

Luke 11:37-54

**Introduction:** Following His teaching on light, Luke now records what spiritual darkness looks like. And he exposes the darkness in the most unexpected place.

**Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for lacking Godward purity—11:37-41**

- 1) Jesus deliberately provokes a confrontation—11:37-38 <sup>37</sup> *Now when Jesus spoke, a certain Pharisee was asking Him to eat a meal (similar to brunch, after morning prayers) with him. So He entered and reclined at table.* <sup>38</sup> *And when the Pharisee perceived it, he was surprised that He had not first had Himself washed [βαπτίζω] before the meal.*
  - a) The man never speaks out loud. Jesus knows his thoughts!
  - b) Having one's hands washed was not commanded in the Old Testament, though they claimed to base it on Leviticus 11:33 and 15:12. It was a cultural practice that attempted to keep oneself from becoming contaminated by something considered unclean. Oh the irony of potentially being contaminated in a Pharisee's house!
- 2) Jesus authoritatively challenges His host—11:39-41 <sup>39</sup> *But the Lord said to him,*
  - a) *“Now **you<sup>pl</sup>** (emphatic) Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you<sup>pl</sup> are full of greediness and wickedness.*
  - b) <sup>40</sup> *You<sup>pl</sup> foolish ones [ἄφρων]!* (cf. Proverbs 1:22; 10:18, 21; 12:1, 15; et al)
    - i) Rhetorical question—*Did not the One who made the outside make the inside also?*
      - (1) God is concerned with what is both inside and outside.
    - ii) Command—<sup>41</sup> *But give as charity those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you<sup>pl</sup>.*
      - (1) Genuine charity should spring from a heart that loves God and people and is genuinely moved at the misery of others.
- 3) The Pharisees are just as guilty before God as the rest of the evil generation.

**Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for lacking a Godward focus—11:42-44**

- 1) Pharisees neglect important spiritual matters—11:42 <sup>42</sup> *But woe (# 1) to you<sup>pl</sup> Pharisees!* (i.e. “How sad it is for you<sup>pl</sup> that you<sup>pl</sup> ...”)
  - a) *For you<sup>pl</sup> give a tenth of mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and love for God (cf. Micah 6:8); but these are the things (i.e. justice and love) you<sup>pl</sup> ought to have done without neglecting the others.*
  - b) Remember Luke's current theme of love for God and love for one's neighbor. Don't be selective in your obedience to God's commands.
- 2) Pharisees are self-focused—11:43 <sup>43</sup> *Woe (# 2) to you<sup>pl</sup> Pharisees!*
  - a) *For you<sup>pl</sup> love the seats of honor in the synagogues and the greetings in the marketplaces.*
- 3) Pharisees endanger others spiritually—11:44 <sup>44</sup> *Woe (# 3) to you<sup>pl</sup>, scholars [γραμματεὺς] and Pharisees, hypocrites!*
  - a) *For you<sup>pl</sup> are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it.”*

- i) You are containers of death, defiling all who come in contact with you. (cf. Numbers 19:11-22; Leviticus 21:1-3)

### Jesus rebukes the scribes/law experts for lacking a Godward focus—11:45-52

- 1) <sup>45</sup> *Then one of the law experts [νομικός], having responded, said to Him, “Teacher, when You say these things You are insulting us also.”*
  - a) To his credit he understands what Jesus is saying, but sadly he is still assuming his own righteousness before God.
  - b) The law experts interpreted the law and assisted the Pharisees in their study of tradition. They were closely aligned.
- 2) <sup>46</sup> *And He said,*
  - a) They are callously self-focused—11:46 “Woe to you<sup>pl</sup> also, law experts [νομικός]!”
    - i) *For you<sup>pl</sup> burden the people with difficult burdens, and **you<sup>pl</sup> yourselves** (emphatic) do not even touch the burdens with one of your<sup>pl</sup> fingers.*
    - ii) They make no effort to help others; thus they demonstrate they are without mercy to those in misery. How ungodly this is!
  - b) They reject God’s revelation—11:47-51 <sup>47</sup> *Woe to you<sup>pl</sup>!*
    - i) *For you<sup>pl</sup> build the memorials of the prophets, and your<sup>pl</sup> fathers killed them.*
      - (1) <sup>48</sup> *So you<sup>pl</sup> are bearing witness and approving the deeds of your<sup>pl</sup> fathers; for **they** (emphatic) indeed killed them, and **you<sup>pl</sup>** (emphatic) are building their memorials.*
      - (2) <sup>49</sup> *Therefore the wisdom of God also said,*
        - (a) What? *‘I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,’*
        - (b) Why? <sup>50</sup> *so that the blood of all the prophets that was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, <sup>51</sup> from the blood of Abel (cf. Genesis 4:10) to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the temple (cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 24:20-25).*
      - (3) They are denying the very message of the prophets but are attempting to honor the memory of the prophets. How hypocritical!
    - ii) *Yes, I say to you<sup>pl</sup>, it will be required of this generation.*
      - (1) God will hold them responsible for how they respond to God’s revelation given through Christ.
      - (2) The danger for us is to think we are somehow superior to the Pharisees and law experts, when in reality we possess the same hard heart. (Jeremiah)
  - c) They endanger others spiritually—11:52 <sup>52</sup> *Woe to you<sup>pl</sup> law experts [νομικός]!*
    - i) *For you<sup>pl</sup> have taken away the key of knowledge.*
      - (1) The right interpretation of the Old Testament. They have done the very opposite of what they claimed to do.
      - (2) Christ came to give light; the law experts bind people in darkness.

- ii) **You<sup>pl</sup>** (emphatic) *did not enter in yourselves, and you<sup>pl</sup> hindered those who were entering.*

**Opposition from religious leaders begins to solidify and intensify—11:53-54**

- 1) Who? <sup>53</sup> *Now when He said these things to them, the scholars [γραμματεὺς] and the Pharisees began ...*
- 2) What?
  - a) *to be very hostile* [pres. act. inf. ἐνέχω] (i.e. hold a terrible grudge; calculated hostility in retaliation)
  - b) *and to question* [pres. act. inf. ἀποστοματίζω] *Him concerning many things,*
  - c) I.e. “You made us look bad publicly; we’ll make You look bad.”
- 3) When? This has a hunting/ambush theme
  - a) <sup>54</sup> *while conspiring against* [pres. act. ptc. ἐνεδρεύω] *Him,*
  - b) *seeking* [pres. act. ptc. ζητέω] *to catch* [aor. act. inf. θηρεύω] *Him in something He might say,*
  - c) There will be no reconciliation between Jesus and Pharisees and scribes.
- 4) Why?
  - a) *so that they might accuse/bring legal charges against* [aor. act. subj. κατηγορέω] *Him.*
- 5) Hostility to God’s way is often the product of rejecting His revelation.
- 6) Jesus has turned the entire system on its head. Everything presupposed about how to come to God has been challenged and contradicted. The leadership is furious. (Couch)

**Take-home truth:** Sometimes a lifestyle of piety is a lifestyle of death, particularly when it is self-absorbed.