

Wrong Judge, Wrong Standard

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Preacher: Rich Chasse

[0 : 00] There we go. How is everyone? Good to see you this morning.! It's been a couple weeks since I've had the opportunity and privilege to be with you.

! And we are all discombobulated. So if you look at your sermon notes this morning, you'll see that the date is March 15th.

That date is wrong. It is March 22nd. And actually, today's sermon will also go into next week.

So we're not going to finish today. That's one of the problems that I have. This is my own personal, open myself up and tell you my junk.

Frank, when I have a little extra time to stew over a sermon, I come up with more stuff. And it makes me have to go two weeks instead of one for just one sermon.

[1 : 02] So that's what we're going to do today and next week as well. And if you've looked ahead at your notes, you'll see that we have some interesting material to cover this morning.

And I want to start with this little comic, Frank and Ernest. You probably have to be of a certain age to know or be familiar with this particular comic.

Frank and Ernest, these two bumbling guys approaching the gates of heaven. And of course, I have to give this qualifier. This is not how it works at the gates of heaven.

For believers, we don't have to worry about the gates of heaven kind of a thing. But here they are approaching the gates of heaven. And St. Peter apparently is there with the keys. And Frank says to Ernie, if I were you, I'd change my shirt.

And his shirt says, question authority. Probably not the thing you want to do as you approach God. Is wear a shirt that says question authority.

[2 : 04] But that's the subject matter of our text today. Now, it's interesting that in the American DNA, we are probably not the group of people that would be most willing to submit to authority.

We would be a group of people that would want to question authority or to counter authority. But that's what we're dealing with today.

Our text deals with the authority of Jesus and the flow of thought through these five verses that we're going to look at. So we're only doing five verses.

Next week is just the one verse. We'll come up to that here in a bit and I'll tell you about that too. But in just these five verses, it seems like there's not a lot of connective tissue here.

It seems like it's just random thoughts about some different things. But that's not really what's going on. Even though it seems disjointed, difficult to track.

[3 : 10] For instance, it starts with money. But then it just says the one thing about money, which is a reflection of the verses before that, the parable of the dishonest manager, the dishonest or the shrewd steward.

And that issue that we looked at two weeks ago, three weeks ago now. And then it moves on quickly. And then it ends, verse 18, talking about divorce.

And it's like, well, how is that related to anything else that we've talked about or looked at in these verses? But it is connected. And that's what we're going to look at today. The overall theme of this little section of Scripture is the authority of Christ, the authority of God's word versus how the Pharisees self-proclaimed their own authority.

And the big idea here is that the Pharisees prided themselves in keeping the law, but God knew their heart. And that was what Jesus was exposing in this, their hypocritical heart in their sense of pride.

So let's go ahead and begin to take a look at this. The Pharisees, after hearing this parable that Jesus told about the dishonest manager, just Luke with just commentary here.

[4 : 41] This is not something that Jesus said. It's just Luke just throws this in. And the Pharisees were lovers of money. And it's that idea then that informs this next phrase.

They heard all of what Jesus was talking about with this dishonest, this shrewd manager, and they ridiculed him. Or other words that are used in different translations here.

They scoffed at him. They derided him. They ridiculed him. They basically, another way of saying it is they made fun of Jesus.

So they were off on their own, and they were back and forth, and they were kind of laughing under their breath and mocking him and scoffing at Jesus.

Supposedly because Jesus was, in their eyes, this poor man who didn't own anything, didn't have a place to lay his head. And they saw themselves as being wealthy.

[5 : 39] And they prided themselves in that based on their understanding of Deuteronomy 28.

Deuteronomy 28 is the passage of Scripture where God is telling the nation of Israel, Well, hey, if you honor me, if you obey the commands that I've given you, then I'm going to bless you tremendously.

And I'm going to give you healthy children and prosperous businesses. And you're going to have much success. You're going to win in battle. Your crops are going to succeed. And you're just going to be blessed financially and in wealth and in every way.

And if you disobey, then I'm going to curse you. And you're going to lose your battles. And your crops are not going to succeed. And your kids are going to be sick and all of these different things. And so they thought themselves as, well, we're rich. And because we're wealthy, because we have these means, that means we're godly. That's how they interpreted it. And it was just this hypocritical view of themselves and their pride and how they saw it.

So when Jesus is talking about money and what they ought to invest in, investing in eternity versus investing in earthly things, and they're just laughing at him and scoffing at him because what does he know?

[7 : 00] He doesn't have any money. He can't give us advice on this. And then it goes into verse 15, where Jesus now begins to say to the group, to the Pharisees who are a part of this group, you are those who justify yourselves before men.

And that was the problem. The Pharisees sought to justify themselves before men. And that was a problem. But God knows your hearts.

And that's what we ought to focus on here. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. What they thought was important, what they thought was a big deal, what they thought was a matter of utmost importance in their lives and what they were living for, to God it was an abomination because of their pride, because of their hypocrisy.

That's how God saw it. And they weren't really concerned about how God saw it. They were concerned about how their men saw them. Jesus goes on.

And he says, the law and the prophets were until John. Now, what does he mean by that? Well, if you remember way back at the beginning of the Gospels, John, this is a reference to John the Baptist, came preaching a new message.

[8 : 25] The new message was, the kingdom of God is at hand. It was the gospel of the kingdom, preaching this gospel message, this good news message.

The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is basically near. It is before you. And Jesus was proclaiming this same message. And so there was a shift between Old Testament and New Testament.

And John's ministry was that transition point between old and new. Since then, since John came preaching this message, the good news of the kingdom of God is preached.

And so we've been talking about this. This is Jesus' ministry. He came to earth. He came preaching this message that the kingdom of God was at hand and that you need to repent.

You need to trust in him, trust in Christ. And then you too can be saved and usher in the kingdom of God. But they rejected him.

[9 : 32] And Jesus knew that. That was all part of God's plan from the beginning. Jesus knew that they would reject him. Jesus knew that he was going to be crucified. He came for that purpose to go to the cross to pay the penalty for our sin.

But while he's preaching for the three years of his ministry on earth, he's preaching this message. The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is at hand. We saw in chapter 9 of Luke that,

all right, we're about two-thirds of the way through his ministry.

And now he's traveling from the north in Galilee to the south to Jerusalem where he knows he's going to be crucified. And he's taking this long journey from village to village.

And he's going through each one on his way to Jerusalem. And he's proclaiming this message. The kingdom of God is at hand. And we talked about when we went through chapter 9 that that message was now being amplified.

So that message was the kingdom of God is at hand. And the drumbeat's getting louder and louder and louder and louder. And it's getting more and more focused. The kingdom of God is at hand.

[10:42] And Jesus now is reminding the Pharisees, is telling them, hey, up until now, the law and the prophets, all the Old Testament law was what held force.

It was that Old Testament dispensation of the Ten Commandments and all the law and the prophets that went with that. And John now is the transition point into something new and something different.

And the Old Testament talked about that God was going to come and give you a new heart. And there would be a new covenant that was coming and a better covenant that was going to be coming. And Jesus was introducing that.

So we go back to Mark chapter 1, verse 14. And it says, now after John was arrested. And so here in the beginning of Mark's gospel, we're already kind of a third of the way in where John is being arrested.

And Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God. And what is that gospel? That gospel is the time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.

[11:47] That was the message of the gospel that they were preaching. Now you'll note that is not the message of the gospel that we're preaching today. We're preaching today the gospel of grace, Acts chapter 20.

That Jesus Christ has come and he's lived a perfect and sinless life and he willingly went to the cross. And there on that cross, he paid the penalty for our sin. And he died and he took our place and he rose again from the dead.

And if by faith you would just trust him, you would place your life in his hands and trust him with your life, he would save you. That's the message that we're preaching. It's this grace, this goodness, this mercy of God that he offers through his son, Jesus Christ.

And we are not today proclaiming the kingdom of God is at hand. We're just not. Now to note, little sidebar, prophetic little comment here, that message will be proclaimed again during the tribulation. After the church has been taken up out of the way at the rapture during the seven years of tribulation, that message will once again be proclaimed that the kingdom of God is at hand.

[12:59] Because the return of Jesus would be at hand. It's right at the doorstep. It's coming. And the people during the tribulation would know about how long it would be because they know it would be about seven years.

And so if they're hearing this message two years after the rapture, they know, okay, we've got five more years to go. We know how close it will be. We don't know the day or the hour, but we know it's coming.

We know it's coming. Now, back to our text here in Luke chapter 16. The law and the prophets were until John. Since then, the good news of the kingdom of God is preached.

Okay, the kingdom of God is at hand. And everyone forces his way into it. What in the world is Jesus saying here? Well, if you remember back in chapter 15, verse 1, there was this little comment that Luke makes about what's happening at that moment.

The tax collectors, now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. So we had all of these people who were clamoring, rushing, who were setting aside all of their daily activities and anything else that was going on in their lives that they were considered important.

[14:19] They're setting that aside because I got to go follow Jesus. I got to go be with Jesus. I've got to go see this Jesus. And that's what Jesus is referring to when he says everyone's forcing their way into it, is they're doing everything that they can to go see Jesus.

And they're the ones who are interested in seeing Jesus. Whereas the Pharisees and the scribes, they're grumbling. They're complaining. Now, in our text today, they're scoffing at Jesus for different reasons.

And at this point, it's, well, he's eating with sinners and tax collectors. And what's the point of that? Now Jesus is giving money advice and they're laughing at him and they're scoffing at him.

And he's saying, listen, all these people are clamoring to get in, forcing themselves to get into the kingdom. And you guys have no interest.

You're laughing. You're scoffing. You're complaining. And then he says this. But it's easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the law to become void.

[15:28] Now, this goes back to the Sermon on the Mount where he talks about I've not come to do away with the law, but I've come to fulfill the law. And not one jot or one tittle, the old King James way of saying that, would pass away.

But he was fulfilling all of the Old Testament law. And basically what he's saying here is this. If we could kind of modernize this phrase to include the English language, this is kind of how we would compare it.

Look at these two phrases and tell me if you can see the difference. They both say, let's eat, grandma. But one of them has a little extra mark in it that makes all the difference in the world, right?

Because the first one says it's an invitation, right? The invitation to grandma, let's go eat. The second one is we're going to eat her.

We're going to eat grandma. And so this apparently was a t-shirt. This was a t-shirt where they had the let's eat grandmas on one side and on the back it said, commas save lives.

[16:35] Yes. But understand that for us, because we believe that the Bible is the word of God, that it is the inerrant and infallible.

There aren't mistakes in the word of God. We believe. We hold a high view of the word of God. And that's important to us.

It's important when we say that we understand and we follow the word of God. This is not a book of suggestions. This is not a book that is malleable over time, that we can change it and conform it to fit our modern culture.

We see that as being a popular thing in what today is referred to as progressive Christianity, or people who identify themselves as progressive Christians.

We are, and by the way, that's an oxymoron. Progressive and Christian, they don't go together. You just can't. You can't take the word of God and say, well, the world has changed, and so I can understand the word of God and make it fit modern culture.

[17:53] And so what the word of God has to say about sexuality, what the word of God has to say about how we view life, what the word of God has to say about how we view our relationship with God, this is all changeable based on the culture.

And that's how God intended it. But that's a foreign view to what the word of God says about itself and about anything having to do with an honest look at what this word says to us and how we ought to live and carry our lives.

Nothing has changed. Just because culture changes doesn't mean that God has somehow changed his view of these issues. God still says that sexuality, how we view and how we carry out ourselves as sexual beings matters, that God views it as one man and one woman for a lifetime. And sex inside those boundaries is a beautiful thing that God created for us, but outside of that is a perversion of what he intended.

And we can't conform the word of God to fit our culture. Same thing with how we view life. We can't say, well, the Bible actually, there's a politician down in Texas that's like, oh man, what makes it worse is he's a seminary student slash pastor.

[19:32] The guy's not even a Christian. Just because someone wears a Christian label doesn't mean that, okay, well, he's a Christian. No. You discern what they have to say.

You discern how they live their lives. And this man is saying that God condones abortion because of how he twists the word of God to fit his current cultural view of the issue.

It's a dangerous place to go. But I think that you'll start to see more and more people wearing the Christian label and yet identifying themselves as people who will twist the scriptures to fit the cultural norms, to justify all these different perversions of life and sexuality and relationship with God.

Oh, well, yes, Jesus is one way to heaven, they would say. But Buddhism and Hinduism and Islam are all just as valid ways of reaching God.

And that is not truth. That is a lie from the pit of hell. It doesn't fit anything.

[20 : 54] Even if you don't use the word of God and what Jesus says about himself, just the idea that, well, I'm going to believe in a religion, if that's how you view Christianity as a religion, I don't want to serve a God who would kill his son if there were other ways to do it.

If there were other ways to get there, that's a sick and twisted way of viewing your God. But we understand that there is one way.

There's one truth, one life. And it's all encompassed in Jesus. It's only through Jesus and his sacrifice that we are saved. And it does us no good to compromise that.

It does us no good to belittle that idea and to sell ourselves short on that. And then Jesus throws in this verse.

Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. Boom. You'll notice here, no exceptions. There's a famous exception clause.

[22 : 01] And if you've ever had studied or heard sermons on the subject of marriage and divorce, you probably are familiar with the exception clause. But Luke and also Mark don't include that exception clause.

What is up with that? We're going to talk about that next week, by the way. That's going to be our, this verse is going to be our starting point for next week's sermon. And he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Again, there's no exception clause there. What is up with that? And let me kind of, if I could, just kind of preview what we're going to do next week. Next week, we're going to tackle this issue head on.

And this is where you might find your pastor getting into a little bit of trouble. Because you're going to hear a message in a way of viewing this issue in a way that perhaps you've never heard before. Which is a dangerous place for a pastor to go. Because normally speaking, when you're talking about subjects of theology or doctrine or how we view a particular issue, if a pastor is like, or commentary or scholar is like, well, yeah, I'm kind of different from the way everyone else views this issue.

[23 : 16] That's usually pretty squirrely. That's not a good place to go. But I want to invite you to come next week and see what you think. See if what I have to say here fits with what I'm going to show you from the rest of Scripture with that particular issue.

I believe that when we approach this issue and when we look at it, you're going to come away from this with a new sense of awe in the grace of God in perhaps a way that we haven't seen before. So be aware of that coming up. Now, with all of that in mind, and that's it for our text, I want to talk about the keepers of the law and the Pharisees.

That's how they viewed themselves. That's how the people in the culture of that day viewed themselves. They viewed the Pharisees as the keepers of the law and how they were really the corruptors of the law.

They were anything but. So on your notes now, God's kingdom comes in the person of Jesus, in the person of Jesus Christ. And that's what I want to focus on.

[24 : 28] And the Pharisees, they're going to be asking this question, how do we know that the kingdom of God, that's the next chapter. And, but remind you of some things about what Jesus has said about the kingdom of God.

He said this back in Matthew 6 from the Sermon on the Mount, but seek ye first, seek first, I got the King James in me, seek ye first, the King, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. All these things will be added to you. If you're wondering, how do I do that? Seek first the kingdom of God. What does it look like to seek first the kingdom of God?

Because that seems kind of ambiguous to me. Seek first, what does it mean for me in the church age to seek first the kingdom of God? Well, answer the question, what is the kingdom of God? What is the kingdom of God? And the better question is who is the kingdom of God? What makes heaven, heaven?

[25 : 34] The fact that he is there. Without him, it's not heaven. So without Jesus, you don't have the kingdom of God. So when it comes to this understanding this, how do I apply this verse?

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. In the context of everything else that he says about the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 5 is all about you can't do it.

Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, you won't be going to heaven because they're not going to heaven. And by the way, you have to be perfect. Last verse of chapter 5, you've got to be perfect.

How are you doing? Well, I'm not doing very well, thank you. But if you seek first the kingdom of God, and Jesus is the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, not your own.

If you're trying to be righteous in yourself, you ain't going to get there. You can't do it. But if you seek Christ and his righteousness, it is by his righteousness that we are saved.

[26 : 43] He is the only one qualified to go to the cross, to be the sacrifice for our sins. He is the only one who is sinless, perfectly righteous in every way. If we seek him, all these things be added to you.

He will provide for you. And then, as I mentioned, later on in chapter 17, that's in a few weeks now, verses 20 and 21, the Pharisees are asking, okay, so how do we know that the kingdom of God is coming?

When is that going to happen? And Jesus responds by saying this, the kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed. You can't see it. Nor will they say, look here, here it is, or there.

For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. Now, there's been some confusion over this last phrase, because some of the translations will say the kingdom of God is in you, as in, oh, it's internal.

That's not what Jesus was saying here. Jesus is saying the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. And by the way, if Jesus is saying the kingdom of God is in you, as in in your hearts, he's speaking to the Pharisees.

[27 : 52] They didn't have it. They didn't have the kingdom of God within. But if you understand this verse to be saying that Jesus is right here in the midst of you, right now, the kingdom of God is right here in the midst of you.

He's standing right in front of you. That's how you recognize the kingdom of God. It's Jesus. He is the kingdom of God.

And so the kingdom of God comes in the person of Christ, in the person of Jesus. And the appropriate response to that is to submit to his authority, not to scoff at it, which, of course, is what the Pharisees did.

And then the question becomes, well, why were they scoffing at Jesus? What was motivating them to scoff at Jesus? And this text now gives us two reasons why they were doing that, why they were scoffing, why they were ridiculing, why were they making fun of Jesus?

And so let's answer that question. Two reasons given. Number one, they were greedy. Luke says they were lovers of money, which is just another way of saying they were greedy.

[29 : 07] Now, ask for a moment of honest reflection here among us, if I could do that. Do I ask for a show of hands for confession?

How many of us struggle? Don't show your hands. How many of us struggle with greed? I'm going to say that that's probably 100% of us in some form or fashion.

And most of us would not, we don't look at ourselves or think of ourselves as being greedy. We just don't. Someone has said that it's the hardest of our sins to see in the mirror.

We just don't see greed in ourselves. We see it in other people very clearly. It's very easy to turn on a TV or to look at our neighbors, look at a coworker, and spot greed.

Or covetousness. The want for more. I got to have more. But we all, I think, in some form or fashion, struggle with greed.

[30 : 26] And certainly the Pharisees really exemplified that. Now what's interesting is that the sin of greed in the scriptures is often mentioned in the Bible in the same breath as sexual immorality?

Huh? And it's interesting. There's some verses that say this. This is not the only one, but I'm going to show you the one here, Colossians 3.5. I want you to notice this list.

And in this passage, Paul is giving several different lists of sins, different kinds of sins. And so this is one category, if you will, of sins, okay, that people can be guilty of.

Now I want you to look at this list. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs in your earthly nature. So we're told as believers now, since we're new creations in Christ, we're told now to put to death, do away with, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, to the old man, the old life, the old way of life.

And then he gives this list, sexual immorality. It's just, that's just our, our, our Greek word is pornea. We get our word pornography from that. It's the catch all word.

[31 : 46] It's, it's just about every kind of sexual perversion or immorality that you can think of. So the way that it's translated here is a good way to say that. So it would include adultery and incest and use of pornography, lust, all, all these kinds of things get kind of shoved into this one word.

Of pornea. Impurity, what we do with our minds in, in, in, in a sexually perverse way, lust, evil desires. Again, it's this, this, the, the things that we can imagine in our minds sexually.

And of course, Jesus reminds us in the sermon on the mount that if we sin in our minds, if, if we lust after someone, what we are, what are we guilty of?

It's, it's, we are guilty of actually committing the sin of adultery. Okay. If we have this, imagine, so, oh, oh, well, pornography, no big deal.

I can look at pornography. I can watch. No. You are participating in, in a moral act.

[32 : 55] By doing that is not an innocent little side thing. So all of these, these, these sins that, that have to do with some, some form of sexual sin.

But in that list now, he, he notes greed. And, and basically is calling it the same type of, same category, sin, wanting something that doesn't belong to you.

God doesn't intend for you. And then he throws in another little wrench into this by equating greed with, what?

Idolatry. Now, we Americans living in 2026, we, we don't, we don't struggle with idolatry, right?

We, we don't, I mean, last I saw, last I heard, I don't, I don't know of any of anyone that's like building a little, little idol in their home, right? I don't, I don't know anybody who's walking out their front door and bowing down to some temple in their yard or some, whatever, right?

[34 : 12] We, we don't do that, right? You, I don't, I'm, you know, anybody here got an idol in your house that you worship? Again, don't raise your hand. But how is greed, which you list with sexual sin, and idolatry related?

How, are they all related? Actually, the answer to that, that is yes. We actually have an Old Testament book of the Bible with the minor prophets, Hosea.

The whole book of Hosea was given as a picture of the relationship between Israel and God. And Hosea was given a wife purposefully by God, who was basically purchased out of prostitution.

And she would keep going back to that life while he was married to her. And God wanted Hosea to go and to get her again, and to go and to bring her back again.

And it was a picture of Israel's, Israel's constant desire throughout Israel's Old Testament history to chase after foreign gods.

[35 : 44] And the way that it's described, and this is kind of graphic, but I'm going to say this. Just bear with me. The way that the old King James says it is that he would say that Israel kept a whoring after false gods.

There's something about idolatry and greed that has with it this component of sexuality. It's all false god related.

After all, what is greed? It's wanting something more. When I should find my satisfaction in Christ, in all that he has given me, when I should find my contentment in what I already have, and yet we have this constant push for more and more and more.

And again, there's nothing wrong with having a nice car or a nice house or all of these things, trips. Understand, again, some of the wealthiest people in the Old Testament were people that God lifted up as righteous and holy people.

Abraham and Moses and Moses and David and Solomon. But again, understand this dynamic that we struggle with.

[37 : 09] And the Pharisees struggled with greed. This is a struggle I think that we need to watch out for, to be concerned about.

And then the second issue that they had, the second reason they scoffed, problems that they had with the law.

And this verse 18 exposed that. Divorce. They often dodged God's law. The law that they said that they upheld.

The law that they said they cherished more than any others in the community. And yet, they would find loopholes in that law to do whatever they wanted to.

And this is what we're going to talk about next week. And that had to do with the area of divorce. So they would find these loopholes, dodge the law through these loopholes, while at the same time proclaiming their faithfulness to that law.

[38 : 24] Now, here's the main point of these two things. The real reason, their sin of greed, their sin of using divorce for their own purposes, those weren't the root problems.

They were the symptoms of the root problem. And the root problem is this. The main point, the real reason that people scoff at Jesus, and this is true today, is not intellectual.

When people want to laugh at you because of your faith, when people want to reject Christ because it's just real, it's just imaginary, it's just something that people made up.

When they want to deny the creation account, and they want to say that, no, we're just evolved, and we're just, you know, a higher form of animal, or whatever it is, however they view evolution, it's not an intellectual problem that they're having.

It's moral. If you study anything about how the evolutionary movement began back in the 1850s, of course, with Charles Darwin, all of his research, all of these scientists and archaeologists, their whole goal was basically to do away with God.

[40 : 07] In their minds, if we had evolved from lower forms of creatures, and we evolved over millions and billions of years, and there was no God involved in that, then we can do away with God and live how we want.

But if God is, and God created, that means we have to obey him, and they did not want to do that. They wanted to live how they wanted to live. They wanted to have no authority over how they chose to live their life. And so that was their motivation.

That was their worldview when they approached the subject of how the origins, how the world began, how we got here.

Now, admitted, I am a very biased person when I approach the subject of evolution and creation and all of that.

[41 : 10] I am approaching the subject from the bias, from the worldview that says God is. God is. And because that is informing how I believe, when I read it in the scriptures, I'm not thrown off by the fact that God created the world in six days.

That doesn't bother me because God is. And if God is, of course he can do that. He can just speak and the world's come into existence because he's God.

He exists outside of it all. He's infinite. God has always existed. Can you understand that? No, I can't, but I accept it.

I believe it. And that informs how I approach this subject. They would say, an atheist or an evolutionist would say, well, they're approaching it from a clean slate.

No, they don't have a clean slate. They're approaching it from the opposite perspective. They're approaching it from the perspective of God is not. There is no God.

[42 : 21] And so that's how that informs that. And it's because they want to live a life however they want to live. So understand that it is a moral issue.

That's what's happening here. Jesus addressed this chapter 3, verse 20, for everyone does wicked things, for everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed.

Okay? This is why people won't trust Christ as Savior. You could witness to someone, they could come and they could hear a message about the gospel, but the reason why people won't respond is, again, not because of some intellectual thing.

There may be some people that struggle with some of the, they want some answers to some questions, but most of the time, the questions that people have are just roadblocks that they put up because they don't want to surrender their life, to submit their life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

That's what's at view. That's what's at, that's at the core of the issue here. Another way of saying that is this, this is several places, but Psalm 14, verse 1, the fool says in his heart, there is no God.

[43 : 43] Now, what I've done here is I've italicized the two words that don't appear in the original Hebrew text, there is. The words there is are supplied by the translators so that the original Hebrew of this would read, the fool says in his heart, no God.

So whether that comes out as an intellectual, well, there is no such thing as God, or whether it comes out as I am saying no to God, I think both are acceptable ways of viewing that because that's basically what people are saying.

because of my moral objection, because I don't want to do what God tells me to do with my life, because I want to live my life my own way, I'm going to say no to God. And that's going to lead me then to argue that there is no God. Because that assuages any guilt that I may have.

Well, if there is no God, then I don't have to worry about guilt. Guilt's a man-made thing. I don't have to deal with it because there's no God. And it's what people tell themselves.

[45 : 08] And it's why the fool says in his heart, it's why he's a fool. There is no God. Now again, while these sins are a serious problem, they're not the root of the Pharisees' problem.

The Pharisees' problem, as we saw before, come out of this. You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.

They were striving to be justified by men. What is the worth of that? What is being justified by men worth? Why do we seek the approval of man?

And isn't that the whole goal of social media? We need to be careful about how we view and how we use certain trends that we see in our culture today.

Their standard for judgment had to be that which men could see and evaluate. What their basis for judgment, how they were doing, had to be based on something that people could observe, people could see.

[46 : 34] In other words, outward appearance. That's what they sought after. But we need to remember it is God who justifies, not men.

And God's basis for judgment, not on what men can see, but in what is in a man's heart.

What is in your heart? God's God cares about. And there is a pretty well-known, pretty famous verse from 1 Samuel 16, came to choosing David as king.

The Lord sees not as man sees. Hello. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

I want to close with this. When you look at God's revelation in the Old Testament, and so often when we read the Old Testament, when people look at the Old Testament, they consider it the law, the Old Testament law.

[47 : 57] It's all based on, well, here's all the, you know, obedient stuff. Here's all the do's and here's all the don'ts. And basically, they boil down the Old Testament to this law, this list of laws, and you have to obey, and Israel didn't obey, and so God judged, and then they, sometimes they did obey, and God blessed, and it's all.

But we miss much of what the Old Testament says about the heart. We miss that. So in the Old Testament, God's revelation was not seeking mere outward conformity, but inward conformity to the will of God.

We think of that more as New Testament thing, inward conformity. We think of that with Jesus and inward, but no, it was all throughout the Old Testament.

And then my question then becomes, how do we miss it? Because the Pharisees certainly missed it. And maybe we did too.

But look, Deuteronomy 6.5, this goes right to the core of the law. You shall love the Lord your God with what? Yeah. In the Old Testament economy, for us, in our world, we equate the heart with emotion.

[49 : 28] Right? But in their way of thinking, this is true for Jewish culture, it was true in Roman and Greek culture as well, the heart was the center of the person.

It wasn't just the emotion. It was the core of a person. When they spoke of emotion, they spoke of that as being from their gut. They used a word that we get our English word spleen from.

And that word spleen meant emotion. Like, you know, if I wanted to express my undying love to my wife, oh, I feel you in my spleen.

I love you from the bottom of my spleen. My gut. But for them, the heart was who we are at the core.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. That's not outward. It starts inside. Ezekiel 36, the prophets emphasized this.

[50 : 45] I mean, the prophets, their main thing was, hey, you guys blew it. God's judgment is coming. That's basically their whole message. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, all the minor prophets, that's all these guys are doing.

It's like, you guys blew it. God's judgment is coming. But, but, but, if you will return, look what he says, I will give you a new heart, a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, give you, give you a heart of flesh. us to do a work in our heart.

Hosea, I mentioned Hosea earlier. For I desire steadfast love. Normally, Old Testament, the steadfast love is coming from God to us.

It's this loyal love. It's this covenant love that God had toward Israel, that God has towards those who are his own. and now, he says, of us, I desire steadfast love, this loyal covenant love, not sacrifice.

[52 : 00] Now, in our way of thinking, what that's, what that's saying is, God's not interested in your prayers at the end of the day. You're kneeling at your bed and you're confessing all of your sin.

sin. What God wants is your loyal love in the first place so that you're not having to confess.

Now, yes, when you sin, God loves to forgive you and wants to bring you back. Absolutely, God will forgive you.

But how much better if we learn the lesson and we obey from the heart the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings to know him.

And, again, in their world, knowing God was an intimate thing, not just kind of how we think of it, well, do you know the material for the test? And it's just like I'm going to cram my head full of facts and figures.

[53 : 10] And sometimes we treat the word of God that way. I just got to cram it in so I'm going to memorize all these verses. To what end? What for?

So that you may know him. Paul echoes this in Philippians that I may know him. And then Psalm 119.

Psalm 119 is like this massively long 158 verses or something like that. But over and over again, the psalmist comes back to this point.

Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, with their whole heart to seek him. I will praise you with an upright heart.

Learn your righteous rules. With my whole heart I seek you. Let me not wander from your commandments. Verse 10. Verse 11.

[54 : 16] For I have stored up your word in my heart. Yes, memorizing God's word is good. But know why you're doing it. That you have his word hidden in your heart that you might know him.

That I might not sin against you. In the way of your testimonies, I delight as much as in all riches. Can we say that? I will delight in your statutes. I will not forget your word. It's to the core of who we are.

My soul is consumed with longing. God's God's law. I have to admit, I mean, I'm the pastor of a church. I've been a pastor for over 30 years.

I'm looking at this and I'm like, huh? My soul is consumed with longing for your rules? Can I say that?

[55 : 21] When I understand the purpose of God's law, it's for my protection because God loves me. It changes my view of how I view rules.

But again, I think we have this natural tendency to want to buck against the rules, but not God's. It shouldn't be that way with God's rules.

Give me understanding that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. Do you see a pattern here? Are you catching? Incline my heart to your testimonies and not to selfish gain.

For I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love.

And again, in my very American churchified view, I'm thinking, you know, when we come to praise and worship the Lord and I'm praising God and I'm lifting up my hands to him, I'm not lifting up my hands to his commandments.

[56 : 33] I have to admit, I don't know that I've ever done that. I've lifted up my hands to him. I don't know that I've ever lifted up my hands toward your commandments, Lord. or to say openly, Lord, I love your commandments.

But when we understand why God gave them to protect us because he loves us, I entreat your favor with all my heart.

Be gracious according to your promise. and there's more. We're going to stop here. But do you get the idea? So the Pharisees, they struggled because they had the outward stuff.

If all you looked at was the outward stuff, you would have said the Pharisees were the most righteous group of people in their community. Right? And then when Jesus said, your righteousness has to exceed that of the Pharisees, you're no way getting into heaven.

Which means, Pharisees, you ain't getting into heaven because your righteousness has to exceed theirs. Can you imagine? Imagine you were in that crowd that day and you're standing next to a Pharisee.

[58 : 04] And Jesus says that. Pharisee, you're going to hell. And I'm thinking the average person is like, well, yep, that means I'm going to hell too.

because he's the most righteous person that I know. At least from an outward perspective, if I didn't know his heart.

So who are you on the inside? What does God see when he looks at your life? If you've trusted him as your savior, yes, he sees the child of God.

And he sees you perfect because Christ is perfect and when he sees you, he sees Christ. And that's a wonderful truth. But do I love him in that way?

Is my whole heart submitted to him and to his word and to how he wants me to live?

[59 : 11] Am I fully submitted this is what's going on in this passage in Luke chapter 16. These Pharisees who were scoffing at Jesus, they were lovers of money.

They were using the law for their own benefit, twisting it and loopholeing it, doing whatever they could to look like, oh, I'm a good person.

We do this too. We come to church on Sunday morning. We look the part. We don't get dressed up anymore. But man, everything's great. Everything's wonderful. But how are you doing really?

Do you honor the Lord with your whole heart before him? Let's pray. Lord, thank you so much for your word.

Lord, we say that every week. We say it because it's true. Your word, it teaches us so much. That's why we gather like this.

[60 : 24] That's why we come to hear teaching from your word. Because our hearts are challenged and Lord, we want to be a people who are wholly submitted to you.

For those of us who are believers, who are followers of Christ, who are committed to you, who have trusted you as Lord and Savior, we have this ongoing struggle within us of wanting to obey, wanting to follow you, and yet still struggling.

with the old man, with the flesh, with the sin which so easily takes hold in our lives. There's a real sense where that struggle is what it means to be a Christian.

It describes the Christian life, that struggle between the old and the new, between the part that is alive, that you have made alive, and the part that is dead and will be left behind when this life is through.

We look forward to that day when we'll be able to see you face to face, and there will be no more struggle with sin. What a day that will be. But Lord, until then, we do struggle.

[61 : 53] Lord, help us to seek you, to know your word, help us to understand that as we do these things, as we immerse ourselves into your word, it helps us to know your heart and your mind, that we might know you, and as we come to know you more and more, that's going to have an impact on how we live our lives.

It has to, because your word is fruitful. It will have its impact in our lives. If we would willingly commit to learning, commit to reading, studying, knowing you through your word, and then having your word have its way in our lives.

Lord, for those who don't know you as Lord and Savior, I pray that you would help them to see that Jesus is the answer to all of what's happening in this life and what's wrong with this life and this world.

This world is so broken by sin, so many people's lives are ravaged by the sin. But Lord, you've provided a way of escape.

You've provided a way of life and it's through your Son, through Jesus Christ. Comes through what he has already accomplished, what he's already done on our behalf, paying the penalty for our sin and dying on the cross.

[63 : 45] and then rising again on that third day. Thank you for these precious truths that we hold so dear. And I pray that even today people would recognize their need of you as their Savior and that they would say, yes, Lord, I trust you.

I trust you today with my life. It's yours. Lord, thank you so much for your love for us, your patience with us, how you guide and direct us.

Bless us, I pray, Lord, that we would continue to come together as this community of believers who gather together on this regular basis. Lord, I pray that you would continue to bless what we're doing here for the benefit of each one of us and for your glory and for your honor.

We love you, Lord, and we praise you. We ask all of it in Jesus' name and all God's people said, amen.