

Message #79**Luke 16:14-18**

The most dangerous hypocrite is the religious hypocrite. First, they are a danger to themselves in that they are on their way to hell; but second, they are a danger to others because they are leading people to follow them into hell.

The problem is religious hypocrites look so impressive. They look good externally. They look like the real thing. But when you present the truth to a Pharisee, you begin to see what they really are, a religious phony.

PHARISEES DO NOT JUDGE THEMSELVES HONESTLY AND THEY CONTINUALLY JUSTIFY THEMSELVES EVEN WHEN THE LAW OF GOD AND THE WORD OF GOD CONDEMNS THEM.

Pharisees are habitually out of step with God's truth. They don't see it accurately and they don't judge themselves honestly.

In these verses that point is very clear. There are three key Pharisaical realities seen in this text:

PHARISAICAL REALITY #1 - The Pharisee reacts negatively to Jesus Christ and truth.
16:14

Pharisees do not ever respond well to confrontation with truth, even when that truth is the pure word of God coming directly from Jesus Christ, Himself. It doesn't matter what the subject, Pharisees hate the truth and they will be judged severely for it.

Now there are three specific facts brought out about the Pharisees in this one verse:

Fact #1 - The Pharisees are money lovers. **16:14a**

Pharisees are not truth lovers, they are money lovers. This is an interesting Greek word (φιλαγυροι). It is a word that speaks of loving something at a covetous level that sees money as the greatest friend one could have (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 469). The word is used in a context of being willing to do evil things to get money (I Tim. 6:10).

Now remember these are the religious leaders who are supposed to love God and His word. They are supposed to have a passion for truth. Instead, the Pharisee is all about money. These Pharisees made money their primary passion. It was their idol. They wanted more and more and they hoarded more and more.

When Jesus informed this group that money was the least esteemed thing in the mind of God, and that you either loved God more than money or you loved money more than God, that rubbed these guys the wrong way.

They were faced with two options:

(Option #1) - Change perspective and conform to truth;

(Option #2) - Reject truth and mock the one presenting truth.

Pharisees opt for the latter.

Fact #2 - The Pharisees are word of God listeners. **16:14b**

Pharisees are at the services and they listen to the messages. In fact, a Pharisee goes to church and listens to the word of God being taught. **But the real problem with the Pharisee's heart is that he has no intention of allowing the word of God to change him.**

A Pharisee is one who believes he is the authority. He does not believe he needs to submit himself to the word of God. He thinks he has arrived to a great spiritual level and so he refuses to analyze himself honestly.

We all have a responsibility to listen to the word of God and make personal adjustments. The moment we stop doing this is the moment we become a Pharisee.

Fact #3 - The Pharisees are Christ truth scoffers. **16:14c**

Dr. Luke chooses a very rare Greek verb for "scoffing" (εκμυκτηρίζω). He writes an imperfect tense which means the Pharisee continually and habitually scoffs at the truth of God in past time and continues in present time. The word literally means that a Pharisee literally holds up his nose in derision and scoffs at truth time and time again (*Ibid.*, p. 140).

A Pharisee is not one who struggles now and then to apply truth; a Pharisee is one who is arrogant and he looks down on the truth of God and the one presenting the truth of God, even if that one is Jesus Christ, Himself. This is a habitual arrogant, proud rejection of truth.

The customary normal reaction of Pharisees when they hear convicting truth is not only to dismiss it, but to look down on it and actually mock it. This is the normal reaction of a Pharisee.

There was a minister friend of mine who had one of these Pharisees on his board. He would hear the truth but never apply it. In fact, he started attacking the minister presenting truth. Well the other board members got in his face and they rebuked the Pharisee and so he got mad and left the church. Several weeks passed and one day the minister friend of mine got a call from another minister in another city. This man had gone to this church and he was now causing problems there. A Pharisee does not change. A Pharisee is self-centered and a Pharisee will be eventually fully exposed.

PHARISAICAL REALITY #2 – Jesus Christ gives His evaluation of the Pharisees. **16:15b**

Jesus Christ is not intimidated by Pharisees. They are no threat to Him. Christ brings out three facts about Pharisees:

Fact #1 - Pharisees continually justify themselves before men. **16:15a**

Jesus is very emphatic in His use of the plural pronoun “you.” He is aiming this straight at all the Pharisees who were there listening. He uses a present tense participle “justify” meaning that these Pharisees continually and habitually justified themselves before men. This is what they do all of the time.

The noun “men” is articular “the men.” So these Pharisees were always justifying themselves before specific people that he had in mind. We think it not only has reference to religious people, but also to people who are actually right with God.

What Pharisees do is they always justify themselves in the presence of other religious people. They make themselves look good. They never admit they have struggles and they never admit they need to change. They never respond to conviction. What they do is to specifically point to their wealth as a basis for claiming God is blessing them because they are right with Him.

They were using their financial success as a basis for self-justification before other people.

Fact #2 - Pharisees cannot justify themselves before God. **16:15b**

Pharisees may be able to fool other people, but they cannot fool God and Jesus says, “God knows your hearts.” Do not miss this point. God looks straight at the heart to determine who the play actor is.

The verb “know” (γινώσκω) is one that means God continually perceives and understands and sees and knows what is really going on in a person’s heart (*Ibid.*, p. 92). No one can fool God. No one can deceive God. No one can justify himself before God because “God knows your hearts.”

Do not play games with God. Be open and honest. When God’s word convicts, we need to respond to it knowing God sees our heart.

Fact #3 - Pharisees are detestable in the sight of God. **16:15c**

Just recently a politician was asked if they hate someone and the answer was I am a very religious person and I don’t ever hate anyone. Well God does. God views certain people as a detestable abomination that so disgusts Him that He turns away from them (*Ibid.*, p. 79). That person is the self-righteous religious Pharisee and hypocrite.

We may notice that the clause that says this begins with the conjunction “for that which is.” This specific clause has been identified by Blass and Debrunner as being a special clause that denotes facts that have existed from past time (*A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, p. 196). What Christ is saying is that self-righteous external Phariseeism before men has been going on for a long time and it is totally and completely detestable in the sight of God.

Men can be easily impressed and easily deceived when it comes to religion, but no one can fool God. God sees the heart and phony Pharisees are detestable in His sight; they have been and will be forever.

PHARISAICAL REALITY #3 – Pharisees do not judge themselves accurately and honestly from God’s law. **16:16-18**

Paul is clear to point out that the O.T. law condemns us all (Romans 3:19-20). Pharisees don’t see the O.T. law as condemning them. In fact, the one thing they prided themselves on before people was their ability to keep the law. Pharisees actually do believe they measure up to the O.T. law.

So what Jesus does here is to bring up three facts about the law:

Fact #1 - The dispensation of the law is over. **16:16**

We are a dispensational church and one reason why we are is because Jesus Christ was a dispensationalist and that point is proved right here.

In this verse, Jesus teaches that there are distinct periods of time in God’s divine government program and there are different ways God governs in those time periods.

Jesus makes the point that the law and the prophets existed until John came. When John came, a new moment occurred in the program of God. He started preaching not the O.T. law, but that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

In other words, John came and pointed to Jesus Christ and said there is your King and you need to believe in Him because He is the One who can give you the Kingdom.

This message was not one of obey the law, but one of believe in Jesus Christ as your God/Savior/Messiah/King. John informed Israel that her Kingdom was at hand, but of course these Pharisees rejected that.

In fact, **verse 16** says they thought they could get into the kingdom by force. They thought they would win battles and take over the land because they kept the law. They did not see themselves as a sinner who did not have the righteousness to get into that kingdom. In fact, they thought their law keeping would guarantee they got into the Kingdom.

When they were told they needed to repent, they saw themselves as self-righteous winners who were guaranteed the Kingdom. They had a violent reaction to Jesus Christ.

Fact #2 - The duration of the law is never over. **16:17**

The O.T. law of God was to show that all men are guilty and condemned before God and every stroke of the O.T. law accomplishes this.

The Apostle Paul taught that the O.T. law continually does six things:

- 1) It will shut every self-righteous mouth. Rom. 3:19
- 2) It will establish every person's sinful guilt. Rom. 3:19
- 3) It will specifically identify personal sin. Rom. 3:20; 7:2
- 4) It will justify and validate God's wrath. Rom. 4:15
- 5) It will not ever justify anyone or make one righteous with God. Gal. 2:16; 3:11; Phil. 3:9
- 6) It points every person to their desperate need of Jesus Christ. Gal. 3:24

Christ is telling these Pharisees that the O.T. law will not ever get you into the Kingdom, but it will continually show that you do not deserve to get into that Kingdom. That is what the law will always do. Pharisees think they are heading to heaven because of their attempts to keep the O.T. law, but Jesus says that O.T. law will never get you in there, it will always condemn you.

Fact #3 - The condemnation of the law is never over. **16:18**

Not only did these Pharisees love money, but apparently they were also guilty of committing adultery. Now remember these are the guys who are scoffing at the teaching of Jesus Christ. Apparently some of them had divorced their mates and were strutting around as if they hadn't ever sinned.

Christ's goal here is not to give God's total teaching on the subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage. His point was to show that these Pharisees, who were scoffing at Him, were condemned sinners.

Alfred Eidersheim says that the Pharisees had come up with a system that only allowed divorce for Jews and not Gentiles (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. 2, p. 333).

Some of the rabbis had come up with some loose reasons that one could divorce a wife.

- 1) If she spoiled her husband's dinner.
- 2) If she was no longer attractive looking to her husband.
- 3) If a woman breached a tithing law.
- 4) If a woman went into public with an uncovered head.
- 5) If a woman was found talking to another man.
- 6) If a woman spoke disrespectfully about a husband's parents.
- 7) If a woman was childless for 10 years.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 331-332)

Some of the Pharisees would actually marry a woman for a night and then divorce her in the morning and act as if it were just fine.

Jesus says I want you to know that you are guilty of violating the law and you will not be able to get into the kingdom unless you come to terms with your sin. What a Pharisee will never do is honestly admit the truth about himself and his own sin. Will you? Will you admit that you have not measured up to the righteousness of God? Will you put all of your faith in Jesus Christ to save you or will you scoff at that idea?