

“THROUGH THE BIBLE”

PASTOR SANDY ADAMS

LUKE 11:37-12:59

I want to kick-off tonight with a Top 10 List. Here are *“The Top 10 Ways to know if you’re a Pharisee...”* 10) You consider your church’s membership roll the Lamb’s Book of Life. 9) You’re disgusted with the filth that’s coming out of your DVD player. 8) You pray twice as long in public as you do in private. 7) You think any church that’s growing must be watering down the Gospel. 6) You don’t drink IBC Root Beer, because it looks like a real beer bottle. 5) You won’t let your kids watch the movie *“Chronicles of Narnia”* because one of the characters is a witch. 4) You read only from the KJV of the Bible because that’s what Paul used. 3) You walked out of a church because it served real wine for communion. 2) You’re suspicious of everybody’s motive, but your own. 1) You tithe your money every paycheck... *and everybody knows it!*

The Pharisees we’ll talk about tonight were a sect of Jews who colored the religious landscape of Jesus’ day. Traditionalists and fundamentalists, they interpreted the Law literally. They obeyed it with a strict, wooden legalism. The Pharisees were good at *“keeping up appearances.”* But their worship had no heart. The Pharisees were known for hypocrisy and hollowness.

Sadly, the Pharisees are still alive and well. In fact, there’s a little bit of Pharisee in all of us. Tonight, we’ll see what Jesus says about the Pharisees.

Luke 11:37, *“And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner.”* And now all moms in the crowd are shocked... *Jesus didn’t wash His hands before dinner!*

Actually, the Pharisees should’ve own stock in Purell – they were the hand sanitizers of their day. They were into washing hands - but not for hygienic reasons – they practiced ceremonial cleansing. In an effort to please God they washed their hands - in a certain way - for a certain number of times. It was *salvation by scrubbing*. And Jesus refused *to lend a hand...*

“But the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?”

So what if your hands look like a freshly fallen snow, if your heart is as filthy as a mechanic’s greasy hands! What pleases God is not the right appearance, but a right attitude. He cares about the inside, not the outside.

Verse 41 *“But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you.”* When you honor God with what you possess, and give Him His portion – then your conscience is clear to enjoy what remains.

“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” The Pharisees were meticulous tithers. They’d go through the spice rack and count the poppy seeds, and bay leaves, and granules of nutmeg – and make sure every tenth was tithed. They made sure God got his share of the spices, *as if God cared...*

They treated God as if He were narrow, and senile, and had lost touch with what really mattered. As if He cared about spices while the world went to hell. Far more important to God were issues like justice and love.

Here’s another way to know if you’re a Pharisee... “You minor on the major issues, while you major on the minor ones.” A few years ago I ran across a tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr. written by a white fellow who lived in the 60s. Here’s an excerpt, “I don’t know how we missed it. While King marched in Selma and an entire race cried out for justice, I heard sermons against rock and roll, the Beatles, mini skirts and long hair, but I never heard them mention racism, injustice, intolerance, hatred, and bigotry. Those are the things God hates. Those are the things that Scripture really does speak against.”

I can relate. As a child I attended a church full of folks who were so proud they weren’t like those dirty hippies. The outside of the cup was sparkling clean, while the inside was full of self-righteousness, and bigotry, and hatred. They were too superficial to even look past the color of a man’s skin.

“Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them.” If a Jew touched a grave – full of dead men’s bones – for a period of time he or she was unclean or unfit for worship. This was also the case if the contact was inadvertent and accidental. Yet Jesus says the hypocrisy of the Pharisees was the real source of defilement. Their attitude contaminated more folks than any unmarked grave.

Verse 45 “Then one of the lawyers (he was a religious scholar, an expert in the Law of Moses) answered and said to Him, “Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also.” His toes were aching – they’d been stepped on! It’s interesting Jesus never scolded the prostitutes or tax collectors - the blatant sinners. He reached out to them with surprising love, and mercy, and gentleness. He saved His harshest words for religious people - the hypocrites and the self-righteous... The one trait God insists on from us is **honesty**.

“And He said, “Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.” Jewish religious leaders interpreted the Law as a maze of impossible commands. A common person didn’t have time to attend to the details.

God intended the Law to be simple. The Law was love on display. It was an illustration of what *love for God* and *love for others* looked like. Yet they turned it into a ladder you had to climb to prove you deserved God’s love. A ladder that had too many rungs to ever make it to the top...

The Jews did to God’s Law, what Detroit did to the automobile. I read recently, where the average car today now has 14,000 different parts, and many of those parts require their own tool to manipulate. The complexity of a modern car has put the shade-tree mechanic out of business. Of course, this is all intentional. If you want your car repaired you have to take it to

the dealer... And this is why the Pharisees complicated the Law. If you wanted to please God you had to come to them and play by their rules. Jesus offered the people a different path. He threatened their authority.

He continues, “Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs.” Today, in the Kidron Valley, between the Mount of Olives and the Temple Mount, you’ll find a series of tombs. The Jews of Jesus’ day built these tombs to honor the devotion and piety of the prophets of old. Ironically, the piety of these prophets would’ve pitted the prophets against the Pharisees. The hypocritical Pharisees honored men they’d try to kill, if the men were still alive.

“Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel (Adam’s son, first martyr) to the blood of Zechariah (the last OT martyr) who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.” The Jewish establishment that nailed Jesus to the cross will bear the responsibility for having rejected the testimony of all the prophets.

“Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.” It’s been said, “If you can’t lead and won’t follow, then get out of the way, all you’re being is a dandy road block.” This could describe the Pharisees. Supposedly “*the representatives of heaven*” were sending folks to hell.

“And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.” It starts to get ugly. Over the next few months their hatred of Jesus will come to a boil with the hatching an assassination plot.

Chapter 12 “In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another...” It was like a rock concert with festival seating. The crowds had grown with the curiosity around Jesus. Everybody heard of His miracles. They wanted to see for themselves.

Recall the times when Jesus told the recipient of a miracle, like Jairus and wife, mums the word, don’t to tell anyone? Here’s why... *It was crowd control*. John 6 says around this time one out-of-control mob tried to make Jesus king against his wishes. They were going to forcibly put Him in power.

Where were these people when the Romans nailed Him to a cross?

Through chapter 12, into chapter 13, Jesus teaches His disciples using a method popular among the rabbis of His day called “stringing beads.”

Oriental women would make necklaces by slipping one bead at a time onto a string. Likewise, when a rabbi randomly covered unrelated topics they said he was *stringing beads*. And the first topic Jesus addresses is hypocrisy...

“He began to say to His disciples first of all, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” The Greek word translated “*hypocrite*” or “*hupocrites*” referred to a stage performer. Actors performed under larger than life masks. The mask contained a device that augmented voice volume.

Over time the word “*hupocrites*” became synonymous for a person pretending to be something he was not. He was a poser. He wore a mask.

And the Pharisees were the *premier posers*. They had a phony faith. They pretended to love God, but what they really loved was for everyone to think they loved God. They augmented their devotion with a pious appearance.

And Jesus compares their hypocrisy to “*leaven*,” or yeast. Leaven works from the inside out. It corrupts by puffing up. This is hypocrisy’s effect. It promotes pride. People end up appearing more spiritual than they really are.

In verse 2 Jesus puts another bead on the string... “For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.”

You’ve probably heard my story of appearing on the matrix board at the Braves game. It’s amazing to see yourself 70 feet tall in front of 40,000 fans. *Especially, when you’re picking your nose.* Yes, the cameraman caught me.

But imagine standing in God’s judgment hall, and watching your every evil act and thought pop up on the matrix board in heaven. It’s all on God’s hard drive. Secrets do not exist. Everything *private* will one day be made *public!*

The only person who has access to the *delete* key is Jesus! Repent and trust Him to forgive you, and He’ll erase all your embarrassing files and pics.

“And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!” It’s foolish to worry about the harm people might inflict on me, while I ignore God. He can do the real damage. *Ever heard of hell?*

God has the power to write your ticket and put you on the bus to hell. It’s been said, “Fear God and you have no one else to fear.”

Verse 6 “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God.” The word translated “*copper coins*” or “*assarion*” was the Roman equivalent of a penny. These little birds sold for less than half-a-cent a piece. Yet God tracks them on heaven’s radar. God monitors distant galaxies, but He also cares about a single sparrow.

And He cares even more about us. “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” If you’re blonde you have approximately 140,000 hairs on your head - a brunet has close to 125,000 strands – a redhead has about 90,000 hairs. But these are estimates that vary from head to head. God knows exactly. God is so crazy about you He keeps a running tally of your head hair. Every time you run a brush through your hair the number changes, but God keeps track. He’s more personally involved in your life than you realize.

“Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.”

Everybody says they love God in the sugary-sweet atmosphere of church, but are you as bold in front of evil men? These verses are clear. Whether you stand up for Jesus on earth – before men - determines whether He'll stand up for you in heaven – before angels.

“And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.” Here's one of the most misunderstood verses in the Bible. Jesus mentions the only sin that won't be forgiven - *blasphemy of the Holy Spirit*.

In John 15:26, Jesus says of the Holy Spirit, **"He will testify of Me."** The Holy Spirit doesn't point people to Himself. He directs them to Jesus. Jesus has been speaking to Jews who rejected Him – even ascribing His miracles to Satan. They dismissed the Father's witness of the Son - the fulfillment of OT prophecy and the voice of the Father at Jesus' baptism. They rejected the witness of the Father and Son, yet there was still hope.

The Father spoke from heaven. Jesus came to earth. The Holy Spirit would soon speak directly to human hearts. The Spirit would get inside their heads and through His inner witness confirm the truth about Jesus.

Jesus is saying you can deny the voice from heaven - *the prophetic voice*. Deny the voice on earth - *the voice of reason*. But if you deny the inner voice - *the voice of conviction* - you've denied the last voice - God's last attempt - to convince you of the truth. Thankfully the voice of the Spirit is a *lingering, longing, loving* voice, but His is still the *last* voice through which God speaks.

Be glad the Spirit doesn't give up easily. John Bunyan called Him the **“hound of heaven.”** He's like a bloodhound that *tracks you* and *trees you*. But if you continually reject the Him, the Holy Spirit *leaves you*. God turns you over to your unbelief. Reject the Father and Son – there's still hope – but die saying “no” to the Spirit and you've forfeited forever God's forgiveness.

In verse 11 Jesus says, **“Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”**

It's hard to prepare for life's every contingency. Imagine being arrested and brought to trial for your faith. It's not a scenario we think about a lot. What kind of a defense would you muster in that moment? Jesus is saying in the face of the unexpected trust the Holy Spirit!

“Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But (Jesus) said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?"

Here's a lesson for pastors and counselors. Jesus doesn't jump into a situation that's none of His business. Of course, you'd think everything is the God's business, and in a sense that's true.

But here Jesus is baited into a family squabble between two brothers. And He refuses to take sides... *Been there, done that*. How often have I been asked by a husband to corral a wife, or by a wife to tame a husband? Yet when you take sides you lose the high ground. You become immersed in the squabble. Jesus is very wise. He avoids getting used by either side.

Instead Jesus addresses a deeper problem. **“And He said to them...”** Notice, He stays above the fray! He preserves his neutrality to speak to both the deeper truths they need to hear.

"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." To one, Jesus says, don't be stingy - share the inheritance. To the other, He says, there's more to life than money. Split the money, not the family. The money isn't worth a brother.

Verse 16 "Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.'" He could've shared, instead he decided to hoard.

And then get haughty! "And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." "

It's dangerous to carry on a conversation with yourself. Here the rich man said to his soul... "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

In contrast to this rich man, an elderly lady lived right down the street from Southern Mississippi University. Osceola McCarty spent her 80-plus years in a one-room shack, washing clothes for the town's lawyers and doctors. In the process, she saved a little money - \$260,000. And rather than reward herself with an exotic vacation, or a new house, Mrs. McCarty donated the sum to Southern Miss to provide scholarships to needy students.

Never say to your soul, "*Soul, take your ease: eat, drink, and be merry.*"

Say that to your body, not your soul. It's healthy to relax your body, but keep stretching your soul. Don't let your soul get sluggish. Keep pressing toward God. Exercise yourself to godliness. Lay up treasure in heaven.

"Then (Jesus) said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing." Life is more than *food and fashion*. Don't get mired down in trivial, material concerns and miss out on why you were created – *for heaven, for eternity, for God!*

"Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?"

Worry is **irreverent**. God promises to care for our needs. Worry is a slap in God's face. It's an insult to His faithfulness and mercy

"And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest?" Say you're vertically challenged. *Worry about it – I dare you – try to worry yourself into growing an inch or two!* Worry changes nothing about your circumstances. It's been said, "*Worry is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere.*" Worry is *irreverent*, but also **irrelevant**.

"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?"

Worry is *irreverent*, *irrelevant*, and **irresponsible**. Worry is a waste! While you worry over matters God promises to provide, major issues go unattended.

This is why He tells us. “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

God will supply what we need materially. We need to focus on His kingdom. If you want to worry about something worthwhile, worry about the issues that concern God - like the people around you who are going to hell, the health of your own spiritual life, or the strength of your church.

Here's the irony, the key to worry is worry. If you worry about the right stuff you won't have time for *irreverent*, and *irrelevant*, and *irresponsible* worry.

“Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.”

Here's another way to beat worry - *I doubt you've tried*. Sell what you worry about, and it won't be a worry anymore.

I had a Beagle once I worried about - it barked at night, woke up the neighbors, jumped from the upstairs window, ate up my carpet, and scratched through the door - I worried constantly about that dog until I got rid of the dog.

Jesus says, sell what you have. Give the proceeds to God. Send it on to heaven, and you won't worry about it any longer while on earth. You don't have to worry about eternal treasures. They don't fall out of a bag, or rot, or get stolen. Eternal stocks don't go belly-up. Invest in the *timeless* not *tenuous*.

Verse 34, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Your heart follows your treasure. You love what you value. John Wesley once said, “When I have any money, I get rid of it as quickly as possible, lest it find a way into my heart.” This is why we need to guard our hearts. Our love for God grows cold when the wrong stuff matters too much. We need to *measure our treasure...* in terms of what's eternal and spiritual.

Jesus says, “Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning...” In other words, “Be ready!” Jesus is coming back! A man hitches up and belts his robe when it's *time to work*. A woman lights a lamp when its *time to watch*. Here's how we get ready for the Lord's return - *we work and watch*.

Verse 36 “And you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.

And if he should come in the second watch (from 9 PM to midnight), or come in the third watch (from midnight to 3 AM), and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.” A thief's success is due to the element of surprise.

If you're watching it's easy to defend your house. *Just be ready!*

Years ago Thomas Jones, age 24, was arrested for robbing a Santa Barbara restaurant. He handed the cashier a note that threatened *"to shot"* her – he misspelled *"shoot."* The thief was caught when police set up a roadblock, and asked everyone fitting Jones' description to spell *"shoot."* Jones was consistent, and was easily apprehended.

It's easy to catch a thief when you know what to look for. This is how you stay ready for the Lord's return. You pay attention... Verse 40 *"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

Jesus will come as a thief in the night - surprisingly and suddenly - but He's not coming without a host of signs designed to keep us on the lookout... *The return of the Jews to their ancient homeland – the rebirth of the nation Israel - the reunification of Europe – Russian hostilities toward Israel - a growing anti-Jewish sentiment all around the world - an age of global travel and worldwide communications...* I believe we're on the threshold of the rapture of the church. That's why we need to be watching and stay ready!

Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?" Peter didn't realize the long term, global impact of Jesus' return.

"And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

It will not go well for the man who ignores God's coming – who thinks He has forever, and begins to mistreat those around him. Notice too, if you shun the Master's return, you end up numbered with the unbelievers. Real *"believers"* believe the whole truth about Jesus!

Verse 48 *"But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."*

Knowledge and opportunity produces responsibility. When it comes to rewarding our service, God grades on a sliding scale. Know a lot, a lot gets expected. Know a little, He reduces His expectations.

"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!"

One day Jesus will call fire down from heaven to devour this wicked world. Even while on earth Jesus longed to flex His righteous muscle and bring *judgment* – but first Jesus came to bear a cross and *be judged* for our sin.

This is the experience Jesus refers to in verse 50, *"But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!"* Verse 51 *"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."*

Isaiah 9 refers to Jesus as “Prince of Peace” - and that’s true! But before we’re *united in Christ* – we’re *divided by Christ*. *Jesus is the line in the sand for all of mankind!*

Today the lines of demarcation in our culture are drawn around race, age, gender, political persuasion, language, and nationality - but in the end there’ll only be two groups of people in the world - those *in Christ* and *outside Christ*. This means families are *drawn together in Christ*, and *torn apart by Christ*. It’s ironic *the greatest unifier of men* is also *the greatest source of division*.

High in the Canadian Rockies there’s a stream called “*Divide Creek*.” A boulder cuts the creek into two forks. Water that flows left rushes into the Kicking Horse River and ultimately the Pacific Ocean. Waters that flow right of the rock become the Bow River that eventually feeds the Atlantic Ocean. Waters from the same stream eventually end up thousands of miles apart.

The rock in Divide Creek determines the destiny of each droplet of water. H₂O molecules side-by-side are separated and sent in opposite directions.

Likewise, folks who grow up side-by-side, in the same house, come to the rock called Christ, and a division occurs. At first the separation seems minimal. They still hang out, but the flow of their lives gradually heads in diverse directions. The current ends up taking them an eternity apart - *one to heaven, the other to hell*. Jesus the rock is the fork in the stream of humanity.

“Then He also said to the multitudes, “Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming’; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, ‘There will be hot weather’; and there is.”

Clouds over the ocean mean rain. Arabian winds indicate a heat wave. Jesus sounds like a weatherman. “Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?” Jesus fulfilled Scripture, and worked miracles. *Messiah had come!* The Jews could predict the weather, but couldn’t recognize the signs of the time.

“Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?”

When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.”

Ultimately, Jesus will judge. For the moment Jesus will save. So while its *now* – before the judge slams his gavel – look for a plea. Settle out of court!

And there’s a deal on the table. Trust in Jesus and He’ll pardon your sin.