

## **A Study of Luke's Gospel**

Week Nineteen

Luke 11:42-12:15

### **Day One**

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. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. 43 "Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. 44 "Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it."

v. 42 – These words appear to be part of Jesus' address to the crowd. Jesus seemed to be hard on the leaders but much softer to the followers. Leadership does command a more exacting judgment, because of their ability to lead people astray. I see a trend today to apply a less stringent measure to leaders than followers. I don't think Jesus did this.

I have also accepted this verse to mean that Jesus approved of tithing, since He did not say that they should not tithe. But some make the tithe as the most critical aspect of discipleship. I don't think that is what Jesus said either. He said that tithing is important, but justice and love of God are more important. I know mean people who tithe; does their tithing excuse their lack of Spirit-fruit in their lives? I don't believe tithing covers a multitude of sins, as some portray it to do.

v. 43 – I am not against anyone in leadership having reserved seats or parking spaces. I just know that it is wrong for *me* to have them. I know some leaders who are offended when they are not honored properly. I am not one of them. I think we should honor leaders, but when leaders expect honor, then they are in danger of thinking they are worthy of or have earned that honor.

Don't judge any leader you know as you read this. Rather develop your own leadership philosophy and values. I have done that. I want to be called John or Dr. John. I am healthy so I can park far away and walk to the buildings I visit. I don't need a corner office. I want to empower and equip others, using whatever leadership power or position I have (which was given to me by God). What is your leadership philosophy? What are your values as a leader?

v. 44 – Jesus referred to the Pharisees as toxic leaders. When people touched them, they were touching leaders who didn't build up the people. Jews were not permitted to come in contact with a dead body or they were ceremonially unclean. That is why Jesus' body had to be hurriedly taken down from the cross and put in the tomb without proper preparations. No one wanted to be unclean and then unable to celebrate the Sabbath and Passover. Jesus was saying that when followers came in contact with Pharisees, it hindered and didn't help their relationship with God. Oh help me, Lord, not to be a toxic

leader. Help me to bless your people and not hinder their walk with you. Allow me to show them the way, Your way, as we come in contact. Amen.

### **Day Two**

45 One of the experts in the law answered him, "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also." 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 finger to help them. 47 "Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them. 48 So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. 49 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.' 50 Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, 51 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.

v. 45 – There were men in Jesus’ day who did nothing but study the Law and questions of how to fulfill it or bend it without breaking it. They were radical men of the Word, yet Jesus condemned them. Bible knowledge isn’t the goal; applying the Bible knowledge in the proper way that pleases God is the goal. It is a fascinating phenomenon that I have observed in the 31 years I have known the Lord. The more Bible one knows, the meaner one can get! When I know about God, I then want to become God’s protector against all the other evil people—the very people Jesus came to reach and save!

v. 46 – The goal of leadership is not to weigh people down, but to lighten their daily load.

“For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it” (2 Corinthians 10:8-9).

“This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down” (2 Corinthians 13:10).

vs. 47-51 – Jesus said in these verses that talk is cheap and that everyone will have their chance to change what they have criticized in others. The leaders were saying that if they had been alive, they would not have killed the prophets like their forefathers did.

“And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets'” (Matthew 23:30).

They built tombs to honor the prophets, or so they thought. But Jesus said that God was now sending a greater prophet in their midst and their religious deception would be revealed to all. Be careful when you criticize government, pastors, parents, supervisors or other leaders. One day you will have a chance to do better, and if you aren’t prepared,

you may just duplicate and intensify the mistakes of the past. Talk is cheap and God will test your will to carry out what you once said “someone” should do. Determine today what you will do differently if given the chance and then *do* it. If you aren’t prepared to back up your talk with action, then you should probably be quiet.

### **Day Three**

52 "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." 53 When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, 54 waiting to catch him in something he might say.

v. 52 – In ancient times, rabbis carried a key, which was emblem of knowledge. Jesus was saying that the experts in the law had taken the key away from everyone, including themselves. They thought they had the key, but they had such a mistaken view of God and His view of His kingdom, that they were teaching erroneous things that prevented people from finding Jesus.

“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check” (James 3:1-2).

Lord, don’t let me prevent anyone from coming into an understanding of your will for them or the Church. I want to open the locks of knowledge, not keep them locked. Is that your prayer? I hope it is.

vs. 53&54 – Instead of repenting or asking Jesus to explain, these leaders launched into a vigorous defense and attempt to discredit our Lord. Because leaders have much to “defend and protect”—prestige, image among the people, honor, money, reputation, and the like—they aren’t always open to new things. What they once obtained by faith, they can now attempt to protect by force. Instead of studying what Jesus said, they now hoped to trap Jesus in something that He said.

Can you imagine that these men gave their lives to studying the things of God? Then when God came, they had to kill Him to maintain their interpretations of their studies. This is remarkable! They studied the Kingdom, but then missed the Kingdom when it came, all because of a wrong attitude and mindset. Help us, Lord, not to do the same.

### **Day Four**

12:1 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. 2 There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made

known. 3 What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

v. 1 – When I was in Israel, I realized how far and long people had to walk in the heat to see Jesus. They paid quite a price so they weren't going to just stay for a few hours. They stayed for days! That is indicative of the spiritual hunger that existed; or perhaps it represented the spiritual famine in leadership.

It seems that Jesus ignored this crowd, which was a bit unmanageable due to its size. He first spoke to His disciples. That is still true. I believe that the Lord speaks to most people, but He reserves His “prime time” for those who are listening and obeying. He warned His disciples to beware of hypocrisy—looking holy when you're not.

This hypocrisy, which literally meant to wear a mask like the Greek actors on a stage, is subtle and caused those who “wore” it to think they were in a better spiritual condition than they were. But they wore it so that others would think they were spiritual. Do you wear any masks? How can you find out? Well, you may want to ask others how they see you. Then you may want to allow the word of God to evaluate you.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:12-13).

v. 2 – The yeast of hypocrisy actually leads one to believe that he or she can hide from God. Didn't Adam and Eve hide from God in the garden? How silly to think that could have worked! But we still do the same thing today. How many stood next to Jesus, probably smiling, but thinking evil things. Jesus always knew what they were thinking. It is futile to try and hide the reality of your heart from God. Tell Him where you are, for He already knows. Telling Him isn't for His benefit; it's for yours.

v. 3 – Jesus reiterated the futility of hiding from God, using outward appearances and rituals to try and atone for inward uncleanness. What is the answer? John gave it to us in his letter:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives (1 John 1:8-10).

Bring things to light now and they will be brought to light later. The choice is yours. Choose wisely for there is no avoiding this truth.

### Day Five

4 "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. 7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

v. 4 – In previous studies I confessed that I have often been afraid of men and worked for their approval, often at the expense of God's approval. Jesus said this in the context of his negative remarks about the Pharisees and experts in the Law. He was urging His disciples to fear the one with true power, not those who could only kill the body.

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short" (Revelation 12:11-12).

v. 5 – Jesus did tell His followers to fear the devil, whose damage has eternal not just physical implications. I try never to address the devil, rebuke the devil or mock him. He is a formidable spiritual opponent and I am powerless against him without Jesus. In fact, I am not very "devil-conscious" at all. But I am very "God-conscious."

Yet the verses from Revelation above tell us how we will overcome him—the devil. We will be victorious by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our salvation testimony. And we will trust in the blood of the Lamb so comprehensively and speak so fearlessly that we will be victorious, even if we are put to death.

But even the writer of Revelation warned against the fury of Satan. He is a marvelous spiritual being who chose evil and he is crafty and relentless. But fear not, Jesus overcame the devil and if you are in Jesus, you did too.

v. 6 – God is awesome. No one and nothing escapes His notice and care. He is intimately acquainted not just with you and me, but with all of His creation. It has not grown to a size that is too much for Him to comprehend or control. That should give you tremendous comfort in the midst of whatever circumstances you are going through. God is in control.

v. 7 – What's more, God knows how many hairs are on your head! (studies show that there about 180,000 for a blond, 200,000 for a redhead and 220,000 for a brunette—just thought you'd like to know). And with day-to-day hair loss, the number is always changing, but God always knows how many hairs we have at any given time. That should give you confidence that nothing escapes God's notice. So fear not.

Keep in mind that Jesus was warning His disciples against their current leadership. I must assume then that Jesus was warning them not to be afraid of the Pharisees, who may kill them but cannot do them eternal harm. Are you afraid of your leadership at work or in church? Then Jesus has a word for you—"Don't be afraid!"

### **Day Six**

8 "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. 9 But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God. 10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

v. 8 – There was tremendous cultural pressure that tried to prevent any Jew from following Jesus, especially in the latter part of His earthly ministry. We read in John:

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God (John 12:42-43).

v. 9 – Remember Jesus is still talking to His disciples in the context of His criticism of the Pharisees. How we treat Jesus on earth depends on how Jesus will treat us in heaven. Centuries later, the Church had to deal with those who had renounced Jesus to save their lives, only to repent later and want to come back into the Church. These verses were the ones that "hardliners" took who did not want them back in. What would you have done if you were alive then? How would you have treated those who denied Jesus? How do you handle those who repent today and want back into the Church after a period of backsliding? It isn't an easy question.

v. 10 – What did Jesus mean here? Remember where this whole story began? The Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons with the help of Satan. They attributed a work of the Holy Spirit to the work of the devil. That is blaspheming the Holy Spirit. I am sure there are other ways that one can blaspheme the work of the Spirit, but it is seldom by using bad words or curses that use the Lord's name. I am not condoning the latter action, but it is not blaspheming the Holy Spirit. I think calling God's work the devil's work is about as blasphemous as one can get, don't you?

### **Day Seven**

11 "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say." 13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" 15 Then he

said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

v. 11 – Jesus told them here that persecution was unavoidable for His followers then, and to some extent now. Paul later wrote:

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:11-13).

Is there some source of persecution for you as you follow Jesus? Can you thank God for it? Peter later wrote:

If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name (1 Peter 4:15-17).

v. 12 – Jesus did not promise that the Holy Spirit would deliver the disciples from persecution, but He did promise that they would not lack for anything to say to their accusers. We see this happening in Acts after Jesus' ascension. The disciples were before the governing officials and they all marveled:

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13-14).

When Jesus makes a promise, there is no doubt whether it will be fulfilled or not. Are you anxious about something that Jesus has promised to do for you? Why? He is faithful to do what He promised, so put your trust in Him today.

v. 13 – Someone in the crowd wanted Jesus to help them with a personal problem between a man and his brother. There are many that hope that Jesus will be their personal valet when they give their life to Him. I have had the same attitude, saying "Jesus, do this for me. Jesus, do that for me!" So I see some of myself in this man. Do you have that tendency?

vs. 14&15 – Jesus refused to be dragged into that family matter, and went on to describe the real problem as greed. Again, I have been guilty of being too attached to material possessions, even when I feel that I am entitled to them. Jesus also indicated here that there is more than one type of greed; I had never thought of that before. I guess I can be greedy for possessions, money, prestige, attention and even ministry, I suppose. Does that make sense to you? Is there any greed in your life? Do you take comfort from your possessions, or see the worth of your life in the quantity that you have?

The word of God gets specific, doesn't it? This is a book written thousands of years ago, but the author is alive and this book can tell me where I am at today. I love God's word! I love the Bible! But, I love Jesus more.