

Jesus exposes the Pharisees

Luke 11:37-44

The Pharisees were a religious and political party that lived in Jesus' time. What distinguished the Pharisees from other religious groups at the time was their strict insistence that the OT Law, the Torah be observed meticulously as the scribes interpreted it. They were also very strict in their observance of the laws of tithing and ritual purity. While this sounds harmless and even honorable on the surface, their greatest error was in not realizing that a relationship to God is not simply defined by adherence to laws. The Pharisees thought that they could live up to God's standards and righteousness by their strict obedience to the law, and other interpretations of the law that they invented. The problem with this is that it led them to believe that they could do it on their own and did not need salvation. It also created an attitude of righteous indignation and feelings of arrogance and superiority among them. It is no wonder then why Jesus calls them "hypocrites" several times in scripture. The Pharisees were constantly at odds with Jesus because He came teaching that God saves people, not the law. In this text, we see Jesus directly confronting the Pharisees about some ungodly attitudes that they had. Jesus confronts them by saying "woe", which means "beware", "warning" or "danger"!

1) They were judgmental toward others for not following their traditions.

When Jesus accepts the invitation and sits down to eat, he is judged by the Pharisee because He did not wash in the traditional ritualistic way. In other words, Jesus did not do it the way they were accustomed to seeing it done.

2) They were hypocrites for having outer rituals but an impure heart inside.

Jesus teaches them that no matter how clean the dish is on the outside, if their hearts are not clean inside then God is not pleased. They could really help some of the poor instead of getting caught up in the tradition. People are more important than traditions.

3) They thought that tithing and giving excused them from treating people right.

Whatever and however much we tithe or give in God's house does not mean we can treat people any kind of way. Both are important in God's eyes. Tithing and giving have true meaning when we treat others with love and justice.

4) They thought that seats and attention is what makes them important.

The Pharisees were into trying to impress people by occupying prominent places in the synagogue and striving for position, prestige and status. They were concerned with the outside show, but not the inner heart. Jesus teaches us that it is not about our seat or status, but rather our relationship with God in our heart that matters.