

## ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **Love Completes, Law Falls Short**

September 2023

Fall Quarter

**September 2, 2023**

## **Lesson #1 – Jesus Confronts Hypocrisy**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Luke 11:37-44

### **ICE BREAKER –**

1. What steps can believers take to develop spiritual purity and personal integrity?

***Key Verse – “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.—Luke 11:39***

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

The Gospel of Luke is the first of a two-volume work attributed to “Luke, the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14). The man Luke was likely the same individual mentioned as the traveling companion of the apostle Paul (2 Timothy 4:11). This would explain the use of “we” throughout the book of Acts (examples: Acts 16:10–12; 20:5–6; 21:1), which is the second volume of Luke’s writing (1:1–3). Together, the books of Luke and Acts describe the establishment and expansion of the first-century church.

Today’s Scripture is part of a larger section that details Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51–19:44). Immediately prior to the events of this lesson’s Scripture, Jesus had been teaching (11:1–4) and healing (11:14–15). His teaching called out the wickedness of the people (11:29–32) and emphasized the importance of their internal spiritual transformation (11:33–36).

The religious leaders undoubtedly heard what Jesus was teaching and doing as He traveled to Jerusalem. The New Testament Gospels describe Jesus’ interactions with the Pharisees more than any other party of first-century Judaism. The Pharisees were a small but influential sect. Their focus was on strict adherence to Judaism (see Acts 26:5), which would have involved obedience to the Law of Moses (also called Torah), the first five books of the Old Testament. The Pharisees believed that by faithfully obeying even the smallest parts of the law, they would experience blessing from God. In an effort to follow the law faithfully, the Pharisees had established a tradition to guide their behavior (see Mark 7:3–5). The Pharisees sought to “build a fence” around the Law of Moses by enforcing their own rules. The expectation was that by following the Pharisees’ tradition, a person would faithfully keep God’s commands—even down to the most obscure command.

The Pharisees' zeal, however, had caused them to lose sight of the intentions of the law and the extent to which they had been influenced by tradition. They had focused so heavily on their prideful adherence to tradition that they neglected to cultivate hearts of worship that the law required (see Matthew 15:1–9). Jesus denounced the Pharisees for their pride and hypocrisy (examples: 23:1–7; Luke 18:9–14). As a result, instances of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees arose (examples: 6:1–11; 16:13–14; John 7:28–34; 11:57).

Despite the hostile relationship, Jesus accepted invitations to eat with the Pharisees. Today's Scripture describes the second time in Luke's Gospel that Jesus dined with a Pharisee (see also Luke 7:36–50; 14:1–6). Accounts similar to those found in today's lesson are found in Matthew 15:1–20; 23:5–7, 23–28; and Mark 12:38–39.

### **LESSON COMMENTARY**

Luke 11:37–44 (MBC): 11:37–38. Following the short discourse on the light, Luke recorded an instance of one who was “in darkness.” A Pharisee had invited Jesus to lunch (11:37a), and in spite of the (possible) disingenuousness of this invitation, Jesus accepted (11:37b). It is doubtful that the Pharisee wanted to learn from Jesus—more likely he was looking for an opportunity to criticize Him; “Jesus was being watched” (Bock, Luke, 1111). Upon the instant of Jesus' reclining at the meal, the Pharisee observed an offense—Jesus had failed to be ceremonially washed for the meal according to the tradition of the Pharisees (11:38). This was not a washing for hygiene but a ceremonial ritual of external and self-congratulatory piety required by tradition but not by the law of Moses. 11:39–41. Jesus' rebuke to the Pharisee was as swift as the Pharisee's observation of Jesus' supposed offense. He first pointed out their failure, namely, their hypocrisy of overly scrupulous concern for the external cleansing of objects and utensils (11:39a) while demonstrating a complete disregard for their internal impurities (11:39b). He also pointed out the cause of their failure: He called them foolish ones (11:40a)—which in OT terms meant they were “blind to God” and had failed “to respond to God's will or his way” (Bock, Luke, 1113). He finally pointed to the cure for their failure: they needed to cultivate the inner virtues—love, generosity, humility. Only these would render them truly clean before God (11:41).

11:42–44. From this particular lesson to a single Pharisee, Jesus turned to a “Discourse of Woes” pronounced upon the Pharisees as a group (see also the comments on Mt 23:1–36). The word “woe” used here is not so much of a curse as a lament. A paraphrase that expresses the meaning of “woe to you” is “how sad for you.” The first woe was pronounced against “selective obedience” and the neglect of the commands of true piety (11:42). The practice Jesus had in mind was “overly scrupulous tithing.” Their failure was the neglect of justice and the love of God, while the solution was finding and maintaining a proper balance. The second woe was for pride (11:43). The third was for deceptive and deadly false teaching (11:44). The overall theme of these first three woes was the sin of hypocrisy.

**LESSON NUGGET** – Jesus was a guest in the home, but He did not flatter His host or the other guests by avoiding the truth. He exposed their hypocrisy and condemned them for their sins (Matthew 23). They defiled people (v.44), burdened them (v.46) and locked the door on them (v.52), all the while posing as holy men of God. Instead of taking the opportunity of repenting and being forgiven, they opposed Jesus and attacked Him.

***Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary***