Woes Against the Pharisees

Luke 11:37-54
Woes Against The Pharisees

Text:

Luke 11:37-54,

37. And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.
38. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that he had not first washed before dinner.
39. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.
40. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?
41. But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.
42. But woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.
43. Woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.
44. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are as graves which speak not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.
45. Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.
46. And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! For ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.
47. Woe unto you! For ye build the sepulchers of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.
48. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchers.
49. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute:
50. That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;
51. From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.
52. Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.
53. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things:
54. Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

Commentary:

Luke 11:37, And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.

I. As Jesus spoke a Pharisee invited him to dinner. Jesus accepted the invitation and sat down to eat.

A. Jesus ate with Pharisees on various occasions.

1. Luke 7:36, And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him, And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat.

2. Luke 14:1, And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.
3. Luke 19:5, And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.

B. There is no indication that Jesus here or elsewhere observed the Pharisaic traditions regarding ceremonial washings before eating.

II. Although Jesus differed with the Pharisees in regard to the Mishna he courteously socialized with those who extended him hospitality and used these occasions to influence them by his teaching.

Luke 11:38, And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that he had not first washed before dinner.

I. The Pharisee marveled that Jesus did not observe Jewish traditions regarding ceremonial bathing before dinner.

A. This Pharisee had evidently not invited Jesus to ensnare him.

B. The Pharisee was evidently surprised that Jesus did not observe the ceremonial washing traditions.

II. Christians are to differentiate between God’s commands and human traditions.

Luke 11:39, And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

I. Jesus responded by saying:

A. You Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and platter but inside are full of extortion and wickedness!
B. “In spite of the extreme care for the vessels on your table, your whole life is unclean and defiled.” Coffman, Luke, p. 23.

C. This seems harsh and blunt, but we don’t know, have no record of the conversation leading up to this statement.

**Luke 11:40, Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?**

I. Jesus described the Pharisees as foolish people for putting emphasis on the outside while neglecting the inside, for putting emphasis on the externals, the ceremonial while neglecting the moral purity of the heart and soul.

   A. Jesus designated many “respectable” people as fools.

   B. How would you like for Jesus to call you a fool?

II. Biblical fools include:

   A. Psalm 14:1, The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

   B. Matthew 7:26, And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

   C. Luke 12:20, But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

   D. Matthew 25:1-13, Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were
foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Luke 11:41, But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

I. Spence paraphrased this verse: “I will tell you how really to purify, in the eyes of God, these cups and dishes of yours. Share their contents with your poorer neighbors.”

II. Jones, The Speaker’s Commentary, paraphrased this verse: “Let the Pharisee do one single, loving, unselfish act, not for the sake of the action nor for any merit inherent in it, but out of pure good will toward others, and their whole inward condition would be different.”

Luke 11:42-44, But woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. Woe unto you, scribes
and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are as graves which speak not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

I. Woe was here pronounced upon the Pharisees!

A. Why?

B. They majored, placed great emphasis on things of little importance (trifles) while neglecting, giving little attention to really important things.

C. They were vainglorious and prideful.

D. They were hypocritical.

E. They were preoccupied with outward forms and ceremonies while neglecting the great underlying truths of God’s word and its spiritual virtues.

F. Barclay: One of the forbidden works on the Sabbath was tying of knots, such as sailor’s and camel driver’s knots, and knots in ropes; but a woman might tie a knot in her girdle. Therefore, if a bucket of water had to be raised from a well, a rope could not be knotted to it; but a woman’s girdle could and it could be raised with that.

II. This list of criticisms of the Pharisees is similar to those found elsewhere which were spoken at other times, places and on other occasions.


III. Jesus said the Pharisees should observe principles of justice and love while not neglecting God’s commandments pertaining to tithing.
IV. The chief seats the Pharisees loved were at the front of the synagogue, around the pulpit, which faced the congregation.

A. What people love determines their destiny.

B. John 12:42, 43, Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

V. According to the Old Testament Law of Moses, anyone who touched a grave became ceremonially unclean for a week.

A. Numbers 19:16, And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

B. Jesus likened these Pharisees to graves which made any who contacted them unclean.

C. People could become unclean inadvertently, by touching a grave that was not marked and/or by being in contact with, influenced by these Pharisees.

VI. A lawyer in the crowd, hearing this, responded.

Three Woes To The Lawyers

Luke 11:45, Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.

I. A lawyer, one who interpreted religious law for the people, responded:

A. “Teacher.”
B. The lawyers simply acknowledged Jesus as a teacher, certainly not the Son of God.

C. What you just said condemns, reproaches, insults us also.

D. Many of the lawyers were Pharisees and held Pharisaic views.

Note: Jesus said these things while a guest in the home of a Pharisee, the very people he was castigating. Wonder if this Pharisee ever invited Jesus to dinner again!

Luke 11:46, And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! For ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

Woe #1

I. Woe to you doctors of the law, experts in the law as well as to the Pharisees.

II. Charges:

A. You load men with grievous burdens, religious duties they can hardly carry.

B. You do not lift a finger to help men carry these burdens you impose on them.

C. You think you are exempt from all these burdens. One law for them, another law for you.

D. Telling others what they should do is easier than doing these things.

Woe #2
Luke 11:47, 48, Woe unto you! For ye build the sepulchers of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchers.

I. Your fathers killed the prophets and you build their tombs.

   A. You and your fathers work together. You testify by your finishing the work your fathers started that you and your fathers agree that killing the prophets was the right thing to do.

   B. The lawyers were hypocritical in that they “honored” the prophets by building tombs for the prophets while actually believing their fathers did right to kill the prophets.

   C. The lawyers were participants in the plot to kill Jesus, God’s prophet, just as their fathers would have done.

   D. Phillips, “You show clearly enough how you approve your father’s actions. They did the actual killing and you put up a memorial to it.”

Luke 11:49, Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute:

I. Jesus here spoke of himself.

   A. Through God’s wisdom he sent apostles and prophets into the world.

   B. Some of these the Jews persecuted and killed as the Acts of Apostles relates.
Luke 11:50, 51, That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

I. The blood, guilt for the deaths of all godly martyred prophets from first to last, from Abel unto Zachariah who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary, would be charged to, required of that generation, the contemporaries of Jesus and the apostles.

A. Jesus here refers to the fate of the Jewish nation; that is, its total destruction in A.D. 70 and shortly thereafter.

B. Israel had been needed and tolerated until the Messiah came. Afterward they were ripe for their due punishment.

C. From Abel to Zachariah covered essentially the entire Old Testament history.

1. 2 Chronicles 24:20, 21, And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord.

2. Matthew 23:25, Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.
D. Martyrs “whom ye slew” continued during the New Testament period; for example, John the Baptist, James the brother of John, et. al.

E. That generation killed Old Testament prophets figuratively because their attitude and that of their ancestors were the same and led to these deaths, martyrdoms.

Woe # 3

Luke 11:52, Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

I. Woe to you lawyers because:

A. you took away the key of knowledge by false interpretation of scripture, beclouding Biblical teachings.

B. you entered not into knowledge yourselves.

C. you hindered those who were trying to enter into knowledge.

Luke 11:53, 54, And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: Layi ng wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

I. When Jesus was come out from where he was; that is, the house of the Pharisee where he had been invited to dinner,

A. the scribes and Pharisees began to press upon him fiercely, **vehemently** (like angry insects):
Note: Vehemently is derived from the same word used to describe Herodias’ attitude toward John the Baptist leading her to ask through her daughter for the head of John on a platter. Mark 6:19, 20, Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not; For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

1. trying to provoke (besiege him with questions) Jesus to speak on a variety of subjects.

2. attempting in this way to get Jesus to say something they could use against him.

B. laying wait for him, to catch something out of his mouth.

II. Jesus had denounced these scribes, Pharisees, lawyers and now they were filled with hatred and viciousness and determined to get even.

A. No thought of repentance crossed their minds.

B. They were totally devoid of any faith whatever in Jesus.

III. What is our reaction to preachers who “step on our toes?”
Woes Against the Pharisees

Questions

1. A certain ___________________ invited ___________________ to _____________. Jesus accepted the ____________ and set down to _____________.

2. The ___________________ ___________________ that Jesus not ____________ his ____________ before _____________.

3. Jesus said, “You ____________ make ____________ the ____________ of the ____________ and ____________; but you ____________ ____________ is full of ____________ and ____________.”

4. What are four characteristics of fools? ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

5. “I will tell you how really to ____________, in the ___________ of ___________, these ___________ and ___________ of yours. Share their ___________ with your ___________ ___________,” is Spence’s paraphrase of Luke 11:41.

5. The Pharisees ____________________, placed great on things of ____________ ____________ while neglecting really ____________ ____________.

7. The Pharisees were ____________________, ________________ and _______________. They were ________________ with ________________ farms and ________________ while
the great underlying’s and its.

8. What were the three woes Jesus levied against doctors of the law? __

9. The of all the, from to, would be required of that.

10. The and began to use Jesus and to him to speak of many things: wait for him, and to catch something out of his, that they might him.