

Have you ever been at a dinner where things got really awkward? The most awkward one I have been to was with some family around a holiday. And one uncle that just continually said incredibly offensive things. Maybe you have an uncle like that. And it wouldn't stop. It kept getting more awkward so I finally told him what he was saying was offensive and asked him to stop and move on. Well then things just got more awkward.

Today, Jesus is going to have His own awkward dinner. He will be eating with the Pharisees and Scribes and conflict will brew. But instead of trying avoid it, Jesus dives right into it. He will loudly rebuke them and tell them to knock it off.

The question I want us to answer is why would Jesus do this? Why would Jesus be willing to make the dinner table a place of conflict? What was so important that He couldn't just be quiet and keep the peace?

The answer is that there are three things Jesus saw they were missing. And they are too important that Jesus could not let it go. And I do not want us to miss these things either.

So, turn with me in your Bibles to Luke 11:37-54 and we will see three things we can't miss.

Point number 1: **Don't miss the point (v. 37-44).**

Jesus begins by rebuking the Pharisees.

Because the Pharisees are laser focused on their outward actions.

They desperately want to do the right things.

But in their focus on righteous actions,

They have forgotten to have righteous hearts.

They have missed the entire point of the law.

It is not just about the outside of their lives, but the inside to.

Our dinner party begins in verse 37,

**"While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table."**

While Jesus is teaching a Pharisee comes up to talk to Jesus.

And he actually invites Jesus to come into his home to break bread together.

And Jesus does so.

This should remind us that Jesus goes into any house that welcomes Him. He is willing to dine even with Pharisees.

So, Jesus comes to dinner and goes right down to the table.

They laid down at dinner instead of sitting in chairs, so this is what Jesus does.

Everything seems normal so far to us.

But Jesus has only been in the house for a few moments.

And He has already offended the host.

Verse 38, **"The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not wash before dinner."**

The astonishment is the same greek word that has been used throughout Luke to describe how the crowd has been "marveling."

The Pharisee does not know how to handle this.

Jesus' refusal to wash Himself is as mind-blowing the Pharisee as Christ's healing a paralyzed man or casting out a demon.

Now we need to understand the context of what is happening here.

This does not have anything to do with hygiene.

The Pharisee is not appalled that Jesus didn't wash His hands because they are covered in dirt.

This has to do with ritual cleanliness.

If you remember much of the Old Testament law had to do with uncleanness.

Uncleanness was symbolic of sin.

It was meant to be a reminder that their whole lives and conduct mattered to God.

If you were unclean, then you could not participate in worship.

And anything you came into contact with could become unclean as well.

There were a lot of ways to become unclean.  
Some of them natural like when you were sick, diseased, or bleeding.  
Others when you sinned and ate things that were banned in the law.  
Or you could even become unclean accidentally.  
If you touched something unclean like a dead body or animal.

Every good Jew wanted to be clean.  
The Pharisees especially tried to avoid becoming unclean.  
So they would wash themselves before each meal.  
Just in case they had touched something unclean, they did not want it to  
make the rest of them unclean.

And there was some biblical precedent for this.  
They took this from Exodus 30:19-21.  
In that passage the priests were commanded to wash their hands and feet  
when they approached the altar with a food offering.  
The Pharisees have extended that command.  
They want everyone, not just the priests to wash.  
And not just before the food offerings at the temple, but before every  
meal.

Jesus does not seem to care for their interpretation of the law.  
He ignores it.  
And I think He does so on purpose.

Verse 39, **"And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the  
outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and  
wickedness."**

Jesus is fairly aggressive here.  
He hears the Pharisees thoughts,  
He knows the Pharisee's heart.  
And Jesus rebukes him.

It seems like the Pharisees do not just ritually clean their hands.  
They also appear to clean their cups and plates.  
They are going overboard to keep themselves clean.  
They clean everything their bodies are going to touch.  
Anything that might come into contact with their mouths.  
But there is something very important they have forgotten to clean.

Their hands look great.  
Their feet have not a speck of dirt.  
Not a single dish or cup inside their house is unclean.  
But there is somewhere terrible they forgot to clean.

They are like a child telling their parents the room is all clean.  
But there is a massive mess in the room they have left untouched.  
They have not cleaned inside of themselves.  
They have not cleaned their hearts.  
If you had x-ray vision like Jesus, you would be repulsed by their hearts.  
You would recognize that they are not clean at all.

Their insides are full of greed.  
Full of desire for what everyone else has.  
Full of selfishness and sin.  
They are full of wickedness.  
They want to avoid the appearance of ceremonial wickedness.  
But there is a fountain of very real wickedness inside of them.

They have missed the point of cleanliness laws.  
It is not about the outside being clean.  
It is about all of you being clean and righteous.

Verse 40, **"You fools! did not he who made the outside make the inside also?"**

In case you missed it, Jesus is insulting them.  
He calls them fools because they have missed something obvious.

Jesus wants to know why they think that God cares about the outside and not the inside?

Jesus wants to know if God only cares about if they drink from a cup that is touched something unclean or if he also cares if their hearts are righteous and clean.

Jesus sarcastically asks if God only made the outside of their bodies and only has authority over their skin and not their heart and their souls?

The clear answer is that God does care about the inside.

God does care about our hearts and our inner lives.

God cares about our souls.

Verse 41, **"But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you."**

They are to give God the inside of themselves.

They are supposed to give God all of their hearts.

Before they eat they should be concerned about repenting of their sins and cleansing their souls before God as much as they are concerned about making sure their fingers or clean.

That's why Jesus is that God wants what is inside of them.

They are to give it as alms.

There to give it to God as something that they owe Him.

As something that He is due.

I Think Jesus also chooses this word as contrast with their greed.

It is not just that they need to give Jesus the inside of themselves but they also need to stop being so greedy.

They need to give away some of what they are holding on tightly to to those in need and to the poor.

And if they do this.

If they begin to look at the inside of their hearts then everything will be clean for you.

Jesus is telling them how they can find true righteousness.

Because Jesus is the Holy One.

Jesus never becomes unclean.

Jesus touches lepers and touches the unclean and he doesn't become unclean they become clean.

Jesus doesn't need to wash his hands because even if he touches an unclean bowl or eats unclean food it will become clean because his inside is clean.

And he tells the Pharisees that they can find true cleanliness when they are righteous.

Jesus continues by giving three woes.

A woe is something that the prophets would say.

It is a term of lament, warning, and judgement.

Jesus is lamenting and saddened by their disobedience.

He is warning them that their actions are unacceptable to God.

And He is pronouncing judgment over them.

Let's look at the first woe in verse 42, **"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe the mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God."**

Jesus rebukes them for their practice of tithing.

Because they are generous people.

Or at least they believe they are.

They tithe regularly.

They give 10% of all their money to God.

But not just their income, they even tithe what grows in their herb garden.

They bring not just a check, but mint leaves and herbs.

We might find that practice strange.

But they believe they are following Scripture.

Leviticus 27:30 says, **"every tithe of the land whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees is the Lords."**

They are to give God part of every harvest.  
The Pharisees believe their small gardens and herbs count as a harvest.  
So they tithe.

But the problem is not with how much they give.  
The problem is with what they do not give.  
Because they **"neglect justice"**  
They are following God's law to the smallest letter in their tithe.  
They even go above and beyond it seems.  
But they do not do justice.  
They do not act towards the injustice in their path.  
They do not act justly towards the poor and powerless.  
To neglect justice is to fail to love your neighbor as yourself.  
They are failing to love their neighbor.  
And they are failing to love God.

It is easy to write a check to a church you love.  
It is harder to give to the poor.  
It is easy to give to a non-profit you love.  
It is hard to give to a needy person you don't know or trust.

Because they **"neglect justice AND the love of God."**  
They do not love God.  
They are doing the external stuff with dead hearts.  
They have no love of God.

Listen to me, you cannot obey God without love.  
We follow Jesus because we love Him.  
We obey God because we love Him.  
We do what He says because we love Him.  
You cannot go through the motions and please God.  
He demands more.  
He demands that we love God.

But look what Jesus says about their actions.

**"These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."**

He does not rebuke them for going above and beyond the law.

He does not say they shouldn't tithe so much.

He says that they should, AND they should have done justice and loved God.

They need to do both.

They have missed the point.

But we cannot miss the point either.

God wants our love and our obedience.

What about the second woe?

Verse 43, **"Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces."**

They love gathering with God's people to worship.

But their favorite part is not giving praise to God.

Their favorite part is getting praise from others.

They love sitting up front in a place of honor.

They love having the seat on the stage where everyone can see them.

They love everything saying hello to them while they shop in the market.

They want to be honored above everyone else.

They want praise and glory.

They are only righteous so that others will praise them.

And the last woe

Verse 44, **"Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."**

Jesus says that they are like a grave buried in a field with no headstone.

That one would have stung and made them especially angry.

Because Numbers 19:16 tells them that anyone who touches an unmarked grave is unclean.

And they are unclean for 7 days.

This is part of why they would take special care to mark graves.

Because if someone walked over one they would be unclean.



Even if they did not realize it.  
This is why they would whitewash tombs.  
They wanted them to stand out so no one accidentally touched one.

This would be something a Pharisee would be afraid of.  
But Jesus says that this is what they are.  
They do not realize it, but they are unclean.  
And they are a plague.  
They make everyone they come into contact with unclean.  
Their hearts are dead.  
And they are but graves.

This is what happens to us.  
When we miss the point of the law, it destroys us.  
Because the entire point of the law is to point towards God's grace.  
It is meant to show us how much we need Jesus.  
But they have missed the point.  
We must obey God's commands.  
But we also must love the God who gives them.

Point number 2: **Don't miss the prophets (v. 45-52).**

Now Jesus turns His attention to another group of people at this dinner.

Verse 45, **"One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also."**

The lawyers and scribes are the experts in the law.  
And they realize that Jesus is insulting them.  
He is saying the lawyers are unclean.  
Because they are spending so much time with unmarked graves.  
And Jesus gives a hilarious response.  
This is part of why this party is awkward.  
The lawyer is trying to gently rebuke Jesus.

It's almost like he's saying Jesus I don't know if you recognize this or not but you weren't just insulting that guy you also insulted me and the rest of us.

And so his expectation in this very gentle pushback is that Jesus would tell him you're right.

That Jesus would say yes the Pharisees are wrong but you lawyers and scribes are doing wonderful.

But Jesus doesn't do that He doubles down.

Verse 46, **"And He said, Woe to you lawyers also!"**

It's hard not to laugh.

Jesus is saying no I wasn't insulting you on accident I wasn't insulting you on purpose.

And now that I'm done with the Pharisees it's your turn to hear some woes.

And they get three woes and three rebukes as well.

The rest of verse 46, **"For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers."**

The legalism is a burden.

Their teaching does not set people free.

Their teaching does not edify and equip those who listen to them.

Their teaching is burdensome.

Their teaching makes people leave with heavy hearts.

Their teaching makes people feel like they've gotten punched in the face and beat up and they think that it's good and it makes them holy.

But Jesus points out that they are happy to load up burns on other people and have no intention of bearing that burden themselves.

They tell others what they must do but are unwilling to do it themselves.

They can find loopholes and excuses for why they don't have to follow the harsh parts of the law.

Their rules and regulations are for other people to follow not for themselves.

And they have missed the point of the law.

The law is heavy.

But the point of the law and the point of the prophets is to point us towards Grace.

It is to point us towards our great need for a savior.

And it is to point us towards the wondrous love of God that even though we are so sinful yet he loves us and yet he saves us and yet he redeems us.

The law is meant to be a teacher that points you to Jesus.

The law is meant to be a teacher that points you to the gospel into the grace of God.

But the lawyers in the scribes only want it to point you to your sin not to your salvation.

And they only want to point out your sin

They don't want to point out their own.

And in doing so they completely miss why the prophets came.

Verse 47, **"Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed."**

Jesus points out that they build monuments and mausoleums for the former Prophets.

The prophets who would come and speak to Israel about the law.

They were like referees and experts of the law come to teach people.

Who would point out their sins and point them towards God's grace and their Redemption.

But many of those Prophets were killed.

And they were killed by just some random assassins.

As if all of Israel mourned their deaths.

A lot of the prophets were completely ignored, mocked, belittled, persecuted, and then murdered to thunderous applause.

And so the prophets that their ancestors murdered they now build beautiful tombs to honor.

The Jesus is not fooled.

**"So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs."**

Jesus says that they are guilty.

That they bear Witness to the sins of their ancestors.

That they should know the stories.

The fact that they have to be the ones to build these tombs shows that they know these weren't built during the life of these Prophets.

And the way they behave now shows that they consent in our participants with their fathers in the murder of God's prophets.

You may be tempted to wonder why they build nice tombs and monuments for the prophets now.

It's because we don't really like prophets.

At least we don't like them when they're alive.

When they're pointing out our sins, we hate them.

And they're pointing at other people's sins, we love them.

And once they're dead we love them more because they can't talk to us or tell us how we're wrong.

Israel loves Moses now but they rebelled against him they refuse to listen to him and they were constantly complaining and whining.

Israel loves the prophet Isaiah but during his ministry no one heard him and they all ignored him.

Israel loves Elijah now but during his ministry they tried to kill him and he fell down in a cave and despair because no one was listening.

But now they build them tombs.

Jesus goes on, Verse 49, **"Therefore also the wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute." 50 so that the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world may be charged against this generation, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished**

**between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation."**

Got to send ambassadors to speak on his behalf.  
first he sent the prophets and now he is sending his apostles.  
And they come to point us to the true purpose of the law.  
They come to expose our sin and to remind us of God's grace that is available to us if we will repent not if we will just try harder.  
God sent them knowing that they would be ignored.  
When God called out to Isaiah and said whom shall I send.  
God then said go and speak but they won't listen to you and they will persecute you.  
God called his 12 disciples were going to become his apostles knowing they would all be persecuted.  
He called them knowing that all of them say for John would be killed.

And yet he sends them anyway to warn us.  
So Jesus says the blood of all of them is on this generation.  
It is not just the blood of his apostles condition this generation will kill.  
It is not just his own blood that he will shed on the cross for their salvation.

It is the blood of every single prophet.  
And God names them from a to z.  
He mentions able first.  
We might not have considered able to profit but Jesus Does.  
And Jesus says that Abel was murdered because he was trying to show his brother Cain and all of humanity after him how to please God with their sacrifices.  
But instead of listening to Abel and instead of learning from Abel his brother Cain murdered him.  
And He goes all the way to Zechariah which would have been one of the last of the more significant Old Testament prophets.

And as God told Cain in Genesis 4:10, their blood **"calls out from the ground for justice."**

A lot more blood has been spilled since Able.

Isaiah was sawn in two.

Jeremiah was stoned.

Jezebel killed hundreds of prophets

Ezekiel was killed in Babylon.

Micah was killed by Israel's king.

Amos was tortured and killed.

And Zechariah was killed by the altar.

And all of that blood cries out.

Those who are deaf to its cry like this generation, will answer to God.

They have totally missed the prophets.

They haven't just misinterpreted them they have murdered them.

And their failure to listen to them today Jesus says As if they are murdering them all over again.

Now we come to the Third Woe.

Verse 52, **"Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."**

Their failure to listen to the prophets of God means they don't really understand the law.

Now the key of knowledge is a reference to interpreting the law.

The lawyers in the scribes are supposed to hold the key that unlocks the scriptures.

When you are confused and you don't understand what God is saying you go to them.

And they unlock it for you with their teaching and their explanation and you get hold of the secrets of God.

The lawyers and scribes are proud of themselves because they hold the key to Understanding God's word.

But Jesus says they don't have the key at all.

There they have so missed the prophets that they miss all of the scriptures.

Jesus tells them that they don't enter themselves.

They do not have the key of knowledge that they think that they have.

They are not nearly as wise and understanding as they believe.

In the weakest of Jesus's disciples understands the scriptures better than these men.

And it's not just that they don't have any knowledge their lack of knowledge is keeping other people from hearing from God's word.

Their teaching and advice and guidance obscures the scriptures instead of explains it.

It hides it instead of revealing it.

And instead of ushering people into the kingdom of God they are pushing people out of it.

They are actually keeping people from being able to understand God's word.

They are not helping they are hurting.

They are causing an entire generation to be cursed.

They believe that if they could go and talk to Moses and Isaiah and Micah and Amos the prophets would be so proud of how well they teach people to hear their words.

But if they could see them in this moment they would be shaking their heads.

They would be screaming trying to get people to listen to the words of the prophets not to the words of these fools.

Because these lawyers are talking over the prophets.

They're talking over the explanation of God's word and giving their own interpretation that is leading people to judgment.

**Point number 3: Don't miss Jesus (v. 53-54).**

The people who attended this dinner party left missing Jesus. They didn't understand that the greatest Prophet that ever has been or ever will be was in their midst.

Verse 53, **"As He went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press Him hard and to provoke Him to speak about many things, 54 lying in wait for Him, to catch Him in something He might say."**

Here Luke leaves us and doesn't give us any more details on how the rest of the evening went.

We don't hear their specific words or their specific arguments but we get the gist and we know what we need.

The Pharisees and lawyers spent the rest of the time trying to prove Jesus wrong.

Instead of tearing their clothes in lament and repentance.

Instead of crying out to God saying whoa is me we are a people of unclean lips.

Instead of immediately going to the temple to make sacrifices for their sins,

they decide they got a trap Jesus.

They try to ask Him every question they can to prove that He's the fool.

Jesus thinks He's so smart,

Then what about this Jesus?

Then what about that Jesus?

They ask Him every question that they can think of.

They try to provoke Him they berate Him they keep going at Him.

They do just with their ancestors have done to the prophets again and again and again.

They don't listen and they refuse to repent.

The tragedy is that their salvation is in front of them.

It's hard to picture how Jesus said these things.



We have His words but we don't hear His tone.  
We don't know if He was standing and pointing His finger.  
We don't know if he was laying down saying it quietly.  
We don't know it sounded like He was angry and combative.  
I don't know if He said it with tears in His eyes wishing that they would listen but knowing that they won't.

The tragedy of the Pharisees in the scribes is ultimately not their legalism.  
The tragedy is not that they misunderstood with the Messiah would do because Jesus own disciples did that.  
The tragedy is that they would not listen to Jesus when he tried to help them.

Because Jesus still came to this dinner.  
Jesus pronounced these woes over them.  
These are words of judgment and they are harsh and they are hard to hear.  
And I don't think Jesus did it just to be cruel or to start a fight.  
I think Jesus did it to give them a choice.  
To warn them of the grievous danger that they are in.  
And offer them salvation if they would stop looking to themselves and if they would look to Jesus.

But they missed Him.  
And they're going to spend the rest of Jesus's Ministry lying in wait.  
And what are they going to do when they catch Him?  
What will they do when they finally get them to admit to some heresy or blasphemy?  
They'll do what they and their ancestors have always done to all of the prophets before them.  
They will kill Him.

This passage should serve as a warning to us.  
I think it's too easy for us often to shake our heads that people in the scriptures and think about how foolish they are.

There are a lot of people in this world that are following on the scribes and Pharisees footsteps.

If you miss the point of the scriptures you will miss Jesus.

If you fail to understand that God cares about the outside of your life and the inside you miss Jesus.

If you miss the prophets and you will miss Jesus.

If you don't heed their warnings and their call to repentance and to Grace, then you will miss Jesus.

This is how a lot of people Miss Jesus today.

They fail to see that the law is meant to point them to the gospel.

The law is meant to show us how far we fall short of God's glory not how holy we can be if we just do the right things.

And there will be those who sound like they really understand the Bible because they give you a big list of things that you must do.

But they forget how much we need Grace.

And how much we need Jesus.

How sad would it be if we followed in the footsteps of the scribes and Pharisees it did not heed Jesus's voice.

Don't miss Jesus.

Come and cling to Christ for salvation.

Turn from your sins and repent.

Cry out to Jesus for salvation.

Let Him take the chains of the law from your wrists.

He bore your burdens and sins on the cross.

Stop carrying it yourself.

He was wash you clean forever with His blood.

Don't try to do it yourself.

Don't miss Jesus.

He is right here before you.