

Watch out for Hypocrites - Luke 11v37-12v3

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 November 2017

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] Bibles might be slightly different in some of them. Some of them are a bit newer. We're going to be starting from verse 37 and we'll read down to the start of chapter 12 verse 3.

Luke chapter 11 verse 37. When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him. So he went in and reclined at the table.

But the Pharisee, noticing that Jesus did not first wash before the meal, was surprised. Then the Lord said to him, Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? But give what is inside the dish to the poor and everything will be clean for you. Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God.

You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.

[1 : 20] Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it. One of the experts in the law answered him, Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.

Jesus replied, Woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did. They kill the prophets, and you build their tombs.

Because of this, God in his wisdom said, I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill, and others they will persecute. Therefore, this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary.

Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all. Woe to you, experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.

[2 : 39] When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely, and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say.

Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying, Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

Thanks, Connor.

Well, let's keep our Bibles open, and let's pray and ask for God's help. Father, would you give to us an undivided heart, a broken and contrite heart, so that we might not only hear your word, but see it applied to our lives, so that it will change us, and we will become sincere followers of you.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You've just got your cup of coffee from the hatch, and you see a visitor come through the doors.

[4 : 33] So you make your way over to say hello. And just as you're about to welcome them, someone else comes up to the visitor and says, Watch out!

And then pointing their finger at you, says, They're a hypocrite. And then walks off, leaving you standing a little red-faced.

Offended? I think I would be. Well, it seems Jesus is in an offending mood. Look at chapter 12, verse 1.

Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another. Everyone is there. They've been following.

And they want to see what Jesus is going to do next. Well, they're in for a shock. Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying, Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

[5 : 41] See that lot over there? Hypocrites. Don't be fooled by their big Bibles and their well-crafted prayers. They're a fake.

Hypocrite comes from the word actor. So in the open-air theatres of long ago, people would just simply put on the mask. They didn't have all the technology, so it's just a simple mask they would put on.

And play the role of someone else. It's an act. They are impersonating someone who they are not. So when Jesus is warning his disciples about the Pharisees, he's saying, Watch out for those impersonators.

They're fake. It's all show. It's an act. They're hypocrites. Watch out for that bunch of people who meet down in Carragoline Community Centre, singing their songs.

It's very offensive to call someone a hypocrite. Unless, of course, it's true. Look, Jesus is saying here, If you're going to be my disciple, if you're going to follow me, there is no room for play acting.

[7 : 05] There's no point in turning up on a Sunday morning and putting on a good show. Turning up with our masks, creating an image, and looking like a Christian.

Well, in case we think following Jesus is all about outward performance, Jesus has some very strong words for us.

First he says, Clean up your act. Clean up your act. This hypocrisy talk all started when Jesus was invited by a Pharisee to have dinner.

Look at verse 38. But the Pharisee, noticing that Jesus did not first wash before the meal, was surprised.

Now, it's not like Jesus has just been to the loo and he's forgot to wash his hands and it's all got a little bit embarrassing. Now, we're talking here about ritual or ceremonial washing.

[8 : 11] It wasn't to get rid of dirt and bugs. It was this outward show to say that you were clean, that you were acceptable to God. And the Pharisees were experts in keeping clean.

Even their name was a giveaway. Pharisee simply means separate one or holy one. And they were so meticulous that they made up lots of extra rules and traditions about washing.

Everything had to be washed in a certain way and so many times. You even had special places where you had to do the washing, separate from everything else.

But most importantly, you had to wash when you came into contact with unclean people. You can get the picture, can't you, about the Pharisees.

It was all about keeping up appearances. Making sure that everyone knew you were separate and you were holy. Outward performance was everything.

[9 : 19] Because as long as we are outwardly clean, God will accept you and welcome you. Now we might not have had a little bowl at the door there for you to do a little ritual washing as you came in.

But don't we all have our little clean rules that we like to participate in so that we look good on the outside? We don't drink or smoke and avoid the places that do.

We want to be clean. We hang out with the good living people and stay clear of those who are morally dubious and those who identify as gay.

We shake our head in disgust at those sinful people and boast about how I'm not like that and I wouldn't do that. You get the picture, don't you?

It can be all about keeping up appearances. Making sure that everyone knows that we're separate and holy and, well, outward performance is everything.

[10 : 34] As long as I am outwardly clean, God will accept me and welcome me. Well, in case we think it is all about outward performance, Jesus has some strong words.

He is saying to us we need to clean up our act. It is not about being outwardly clean but inwardly clean.

You see, for the Pharisees, outward was everything. And now, Jesus arrives for dinner at the Pharisees' house. And where has Jesus been all this time?

Well, he has been hanging out with those tax collectors and those sinners. He has been hanging around with unclean people in unclean places.

And he sits down for the meal and he doesn't even wash. Verse 39, Then the Lord said to him, Now then, you Pharisees, clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

[11 : 48] Outwardly, you look the real deal. You look like a Christian. Outwardly, you're setting the standard for every single person. But inside, you're rotten to the core.

You need to get your hearts cleaned. And we can be so busy trying to give the impression we're clean. We come through the doors on a Sunday morning and we want people to think well of us. We want God to think well of us. We sing the song so well and nod at the right times and we can even take the Lord's Supper.

But inside, inside we're unclean. Private sin festers away, eating us up.

And it's all covered over by our public performance. Our Christian masks creating a good impression. But outward performance will never make the inside clean.

[12 : 58] Look at verse 40. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside only?

In other words, there's only one who is going to clean the inside and that's the one who made you. But give what is inside the dish to the poor and everything will be clean for you.

That last verse there, it's a little bit difficult to grasp but essentially Jesus is saying, look, you need to clean the inside. You need to start dealing with the heart and once you deal with the heart, then the outside, then you will be clean.

Stop focusing on the externals and deal with the internals. Instead of putting on this drama and act and covering up with our masks, he's essentially saying to us, you need to run, you need to come to me.

You see, here's these Pharisees sitting down for their dinner and they're wanting Jesus to wash.

But what they can't see and what they can't grasp is that Jesus has come to wash us.

[14 : 18] Jesus has come to take our uncleanness and in its place cover us with his cleanness. Maybe you can remember some of the interactions Jesus had with different people.

Go back to Luke chapter 5. Luke chapter 5 and verse 12. Here Jesus is meeting with somebody who's considered unclean, unacceptable because he has a skin disease.

Luke chapter 5 verse 12. When Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. He's unclean. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

And Jesus reached out his hand, touched the man. I am willing, he said. Be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him.

You see, what Jesus was doing physically for people, cleaning them on the outside, Jesus is saying, look, this is a picture. This is what I am coming to do for you on the inside.

[15 : 41] Like that man with leprosy, we are to run to Jesus, to fall down before him, to reach out in faith, as it were, and ask him, will you touch my life? Will you clean me?

And that's what Jesus does. As he goes to the cross, he takes our sin, my sin, he takes that upon himself and in its place he gives us his righteousness.

He takes our sinful hearts and he gives us a new heart. He fills us with his Holy Spirit, so not only are we accepted and welcomed, but now our hearts have been changed so we can go the way that Jesus calls us to.

You see, Jesus has not come for those who think they are outwardly clean. Jesus has come for those who know they are inwardly unclean.

So first, Jesus says, clean up your act. Second, he says, check out your heart.

[16 : 57] Check out your heart. You see, it's easy, isn't it, to sit back and read this story and wag the finger at these Pharisees and wag the finger at all those we think are hypocrites.

But we're to start examining our own hearts. As Jesus confronts and condemns the Pharisees, starting at verse 42 with these, woe, woe to you.

It's a pronouncement of judgment and condemnation for the way they're living. And as we follow through, it's, well, we're to examine our own hearts because we're to get rid of all outward pretense. Six things we are to look out for in our own hearts. First, false giving. Look at verse 42. Woe to you, Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue, and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God.

These guys were so meticulous that they gave a tenth of everything that they owned or had. A tenth of everything.

[18:22] Outwardly, so generous. Even their little herb gardens that they had. A tenth went to God. So you can imagine them, there they are, going out to the garden, to their little mint tree, counting off the leaves.

There's ten on it. Pull one of those leaves off and gives it to their neighbour. You know, this is giving a tenth, but not one leaf more.

Nine for me. We too can be so careful in our giving, calculating how much we're going to give a tenth, but not a euro more.

Neglecting justice and love for God. Oh, outwardly, it all looks good as the bags pass by and we drop in what we drop in. outwardly generous, but inwardly tight.

Second, approval seeking, verse 43. Woe to you, Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.

[19:38] They loved it. They loved going down into the town. The praise of others, oh, good morning, holy one. Oh, aren't they great. And don't you like a little bit of recognition?

I certainly do. Oh, you're so good the way you care for people. Isn't he a wonderful pastor? Oh, what a great teacher he is.

I love those recognitions. But sometimes what people think of us matters more than what God thinks of us.

Craving human approval, desperate for status. We do our service, but actually seeking out the praise of others.

Look at verse 44. Fake spirituality. Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it.

[20:49] Now, we could walk over an unmarked grave and it's, well, nothing happens, does it really? But for these guys, if you came into contact with the dead, even by walking on a grave, you became unclean, unacceptable.

So Pharisees avoided the dead. It was a mark of their, well, their spirituality. spirituality. But Jesus is saying to them, actually, you're like the living dead.

People who come into contact with you die. They become unclean. That's what you're really like. And so we can impress people with our spirituality.

We stay away from those unclean people and those unclean places. Instead, we go to church with those good people and nice people.

But we all leave unchanged. Nothing different happens. Spiritually dead. Remember here, we're to be examining our hearts.

[22:04] Verse 45, one of the experts of the law answered him, Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also. Maybe Jesus now is going to tone it down a little and not be so offensive anymore.

Not at all. Verse 46, Jesus replied, and you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one little finger to help them.

Look, you've just got to stop sinning. you've got to be a better person. You should obey more and start reading your Bible more and stop behaving like that, and why don't you pray a little and do this and don't do that, and why don't you just become like me?

so easy to say, isn't it? Rather than actually getting alongside people and spending time with them and showing them God's grace and showing them how change is actually possible.

It's easy to point the finger and condemn and judge, burdening people with all these rules, offering no grace and no help.

[23:24] what about in sincere worship? Look at verse 47. Woe to you because you build tombs for the prophets and it was your forefathers who killed them.

So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did. They killed the prophets and you build their tombs. Again, they love to talk the talk.

Oh, those prophets. Great people. And build these great kind of memorials to these prophets of the past who were so great and mighty.

Remember Jeremiah? What a great teacher he was. And Hosea? Boy, he knew how to preach a sermon. men. But they never ever listened to the prophets message.

In fact, they hated the message so much their forefathers killed them. But let's not miss out on what Jesus is actually saying because, well, they want to get rid of Jesus too because he is the ultimate prophet.

[24 : 40] And they don't like what he's saying. So, verse 53, when Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with many questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say.

Now, we can bring our Bibles to church. Good at listening to sermons, taking down our notes, talking about our favorite preacher, John Piper, always great, isn't he?

Tim Keller, fantastic. We can even attend Munster Bible College and earn ourselves a certificate. We worship the Bible and all those who teach it.

But yet it is actually possible never to apply God's Word to our hearts. And never to submit to what God's Word is actually saying to us.

It's hard to look into our hearts, isn't it? What about this in verse 52? Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge.

[26 : 03] You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who are entering. people are or they claim to be experts. They say they are the real deal.

They even look the real deal, spouting off their knowledge, telling everybody how they should live and what they should do. But in reality, Jesus says, you are ignorant obstacles.

You hinder people coming to God. You see, it is so possible to think that our outward performance, that all our show and how we behave is that it kind of can attract people to God and bring people closer to him.

Well, the reality is with all the show, it's just obstacles. Rather than giving people the key to salvation, it's as if we locked the door and threw the key away.

It's easy to point fingers, isn't it? Because that's what hypocrites do. Point their fingers at other people and go, I'm not like them.

[27 : 24] Setting our own standards that everybody else must meet. Our own little rules rules that everyone must follow. But Jesus is saying, look, if you are going to be my disciple, if you are going to follow me, then we must first learn to examine our own hearts.

What are our hearts like this morning? So first, Jesus says, clean up your act. check out your heart. And then third, guard against the yeast. Look again at the middle of chapter 12, verse 1. As Jesus is speaking to his disciples, he says, be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Be on your guard. We need to be on our guard. We need to be paying attention for two reasons. First, because hypocrisy spreads.

Do you see the connections that he's making in verse 1? He says, be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

[28 : 47] Hypocrisy is just like yeast. You only need to put a small amount of yeast into a big lump of dough, and it begins to spread.

Not one part of the dough is left unaffected. It all rises. Now, he says, that's the danger of hypocrites. Their attitude can spread.

It can infiltrate like a deadly poison. And here's how it can spread. spread. And I just have to get the book because I forgot to get it out.

Hang on. Here's how it can spread.

This comes from Mike McKinley in his little book. He says, hypocrisy remains a spiritual threat.

Whenever Christians are tempted to pretend to be more holy than they are, whenever we are unwilling to confess sin and ask for help, whenever we establish our own man-made rules as the standard for everyone's holiness, whenever we are comfortable with private sins, so long as they do not come to light, in those situations, the yeast of the Pharisees is present.

[30 : 14] you see, we are all performers at heart, and the danger is we can all begin to follow each other, to try and follow one another's standards.

Watch out for the yeast of hypocrisy. Second, we need to be on our guard because our hearts will be exposed.

You see, the thing about hypocrisy is we think we can get away with it, because it's all an act, it's all a show, and because it's an act, well, we fool people, and people know, nobody really knows what's actually going on inside our hearts.

We can hide it and cover it all up, but look at verse 2. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known.

Or we can point the fingers and complain about what everybody else does, but what's done in the secret, that's going to be made known to.

[31 : 37] Verse 3, what we have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what we have whispered in the ear in the inner room will be proclaimed from the roofs.

We may play a good game, but God sees my heart, and he sees your heart. Nothing is hidden from him. And one day the masks are going to be lifted, the drama will all stop, and we will be shown for who we really are.

You see, the Pharisees thought that Jesus needed a wash, and we probably think at times that it's everybody else who needs to be cleaned up, clean.

But Jesus has come to wash me, and he's come to clean you. He's not come for those who think they are outwardly clean.

He comes for those who know they are inwardly unclean. He says, come to me. You can take off your masks.

[32 : 53] you don't need to hide from me, because I have dealt with your sin at the cross. I have taken it all away, and have covered you with my purity, with my beauty, with my goodness.

you don't need to hide. You can run to me. We're going to sing in a minute an old song.

Let me just quote to you one verse from it. As we reflect on what we have heard, it says, nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling.

Naked come to thee for dress, helpless look to thee for grace. Foul I to the fountain fly, wash me saviour, or I die.

That is the invitation for us all to run to our saviour with an undivided heart, to come with a broken spirit, to come with a broken and contrite heart, and let him deal with us.

[34 : 18] Let's stand together as we sing this song, and may it be a prayer in response that God would change us and clean us.

from the through