

## The Danger of Self-Righteousness

Luke 11:37-44

Though self-righteousness is a big word, it's not a word confined to religion. The irreligious can be as infected with self-righteousness as the religious, for it is a feeling or display of personal superiority. This disease has spread rapidly in our nation. *"I cannot tolerate intolerant people"* is self-righteousness as well. During Jesus' ministry, He was in always in contact with people who felt superior, including the Pharisees. In today's text, Jesus goes to the home of a Pharisee ("those set apart") and didn't wash his hands before He sat down to eat. Jewish legal tradition made a point of washing – based on Genesis 18:4; Judges 19:21, but made *law* in *Yadayim 1*. Yet Jesus did not wash. The Pharisee marveled (lit. "was astonished"). Jesus responds with "You foolish ones" (v. 40). The word translated "fools" (KJV) is the Greek word *aphron*, which means "without reason." "You aren't thinking!" So, let's think about the sin of self-righteousness.

### I. The Diagnosis of Self-Righteousness

Just like any physical disease, there are several symptoms seen when we suffer from self-righteousness.

**A. *I'm self-righteous when I focus on what others do or don't do in comparison to me* (v. 38).**

We as a church are self-righteous we focus on things other people do that we don't as a people.

It's rare to ever hear preachers speak on overeating, but wax eloquent on drinking and drugs.

We make snap judgments about people who do things differently than we do, just as this Pharisee.

**B. *I'm self-righteous when I work to be perceived a certain way rather than being a certain way.***

The Pharisee made sure that they paid their "tithes" of "every mint, rue and garden herb" (v. 42).

You could pay your tithe to the Temple any number of ways. Why did the Pharisees' pay this way?

When the Pharisees came into the Temple to pay their tithe people noticed (*smelled*) their giving!

I suffer from self-righteousness when I say *"I just don't want people to think I am \_\_\_\_\_"*

**C. *I'm self-righteous when I love the praises of people to the point concealing my character flaws.***

"You love the chief seats...and respectful greetings, but you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it" (v. 44). We must hide, we think, to be respected.

### II. The Danger of Self-Righteousness

Jesus uses the word "Woe" five times in this chapter: "Woe to you Pharisees!" (vs. 42, 43, 46, 47, 52).

I first heard *"woe"* on *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show* when Dudley Do-Right's girlfriend was in trouble.

"Woe is me" Nell Fenwick would cry out when tied to the railroad tracks by villain Snidley Whiplash.

But Jesus says, "Woe to you" who are self-righteous. This is actually a Divine curse. Why a curse?

***Since the heart of my problem is the problem of my heart, it's deadly for me to ignore my heart.***

"You Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness" (v. 39). Jesus points to the table ware – a cup and plate – and the food and drink.

"You are religious leaders with clean dishes but the INSIDE STUFF comes from stealing and swindling."

*"People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart"* (I Sam. 16:7). *"The heart*

*of a person is exceedingly corrupt, who can know it?"* (Jeremiah 17:9). Only God can give *"a new heart,*

*and a new spirit within you"* (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Self-righteous people point a dying finger at others.

### III. The Deliverance from Self-Righteousness

*We trust the righteousness of Christ by faith and have no confidence in ourselves* (Philippians 3:1-14).

A. When we trust Christ, we can freely reveal our inner struggles and problems.

B. When we trust Christ, we quickly ignore others' outward deficiencies and problems.

C. When we trust Christ, we are loving, gracious and understanding of other people.

*"He who began a good in you will carry it on to completion"* (Philippians 1:6).