's the stuff of true religion.