

Diagnosing Hypocrisy

Luke 11:42-44

June 14, 2020

As we continue our exposition of Luke's Gospel, we're going to consider the subject of spiritual hypocrisy, which is not a, a topic that is for meant for comfortable or easy listening. So, if you're feeling uncomfortable in the topic and the subject as we get into this, believe me, I sympathize. This is a subject that really should for all of us, prompt sincere self-examination, which we are going to endeavor to do together today.

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.

Every now and again the Lord has me do some irksome task that gives me greater insight into a passage. I'm convinced that that's what he's doing. Yesterday, it was removing an unruly bush/tree thing from the side of our house. I was content to leave it there growing in the wild. But it's becoming an eyesore and it's probably going to take over the neighborhood. So we had to do something about it.

It was a full with green leaves at the top, but also had all kinds, as you got closer, all kinds of sticks and prickly branches. This is unpleasantness that made this thing fuller than it actually should be. So trying to attack the thing from the top, going at the top of it, was no good. You just gonna get scratched up, get sticks in the face and the eyes and all the rest. You had to go down to the base of this thing. Go to the root to get this thing out. And after digging a bit at the root, it broke away a lot easier than I had expected since much of

that root was dead or rotting away. There's nothing healthy down there. And once I started pulling it out by the root, the whole thing came down rather easily.

The system of the Pharisees, and you might say the system of all false religion, is a lot like that plant. It appears big and full and even healthy from a distance. Casts long shadows. It exerts great influence. Birds and, well, in my case, insects are all crawling around in there. And as you get closer to the plant with its individual issues, fruits, branches, it's gonna cause injury when you get too close.

But when you attack it at the root, the whole system comes crashing down because it is rotten at the root. It is rotten at the core. And that's what Jesus is doing here. He enters this house of this Pharisee, Luke 11:37. And this is actually what he has on his mind. He's intentional here to go after the bad root of this bad system.

He enters this man's home. He walks right past the servants as they are assisting the Pharisee's guests in their handwashing

ritual. Other Pharisees are there, other lawyers. They're trying to wash off all that impurity that came from mixing and mingling with the defiled among common people and Jesus goes right past them. He finds his place at the table. And he waits for them to come, and sit down, recline, and eat.

He is fully aware of the social offence that he has just given by ignoring the ceremonial handwashing. In fact, that was his intention. It was the quickest way for him to get right into the conversation he wanted to have. No pleasant chitchat over hors d'oeuvres. None of that. He's gonna come and cut down the poison tree, tree of spiritual hypocrisy. He's going to go right to the root and deal with root and branch and all. And he's starting with the Pharisees.

Look at Luke 11:37. This is what we read last week. "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,' clean the outs, '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, love, joy, peace, pat, you know the verse, Galatians 5:22.

But it says in verse 22, it's a strong contrast there. 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.

Having said that, let me speak a word of caution to you who have a more sensitive conscience as we go through this text. Inconsistency in your spiritual life, that is not the same thing as hypocrisy. Inconsistency is not in and of itself hypocrisy. It can be, but it is not in and of itself hypocrisy. Live, inconsistency in living out what we know to be true, what we understand from Scripture, what we believe that the Bible says. Inconsistency between how we talk and how we walk, that is not in and of itself hypocrisy. It can be, but not necessarily so.

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's, it's so, 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 table, 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. We just read about it in Psalm 50, didn't we? 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. So when it goes long, do not worry. Do not be alarmed. You'll still get out of here in time for lunch, okay?

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. I, 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. Like all of you, I've been reading through John's Gospel, daily reading Bible plan. The Bible reading plan. There are glaring examples of missing the point all over the place, aren't there, in John's Gospel? John is just bringing this to the attention of his readers all the time about the Jewish leadership and how they have deceived the entire nation. I'll just mention two. I mean examples abound. But two in particular, John chapter 5. Remember in John 5, Jesus healed a man. He'd been lying as an invalid at the pool of Bethesda for 38 years, almost four decades of his life.

And Jesus told the man, graciously, "You want to be healed? Get up, take your bed and walk." He did that. Got up, walked away. But the Pharisees were right there to pounce on him because of what? A Sabbath violation. He's carrying his bedroll. Ah, Ah, Ah! Carrying a burden on the Sabbath, what are you doing? Explain. Come here, explain.

After their inquisition, the man revealed it was Jesus who made him well. Who told you to get up, pick up your bed and walk on the Sabbath? Come on! He healed you. He can't be holy violating the Sabbath. Find out it was Jesus who made him well, and then we read that instead of praising God, instead of congratulating this man. Thirty-eight years you've been down and now you're walking! Praise be to God! Amen! Let us get you involved in the synagogue because you need teaching. You've been sitting by this pool for 38 years. Let's get you taught. Let's get you disciplined. Let's get you fed, lifted up, strengthened.

The text says, "Therefore the Jews were persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath." Come on. I mean Jesus, oh, he had been, let's admit, he'd been pretty irresponsible, hadn't he? The healer? I mean, come on, he's healing the guy on the Sabbath. It only encourages him to pick up his bedroll and walk and carry a burden on the... Really? Talk about missing the point.

One more. Remember in John chapter 11 when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. It's an incredible display of power, raising a

man from the dead, it's unheard of. The Pharisees' reaction? Conspire with the chief priest to arrest Jesus. Can't have this going on. And then, in addition to them planning his demise, planning his murder, John 12 says, "They decided to kill Lazarus also because he's the reason many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus."

Ah! There's the issue, huh? Their power's at stake. Their influence is at stake. Can't have any revived, resurrected men walking around. Their envy could not rest until they rid the world of Jesus. Until they rid the world of any rival to their power, their influence, their reputation. He's competition. Get rid of him. Oh, but as we get rid of him, let's make sure we tithe the mint and the rue and every other herb.

Even when they're, they're bringing him through those mock trials at the end of the Gospels, they're like fastidious about, Oh, oh, oh, we, well, we'd kill him ourselves, but it's not lawful for us to kill him, so here, we're having you kill him. Judas throws the money back into the temple. Oh, oh, we can't

use that money. It's blood money. Let's lawfully use this and do something else.

This is dem, this is completely, 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.

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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. Pharisees ignored all that. We read those texts and we're like, Yeah, that's true religion. That's what I long to be. That's what I pursue. That's what I live for. That's what I repent over. Pharisees, they ignored it. They replaced true piety, piety with triviality. They taught others to do the same.

They made righteousness before God seem like a burden not a joy. They see, they made it seem like a harsh obligation, not a blessing. Listen, these are unregenerate men. That's the way unregenerate men think. But Jesus doesn't excuse them here. He doesn't let 'em off the hook. The law of Moses, the whole of Scripture still applies. Look at the rest of the verse. "Woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint, rue and every herb and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."

Now it's clear what Jesus meant when he said, "These you ought to have done." These, he's referring to what he just said,

justice and love of God. But what about that second part about not neglecting the others. What does Jesus mean by the others? It's tripped a few people up, commentators, scholars alike. If he means here, do justice, love God and then keep on tithing the mint, the rue and every other herb, just make sure you're doing justice and loving God as well.

You know what Jesus has done? He's just undermined his own argument. He's strengthened the legalism of the Pharisees. He's sanctioning it. If that's what he meant, he'd, he'd be sanctioning these man-made extrabiblical traditions that the Pharisees were using to promote their false piety. He'd be affirming that. He'd be reinforcing their self-righteousness. He'd been then further, which is really sad, he'd be, all those sheep that are under their influence, he'd be subjecting them to greater burdens, having to go through their cabinets and their spice racks and pull out all their condiments and cut off a tenth and give that to the temple.

I'm pleased to inform you that's not what he meant. You can leave your spice rack alone. Leave the salt in the shaker. What

did he mean, though? What did he mean? Turn back to what God actually said and what he actually commanded in, about tithing and there are a number of places we can go. But let's look at Deuteronomy chapter 14. What I'm gonna, about to read to you out of Deuteronomy 14 is consistent with what the other passages teach. But there are a number of texts, Leviticus 27, and other places as well.

But in Deuteronomy 14:22 to 29, this is one of the most expansive, more expansive texts on the subject. And it's clear what God meant when we consider the context. The passage begins in verse 22, Deuteronomy 14:22. He says, "You shall tithe," that is you shall give a tenth of. That's what the word, tithe means, give a tenth of. "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year." Oh, oh, okay. Pharisees say stop right there. Ah ha! Gotcha. Right there it is in black and white. "Tithe all of your seed."

Anything that comes from the seed, seeds itself, everything. Spices, herbs, all of it. Mint, rue, garden herbs. Keep reading though. You see they completely ignored the context. And by

ignoring the context of the law, get this, they not only failed to understand the spirit of the law, they distort the letter of the law, as well, and place a heavy burden upon people. Look at verses 22 to 23. "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. And before the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of, what? Your grain, and your wine, and your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock," stop there.

If they kept reading, they would see that God intends the tithe, the yield of the seed to be in the form of three things there: grain, wine, and oil. They're to tithe also the firstborn of the animals from the herd or the flock, not their puppies or their kittens or their hamsters or any of those other things that little kids love. They don't tithe those things. They just tithe the firstborn of their herds and their flocks.

Take the same principle back, it's grain and wine and oil. Hendrickson says, "Pharisees were always illegitimately overextending or overstretching the law." That's exactly what's

going on here. Was that not exactly what they also did with respect to fasting and hand-rinsing and Sabbath observance, etcetera?

So when Jesus said, "These you ought to have done without neglecting the others," he is not sanctioning the Pharisees' overstretching of the law. He's not sanctioning them turning God's good and gracious law into a burden. Listen, that's what Satan does. Satan tries to discredit God by making his good commandments appear foolish and burdensome and heavy and toilsome.

Satan employed that same strategy when he approached Eve at the very beginning, slithering up to her in the garden, insinuating unfairness and unreasonableness in God. "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" I mean, come on! What kind of a God are you worshipping, Eve? So unreasonable. So unfair. His burd, his commands are so burdensome.

That's satanic religion, making God's law out to be burden. So when Jesus said, "These you ought to have done without

neglecting the others," he's essentially saying this: Look, make sure you attend to the spirit of the law, the heart of the law. And what is that? Justice toward your fellow man. Loving your neighbor. Because when you love your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, listen, in that frame of mind when you love God that way, you're gonna understand what tithing is for.

You're going to understand the meaning of it. You're not gonna, neg, neglect the other command either because they put justice and love for God into practical daily use. All these other commands that come from the two greatest commandments: love God, love your neighbor. All those other commands are an unfolding and a manifesting and a demonstrating of justice and love for God. Do 'em all. That's what he's saying.

Notice at the end of verse 23, Deuteronomy 14. Pharisees had completely missed the purpose of tithing. "That you may learn to fear the Lord your God always." That's the point. To learn reverence, to learn respect, to learn regard for God. And as

we'll see, to turn, to learn his ways, and enjoy his blessings and share them with others.

Look at the rest of this. Deuteronomy 14:20, 24. "If the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the Lord your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the Lord your God chooses to set his name there, then you shall turn it into money," okay, so turn your product into cash, which is lighter to carry. You don't need to haul a bunch of bulls on your back or goats or anything else. Turn it into cash.

So turn it into money and verse 25, "and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the Lord your God chooses and spend the money for whatever you desire: oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, or whatever you apt to, your appetite craves. And you shall eat it there before the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household. You shall not neglect the Levite who's within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you.

"At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be satisfied, be filled, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do."

You see God not adding burdens but lifting burdens in this text. Look, if it's too hard for you, just, it's okay. Sell, gather up cash, save it for three years and then bring this company of those in need with you. Bring 'em with you. And you celebrate together. You provide a feast for them and just rejoice before God. Isn't that great?

God says, I want you to plan, and I want you to make provisions for future joy, for future celebration and you have, you have a clock on it. Every three years. Here's what you do; gather the tenth of grain, wine, and oil. Store it up, sell it, save the money for later. When the time comes, I want you to go to the festival, celebration. I want you to eat and drink. I want you

to be merry. I want you to satisfy your appetite. Add to your rejoicing by doing this, add to your rejoicing, multiply your rejoicing by doing this: share it.

Share the abundance of food and drink with other people starting with your spiritual leaders because I didn't give them a portion in the land. I gave you the portion and for you to provide for them. Store up for them and then provide also for those who have less due to their station life that I have assigned, to teach you to share, to teach you to be generous. Those who are less privileged, those who are disadvantaged. The foreigner sojourning in your midst. The orphan who's lost his parents. The widow who's lost her husband, has no means to provide. Let them come. Let them eat. Let them be filled. And all together, you can rejoice as God's people.

Man, folks, that's the point of the tithe. That is why we bring offerings here. It's not a burden, it's a blessing. It's not an obligation to be loathed. It's a joyful opportunity to be celebrated. God has provided and we get to enjoy that together

by sharing it with each other through the practice of tithing and giving and feasting and enjoying.

Can you imagine, just backing up for a bit, seeing all the unrest that's going on in our nation? Imagine if we thought like this as a nation, as a country, as all people? Can you imagine how united the United States of America would be? What a difference this would make in uniting us, in promoting and spreading a spirit of peace and harmony, goodwill.

Instead, we want to teach everybody to be complainers, to voice their grievances, to come and say, I've got it worse than you do. I've been more poorly treated than that person, than that person, than that race, than that race. I mean that is so divisive. Look what God says. If a heart of love and justice and generosity exists in you and you actually practice that with other people, creates goodwill, peace, harmony. Now the bad news is we're not gonna probably experience this any time soon in our nation. The good news, though, is we get to look forward to practicing this actually in the millennial kingdom together. Read the Book. It's all there.

But back to the point. Pharisees just didn't get this at all. They're unconverted men, that's why. They're not regenerate. They don't have any internal change and so there's no actual outward change either. They've just learned to mask their controlling greed. They've just masked their pride and their wickedness. They're self-centered. They care little for their neighbors and nothing for God. When they gave, it is in measured out increments. Weighed out precisely, tithed reluctantly and fastidiously. They had no appreciation for the joy of doing justice and loving mercy and loving God.

Folks, let's just take a few minutes to apply this. First, you need to know your leaders well enough that you can see their lives and their ministries and see whether or not they're consistent with what the Bible actually teaches. We don't go to a church that we just project an image on a screen and that's good enough. You can't get to know a screen. You can't get to know a person in two dimensions. You need to know their life. You need to know their family. You need to know their way.

So please pray for your leaders. And when necessary, when appropriate, hold them accountable by bringing any pattern of inconsistency to their attention. A godly leader will thank you for it. And he'll either help you see how his actions and decisions, the, more, he'll help you see those more clearly, help to resolve any apparent discrepancy. Or he'll repent and change. Either way, it's a win/win. You get to love him, and he gets to show humility and meekness.

Listen, we don't want any leader guilty of practicing hypocrisy here. So much is at stake. Not just for the leader, but for the entire church. Second thing in applying this is just think about your own life for a moment. Any evidence of hypocrisy in your own life? You don't want to start confronting your leaders for the speck in their eye until you've removed the log from your own, right?

Have you ever stopped to ask yourself, Why do I live the way I live? Why do I do the things I do? What do you practice in your life by rote? Because of learned tradition, just habit that you kind of follow on autopilot? How concerned are you with what

other people think about you? Are you a performer? Do you play to the crowd on the outside, but you don't own the truth actually on the inside? Can you draw a line from what you practice on the outside down to a deep internal conviction in the truth?

Even more pertinent, ask yourself how much of your life is consumed on yourself? And how much is lived for the sake of doing justice and loving mercy and living out a deep sincere love for God? Is Christianity, for you, play? Or is it warfare? Is it warfare with the flesh? Is it warfare with the systems of this world and it's, all of its ungodliness? Do you do what you do out of a sincere deep practiced love for God? Do you truly love God, love others, or is that just what you talk about because that's what we all talk about?

Because of the blinding nature of hypocrisy, and our tendency to self-deception, which is very real, don't just ask yourself and leave it at there. Ask others. Ask people who are godly mature Christians, who are trustworthy. Listen, this is not about image protection. This is not about brand protection. This about truth

piety. And listen, image protection is gonna fade away and burn away. The source of true joy in the Lord is in loving God and loving other people.

Well that's the evidence. I told you I was going to spend most of the time on the first point. So true to my promise, now we're going to get on to the second point. Jesus gets down to the heart of the matter, second point, the essence of hypocrisy. The essence of hypocrisy. Jesus said in verse 42 that you bypass the love of God, you don't love God, which raises a question. Well, if the Pharisees don't love God, what occupies that space in their hearts? What do they love?

Look at verse 43. "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love," excuse me. "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces." Okay, so when Jesus gets to the heart of the matter, he uses a single verb. Love. What do you love? And the essence of the Pharisees' hypocrisy, it comes down to what they love, to what captures their affections.

And listen, they're lovers of notoriety. They are lovers of praise. "Best seat in the synagogues," singular, refers to one seat. This refers to the highest seat among the seats of the front of the congregation in the synagogue. In any given synagogue, there was a raised platform, kind of like what we have here. And there was an ark at the front. And don't think Ark of the Covenant, just think box. Okay, it was like a big box, but it was called, you don't just dare call it a box, that was actually tantamount to sin in their minds. You called it the holy chest and the holy chest was important because inside it contained the scrolls of the law and the prophets. That was in every synagogue, had a holy chest, had the scrolls of the law and the prophets inside.

And Edersheim says, that "right before the ark, facing the people, are seats of honor, thrones. For the rulers of the synagogue and for the honorable." Pharisees weren't content just to sit up front on the platform, sit on one of the thrones. They wanted not just one seat of honor to occupy, they wanted the very best seat. They wanted the highest seat, the place of greatest honor in the eyes of the people. Anyone sitting up

there in the highest, most prominent seat, oh, a man of great distinction, great piety, great holiness. It was a show.

When they went out of the synagogue and walking around in public in the marketplace, the agora, it's like a huge outdoor mall, picture this middle eastern market called a *shuk*, a bizarre. Imagine how busy that place is, packed with people in non-Covid times, I grant you, but packed with people. The Pharisees don't just simply want to be treated kindly in a greeting, in a friendly manner. No, no, no, no, they want an appropriate greeting. That's what's talked about here. They want a greeting that's due their station. They want a fitting salutation, one that acknowledges their greatness in the community.

One commentator said it this way, "They don't want a mere cheery 'Hello', but a demonstration of respect, an elaborate verbal recognition of their prominence." This is what false leadership is after. The, the money is one thing, sure, there are many people who love money, lovers of money and that's a clear sign of false spiritual leadership. There are others that are content with poverty because sometimes poverty gives them

praise. It gives them spiritual credibility, clout with other people and they feed off of that. They want to people to make over them, to fawn over them, flatter them, appreciate them, make a big deal out of them, recognize all their contributions.

Jesus said the same thing of the scribes later on in Luke 20:46. He said, "Beware of the scribes. They like to walk around in long robes." Why long robes? Because everybody can see what they are, right? Vestments, ministerial vestments, collars and all the rest, big hats, all that stuff. All the trappings of false religion. They love greetings in the marketplace, best seats in the synagogues, places of honor at the feast. Oh, but they devour widows' houses. For a pretense, they make long prayers. Jesus says, "They'll receive a greater condemnation."

Pandering after praise. Doesn't that seem rather childish, petty? These are grown men doing this. Grown men. Aren't they above such things? Beloved, examine your own heart and see that no, none of us are above such things. We like to be. Some of us pretend to be above such things. Nobody is. Jesus's identifying sins that we all struggle with.

But these guys, the Pharisees, they live this way. They're characterized by this all the time. They're not struggling. They've given themselves over to it. They're massively concerned about their public image. They're concerned mostly about what people think about them. John 12:43 says, "They love the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God."

That's not just a first century malady, folks, that is present-day. I've seen it in our own as well. And this is why they had no concern for justice, no love for God. Huge weighty matters like justice and love for God. These issues of gravitas, insignificance, they were crowded out of the tiny little space in their hearts reserved for a tiny itty, bitty, finite, little idol called the self.

Is this not the worst form of idolatry? It's even uglier because they put that little, tiny self on the pedestal. They long for others, they invite others to come and worship and praise. They're outward behavior is basically a call to worship all the

time. They're greedy from praise, of, of praise from, from other creatures. They want to be worshiped by other people.

Folks, that's the essence of hypocrisy. It's idolatry in the rawest, least refined form, it is the idolatry of the self. The application here is simple for this point. First, do your leaders call attention to themselves? Whether overtly as, or subtly, do they point out themselves and their own accomplishment. Are they the hero of all their own stories? Or did they prefer to point to Christ? Whether in public or in private, are they seeking glory from men or are they loving to see God glorified, Christ honored, Christ lifted up? Are they humble men? Do they avert attention from themselves and call everyone else to worship God and God alone? Because those are telltale signs of what they love and what they worship.

Second way to apply this is ask these hard questions about your own heart. What do I love? I mean what do I really love when it comes down to it? If I say, li, I love God more than anything, does your life reflect that? Can other people see by the way you live, how you spend your time, what you do, what you don't do,

what you talk about, what you will not talk about? Do they see that you love God?

Or is that glorify-God talk just a show? You're just staying what's expected in church among Christians? Consider the small, little ways, natural fallen tendency to, that self-worship insinuates itself into your thinking so often. Do you love the praise and admiration of others? Does it warm your heart to hear people say good things about you? I mean, it's okay to like encouragement. That's fine. But, man, there is a line there, isn't there? When you go over and start longing for that, soliciting it? We call it fishing for compliments, right?

Are you always wondering what other people think about you? If they notice you? When two people are talking, do you assume it's about you? Want to take a little test to see if you're driven by the love of praise? Ask yourself this: are you happy when someone else succeeds? I mean not just being okay with it, not just smiling at it, but does it actually bring you joy and contentment to see other people succeed? To their star rise?

Are you content when somebody else gets the credit? What about when it's your idea and they get credit for it? You okay with someone else getting the credit, receiving the praise? Because you're just as happy that something good is taking place, that a good idea has taken shape and is actually manifest and doing something good that's gonna bless others. Are you okay with that even it's your idea at the beginning, but they took credit for it? You okay with that? You get a lot done, as they say, if you don't care who gets the credit.

When you put out 100 percent, and someone else has worked at about 50 percent and you know because you are the best judge of effort, right? Are you okay if you both get the same bonus? When someone else gets the promotion, gets the raise, gets the recognition for their, the work that you did, can you give thanks for the position God has given you? Can you give thanks to him for the money you make, the job that you continue to have to provide you for your family? Or does it really burn you to see that injustice?

We're really good at justice when it applies to everybody else, right? When it's offending us, hard to see our own injustices. We all struggle, beloved, with all those thoughts and feeling. If you're feeling uncomfortable, I'm watching a couple of you squirm and I don't know if it's because of the lateness of the hour, but I'm taking your squirming not as the lateness of the hours because it's like not. It's like, Oh my, that's me.

Listen, these sins are common among us, aren't they? But because they're common, it doesn't give us a reason to ignore them. Because these are the subtle signs that idolatry is creeping around in our hearts. And left unchecked, it'll grow like weeds that come and choke out good plants that God has planted. It'll stifle all true piety. When that's left unchecked, it turns into an ugly Pharisee-like hypocrisy.

One way to kill this ever-present pride and grow in humility is to mortify every tendency toward self-sympathy and learn to sympathize first and sympathize instinctively and then sympathize passionately with God. Let the zeal for God and his right to be worshiped, let that grab a hold of your heart.

Mediate on it. Think about this, without comparison, the most overlooked person in the entire universe, the most ignored, the least thought of, the least considered and for no good reason is God.

"Every good gift, every perfect gift is from above." Is that most good gifts and most perfect gifts? No, every one. "Coming down from the father of lights with whom there's no variation or shadow of turning." Look, you think he gets the credit he deserves? No, he does not. You think he's honored and glorified as he ought to be? You think he's loved as he ought to be? You think he's thanked and considered and appreciated and adored and worshiped as he ought to be? Not on your life!

Listen, until we rectify that injustice, we got no right to complain about any other injustice toward ourselves. Certainly have no business loving the best praise for ourselves. Well Jesus has given concrete evidence for the her, hypocrisy of the Pharisees, verse 42. He's identified the essence of their hypocrisy. They love and worship themselves, that's verse 43.

Third point, this is somewhat ironic, but the effect of hypocrisy. The effect of hypocrisy. Look at verse 44. See if you can spot the irony considering the context here. Jesus says, "Woe to you! For you're like unmarked graves, people walk over them without knowing it." Unmarked graves, what's the big deal about that? A couple weeks ago, we worked our way through the, one of those pilgrim psalms, Psalm 122, ascension psalm used by Jewish pilgrims as they walked up to, ascended up to Jerusalem to attend one of the three annual feasts.

We mentioned then that it was very important that they prepared themselves spiritually to participate in the feast, which is what those psalms prepared them to do. They also took precautions to make sure that they were ceremonially pure and undefiled before attending the feast. So they could come to the temple, they can offer sacrifices, they cannot be excluded from the worship of sacrifice and feast.

One of the several ways to become ceremonially defiled was by coming in contact with a dead body. So while journeying on the road, though, through this unfamiliar territory they had

increased exposure to coming in contact with the dead. And Numbers 19:16 says that "whoever in the open field touches someone who was killed with the sword or who died naturally, or who touches a human bone, or grave shall be unclean for seven days."

Seven days of ritual impurity. If that happened on the way to Jerusalem, they made all this effort to get there. Touch an unmarked grave, impure seven days, can't participate in the feast. It's all null and void. So a custom arose in Judea among those living in Jerusalem just before one of the grace, great feasts, the graves were whitewashed, freshly painted with bright white paint to make those graves as visible and prominent as possible. Why? So pilgrims could avoid walking over the grave, avoid the ceremonial impurity, defilement, the res, result from doing so.

So that's what's so ironic about this. Why Jesus has been so strong so straight forward in his rebuke. They, they're practicing this handwashing ritual before sitting down to eat a meal to avoid ritual impurity, but they have no idea, nor did

the people who admired them, who glammed on to them, they, themselves are as full of contagion as a grave. They're a hole in ground to these people containing a rotten corpse of dead religion.

Pharisees pretended to be holy with all their outward show, all their pomposity, seats of honor, flattering greetings in the public, but in reality, they're more deadly than a virus. They're inf, more infectious than a disease. They infect whoever's around them, causing them to become spiritually defiled. They had been like unmarked graves. Not only to each other, not only sharing the corruption, but common people who looked, looked up to them and followed their teaching, tried to follow their ways.

Jesus has here in a manner of speaking, walked into this luncheon, as it were, with a five-gallon bucket of whitewash. And he's applying it liberally all over these Pharisees. He's becoming the grave-marker, marking hidden graves so that no one comes into contact with the contagion of their presence. No one

comes, becomes under the influence of the infection and the leaven of their teaching.

Beloved, it is so important that you yourselves discern true and false spiritual leadership. And that you pray for your spiritual leaders. Hold them accountable because they're in a position of influence. If they go bad, everybody goes bad. Their teaching, their example, their preaching, their conduct, it effects, it effects the way people see God. It effects the way they learn to practice religion.

I feel that weight. And I pray that every elder, every leader here feels that weight heavily and, and the burden is shared more and more and more. It's weighty responsibility. And beloved, we need your prayers. May the Lord protect us from becoming like a, an infectious disease to you, like a spiritual contagion, spreading a virus of bad religion, hypocrisy to other people. We don't want to defile the unwary. We don't want to spread corruption, death. Instead, pray for us and you practice this as well. May we all together be sincere Christians, no evidence of hypocrisy among us. But always motivated by love for



God, love for neighbor. So that God will, through us, spread the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ in every place.

Bow with me for a word of prayer. We do pray, Father, that you would protect us from all hypocrisy and all the sins that spiritual, hypocrisy is meant, are meant to hide. We pray that you would help us to be constantly attending to our souls and examining ourselves before you, before your Word.

May we look and be careful, consider our steps, be attendant to our hearts. Help us to be those who practice repentance often. May we never think of ourselves as above any sin. But always be on guard for every sin. Please be gracious to point out the evidence of hypocrisy in our lives, the sins that lead to it. Help us to care for one another in that way, practicing Matthew 18:15 as a matter of course. Please help us to be gracious with each other, merciful, compassionate. Help us to be people who do, do love justice and mercy. And at the very heart of it, that we love and worship you. It's in Jesus' name we pray and for his sake, amen.