

Dealing with Unmarked Graves (Luke 11:44-54)

Summary of “Four Marks of a Religious Hypocrite” (Luke 11:37-44)

- A. The religious hypocrite is more concerned with outward appearance than inward godliness (v.39-41)
- B. The religious hypocrite is more concerned about personal preferences, traditions, and dead orthodoxy than the critical matters that concern love for God and others (v.42)
- C. The religious hypocrite is motivated by public recognition and praise (v.43)
- D. The religious hypocrite is spiritually dead and may or may not be deceived about it (v.44)

Hypocrisy: a deficiency of integrity between public persona and private character. It is the “gap” between what is said or done publicly, including the content and motives of the heart, that often manifests itself in a “double” life (though not always, at least initially). What one is in private is not what one displays in public. Hypocrisy is always a sin, but not all sinners are always hypocrites.

Jesus models for His disciples how to respond toward hypocrites who suppress the truth:

1. It is justified before God to be frank and open toward the (religious) hypocrite when he burdens others with man-made rules (v.46)

- After rebuking the Pharisee in his own house, violating every cultural norm in the first century, the reader discovers another at the table: a lawyer.
- There is no definite article to the recipient of v.44:
 - Jesus is not merely speaking of the Pharisees but sets the stage to exhort the scribe. There may be a plurality of Pharisees and Scribes at the table.

Pharisees: a sect created to preserve, maintain, and uphold the Torah when Jewish captives were permitted to return to the Promised Land following the Babylonian and Assyrian Captivity (beginning mid-6th century).

Lawyers (Scribes): were not personal injury prosecutors who acted on behalf of their clients or defense attorneys who made closing arguments in the court of law. They were the Bible scholars and theologians who devoted their lives to interpreting Scripture. They were the Hebrew scholars.

* Some lawyers were Pharisees, but not all of them because not all lawyers followed the customs of the Pharisees.

The scribe, who listens to Jesus’ woe and exhortation to the Pharisee, is “offended.”

- Jesus rebukes the lawyer(s) for the same principle as the Pharisees: man-made rules about the Sabbath and other ceremonial stipulations.
- They (scribes) were usually responsible for interpreting the Torah and establishing “hedges” and “protections” around it to prevent infractions.
- Not only did they create man-made traditions, but they equivocated them with the authority of the Torah.
- The lawyers, then, understood and interpreted the Torah, established rules to protect its infractions, and knew all “exceptions” and “loopholes.”
- They did not “lift one finger to help those whom they had burdened with their rules” (v.46). Jesus is saying:
 - (1) “You do not attempt to help the average person to keep all of the laws,” and
 - (2) “You do not keep the obligations that you impose on others” (Matt. 23:3).
 - They were “heavy burdens” (Acts 15:10; Gal. 2:14).

- Jesus rebukes the lawyers for their legalism. Legalism always destroys truth, as it majors in the minors and minors in the majors.
- ### 2. It is justified before God to be frank and open toward the (religious) hypocrite when he rejoices in silencing the righteous (v. 47-51)
- Jesus exhorts the lawyers for their hypocrisy in building tombs of remembrance for those they silenced.
 - These scribes, along with their forefathers, silence messengers of God while they are living, yet give false testimony about those they silenced after they are dead. They enact policies to suppress righteous men and then “honor” them in their graves. The righteous are not honored while they live, only when they are dead (v.47-48). What hypocrisy.
 - The lawyers are guilty of the same principle as their forefathers, as they have the same policy, mindset, and goal of the former wicked generations – prophets from Abel to Zechariah:
 - The first righteous martyr was Abel, and the last was the high priest, Zechariah. Abel was killed by his brother Cain (Gen. 4: 1-9), and Zechariah was stoned in the courtyard of the temple when he rebuked the people for breaking God’s law (2 Chron. 24:20-22).
 - Abel (Genesis) through Zechariah (2 Chron.) represents the entire OT canon, as the Hebrew Scriptures (OT) organize the first book as Genesis and the last book as 2 Chronicles.
 - Violence against God’s prophets often occurs in the holiest sites. In the same way, Jesus will be killed in the most “holy” city: Jerusalem.
 - The lawyers are not blamed for the sins of their ancestors. They are accused of their current hatred toward Jesus (the righteous), which is measurable and observable.
- ### 3. It is justified before God to be frank and open toward the (religious) hypocrite when he actively hinders others from having access to God (v.52)
- The wisdom of God (v.49) and the key to knowledge is the comprehensive understanding of what we understand as a literal-grammatical-historical-soteriological-hermeneutic.
 - Jesus rebukes those most responsible for leading people to the truth for hindering access.
 - This is true in every other form of religion: Catholicism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormonism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, postmodernism, etc., etc., etc. In all these religions, the key to knowledge is taken away from others, either intentionally or unintentionally.
 - Those in a leadership position have a responsibility before God to give the keys of knowledge (truth) to those they lead and serve.
- ### 4. It is justified before God to be frank and open toward the (religious) hypocrite when he schemes to suppress the truth (v.53)
- In a linguistic irony, Luke notes that Jesus “went away” from the Scribes and Pharisees. He was an outsider who came in to win these hypocrites to repentance.
 - Instead of confessing their sin and abandoning their dead system of traditions and deceptive practices, they doubled down and are even more committed to catching Jesus (silencing him). The Greek verb for “waiting” and “catching” implies one step short of violence (Acts 23:21).
 - “This generation” (v.50) is not a time indicator but a character indicator. During Jesus’ day, that generation was like all the other generations: it hated God and His word.
 - Jesus models for His disciples how to love their enemies (6:27) by verbally confronting the Pharisee and the Scribe in their error. They are not His enemies. He is theirs.
 - Reform is always birthed, not of indifference and tolerance, but engagement and confrontation.