

September 3, 2023

"Jesus Confronts Hypocrisy"  
Lesson 1

Luke 11:37-44

**Intro**

In many areas of life there are genuine items and counterfeit or fake versions of those items. This even applies to smells, where scented candles or heated waxes may smell like fresh apple pie or sugar cookies. In some areas, counterfeit items can be criminal - such as money. In other areas it can be potentially deadly, as in airline engine parts. In today's text, Jesus confronts a different kind of counterfeit; people who act one way on the outside but are very different on the inside. Just prior to today's text, Jesus had addressed the idea of perception and how that can distort or blind us to the truth.

**Read Luke 11:37-41**

1. vs. 37: The invitation for a meal  
Jesus accepted  
The text doesn't indicate why this Pharisee invited Jesus in. It could have been to honor Jesus, or it may have been an attempt to bring honor to himself.
2. vs. 38: A tradition skipped  
This ceremonial cleansing was traditional (Mark 7:1-8)  
It is unlikely that Jesus just forgot. He was more likely creating an opportunity to make a point.  
The Pharisees weren't content to just follow the traditions themselves. They spent much of their time pointing out deficiencies in how others followed them. It allowed them to point out how much more "righteous" they were compared to those around them.
3. vs. 39-40: Jesus answers  
The text doesn't record the Pharisee asking Jesus a question, but Jesus does answer his thoughts. That by itself should have convinced him to heed what Jesus said.  
Jesus called attention to the inconsistency between their outward appearance and inward reality.  
Jesus spoke more harshly to those who thought highly of themselves, here even calling the generally respected Pharisees "foolish people."  
They focused on the outside, but Jesus said they had neglected the more important area of the inside
4. vs. 41: Inside and outside  
The Pharisees saw material wealth as an indicator of God's favor, so they saw no problem with taking advantage of the poor. In their eyes, those who were poor were obviously not as righteous as they were. So it was only fitting to take what they had when they could.  
(Luke 20:46-47)  
The NASB probably does a better job of translating this verse: "Give that which is within as charity..." In other words, get their hearts right. Once that had happened the externals

they were so concerned about would sort themselves out. With the right motives they wouldn't need so many restrictions to feel or appear righteous.

### **Read Luke 11:42-44**

1. vs. 42: Majoring in minors

Tithing of produce from their fields was commanded. The Pharisees extended that to even their spices.

But they didn't even follow what was commanded when it came to justice and the love of God

They wanted people to see righteous things they did, but they had no real connection with God or His priorities

2. vs 43: Public honor

They relished being treated like they were better than the people around them

This became their focus, rather than really pleasing God

They should have known that being proud and arrogant displeased God (Proverbs 16:18)

3. vs 44: Unmarked graves

Under the Law anyone who touched a dead person became unclean and had to go through a ritual cleansing (Numbers 19:11-122)

This included graves (Numbers 19:16)

A hidden source of defilement that made people unclean was the worst kind, because people wouldn't know to avoid it and might become unclean without knowing it. Those who admired and followed the Pharisees were being similarly affected when they followed their hypocrisy. They practiced things the Law never really commanded while neglecting the love for God and others that was its very core.

Application: Jesus focused on the heart, and we should do the same. Religious acts or restrictions that focus on externals don't reach the heart. We should focus instead on inner perspective, beliefs and motivations. Since we can't see those in others, it forces us to look mainly at ourselves instead of badgering others to conform to what we think is right.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to pay attention to our own hearts, and not be focused on the flaws we think we see in others. Thank you for reminding us that You see our hearts, know us fully and still choose to be gracious to us. Thank you for forgiving us when we fail to meet Your standards, and help us to be just as gracious with others around us. In Jesus' name, amen.