

Practice the Latter

Luke 11: 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." LUK 11:42

Jesus had some very succinct words for His listeners in this passage. It is obvious that they were supporters of the work of the kingdom, for Jesus speaks to their support. Yet, they seem to lack a full understanding of what they should be doing. It seems that many people have a partial idea of what they should be doing, without exploring a full understanding of what God is calling His children to accomplish.

What I mean is, that we have enough of an idea of what the Lord expects of us that we appear to be on track, however, if we were to compare our activities in life with the Word, closely, I think we would find that we have not fulfilled the challenge God places before His people.

There was a very famous man who once said: ***"Everybody can be great because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your noun and verb agree to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love. When evil men plot, good men plan. When evil men bomb and burn, good men must build and bind. When evil men shout words of hatred, good men must commit themselves to the glory of God's love."***

Does anyone know who side this? It was: Martin Luther King, Jr.

Luke could have penned these words as well, for it coincides with what He wrote in the passage we read just moments ago.

Let's look at Luke words more closely...

First - Woe to you Pharisees

"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." We can't buy our way into Heaven. However, we are called to share that which the Lord places in our care, as we seek justice, love mercy and serve our God with all we have been entrusted.

Who was Luke really speaking to? Well, this particular statement was first made at the table where many prominent Pharisees sat. The makers and keepers of the Law, had gathered along with other guests. Later on, however, Jesus repeats this statement in public. (Matthew 23)

What I have found is that Jesus never said anything in private, that He would not also proclaim in public.

Although he was addressing the Pharisees and their guests, He was also addressing all who were His listening, or, in this case, His readers. It was apparent, that many of the religious

leaders wanted to have Jesus in their homes and dine with Him. Perhaps for political reasons, I don't know.

While Jesus was speaking, another Pharisee stood up and invited Him to come and dine at his house. One might have thought it was because of the great interest in His message. Perhaps? I am not sure whether that was the case or not? If we listen closely to what Jesus is saying, I doubt honestly that they wanted to hear any further comments of what he had to say, let alone invite Him to their houses. It was probably more of a **"beat the Jones,"** or, status symbolism which began to arise. You've had Him over, now I'll have Him over, and so on.

While all of this noise was taking place, Jesus spoke penetrating words, which if they are heard, would challenge the hearts and lives of the listeners. An interesting point I caught here, is that ***Jesus knew what kind of people these Pharisees were, yet, he accepted the invitation.*** Why? I believe it was to provide a platform, of their own choosing, so He could address them. Perhaps we might want to consider that thought, as we are seeking for the opportunities to address those who are **"within our sphere of listening"** as we share God's Words. Where and to whom we speak, may make a difference to someone. So, what was Jesus' message to them?

Let me paraphrase the message if I may?

"You practice religion, going through the motions of worshiping God, even to the point of giving tithes of your wealth, the 1/10th which is required by religious practices, yet you have no understanding for what truly is needed in this world, God's LOVE." He states it this way, ***you have forgotten justice, and how to love as the Lord calls us to love others.*** Two very important parts of God's ministry, which are just as important and needed today. Woe to you who are hearing these words and do nothing about it. How can a person say, **"I love you Lord"** if we ignore what is taking place in our world, and allow people to go about without hope, because they do not meet up to our standards in life.

Christ's statement began with a word we see often, **"Woe..."** The implication is, ***Watch out... "If you are My children, consider what is truly happening in the world around you."*** More than anything, ***people need the Lord.*** Help us Father, to become more sensitive to the needs of the lost people around us.

Second - Acknowledgement of our good habits, inclusion of our needed practices ***"You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone."***

What should we practice? ***Bringing unto the Lord our tithes, offerings and gifts from all He has blessed us with. YES!*** However, the Lord says, some of you have forgotten why we are here. It wasn't and isn't that giving is wrong, in fact, giving is one of the best ways to express our loyalty and love unto God. But it is our willingness to serve Him that is seen more readily. As His children, we are called to give our tithes and offering unto Him— that is the first fruits of our blessings from Him. However, I believe that it is the love of God demonstrated by actions,

which people see and are needing right now. That is where we come in. The practice of giving was and is appropriate for every believer. And it is not about the amount we give it is how and why we give. Giving is seen in monetary gifts and in serving the Lord by helping others.

I have found, that obedience in giving, of what we claim is ours, time, talents and resources, what most consider our valuables, signifies obedience unto Him and brings about obedience in other areas of our lives. These are part of the **“good habits and needed practices”** mentioned here. That which the Lord is calling us to do as we follow Him. Actions speak louder than words.

Jesus said, **“If you love Me, you will follow my commands.”** Part of His commands are to bring the whole tithe into the Temple store house, according to Malachi. Another part is serving those the Lord places in our lives, as needed. In my opinion, that also includes the very fellowship we share in while drinking coffee or eating donuts as a part of our worship when we gather.

Paul says it best in Romans 12, when it comes to being obedient to give: **“Present your lives as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing in His sight, this is our spiritual act of worship.”** (The word Act – stood out to me) You see, Paul is telling us that we must learn the basics of what it means to worship the Lord. It Includes: going to church, reading the Word, giving our best of tithes and talents unto Him, encouraging each other, lifting our prayers unto Him, and enjoying each other’s company. These are all part of worshiping Him.

Still, there is another aspect of worship which goes beyond these walls. The call for us to examine the world in which we live, then, to do our best to make certain that world sees and knows of His love. Treating others fairly and justly. It doesn’t mean we have to embrace others peoples life choices, it means we need to allow the Love of God to guide our actions and words as we reach out to them. To do our best to make certain that **God’s love** is the foundation upon which our lives are built upon. That happens as we live.

In order to do this, we must get involved with other people, outside of the church, sometimes even in areas we would rather avoid in our world. That is not always easy, or enjoyable. As we lift Him up, lift His power up, His presence, His love, He tells us He will draw them to Himself. This is a challenge for all of us who claim to love Him and follow Him.

I have found that at times, we get stuck? The things we may be doing are not necessarily bad things, they may even be good things, yet, perhaps not fully what the Lord expects from us.

So, this brings me to the last point today...

Third - What do we do

The Psalmist reminds us of a good place to begin: **“O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”** PSA 51:15-17

I have mentioned this before. We begin our worship of God with opening our hearts, minds and mouths, letting our lips declare His praise. Praise the Lord for what He is doing, goes along way. Knows this, it does and will impact others, as they hear us sharing His Word and life, and see it working in our lives. If we don't praise Him for what he is doing, who will? I have found that it also helps us stay positive in life! **God is Good all the time, All the time, God is good.**

Thus, it is not wrong to bring Him sacrifices, offerings, and tithes, in fact we are told that this is a part of our worship of God. Yet these gifts are not all of what He wants from us. He wants a **broken spirit**, and **a broken and contrite heart**...

A Broken Spirit...

One definition of broken is, something that cannot be fixed. In this text, I think He means, "**A Broken Spirit**," a willingness to listen to Him, follow Him, give unto Him, and allow Him to guide our every footstep in life, as we seek to put self away. Submitting to Him fully.

A contrite heart...

A "**Contrite heart**" is defined as: "**grieving or penitent heart, for sin or shortcomings.**" God is looking for people who are open in their lives to His leading, recognizing their own shortcomings and sin, regretting that this sin is even within them. People wanting to see their lives changed. People who want to make difference, not only for themselves, but for others around them. You might say, people who can sense the pain and hurt of those around them, **sympathize**, see and know the feeling they are feeling, and thus **empathize** with others. Understand and share the feeling of another.

People who are not caught up in self-centeredness, "**What I want or need**," what I deserve, but rather, people who are concerned more about what God wants, desires, needs, recognizing what the Lord is calling us to accomplish as we live here today.

Illustration:

*A man in Colorado who was purchasing a Power Ball lottery ticket was told that his odds in winning were about 1 in 80 million. He chuckled and said, "**Those odds were just a little better than his chance of ever getting a raise at his job.**" He added, "**It looks like the odds are working in my favor.**" He went ahead and bought the ticket.*

*When asked if he was going to tithe on the winnings, since he was a good upstanding believer in God, his reply, "**No way, I am the one who bought the ticket!**" Oh, how quickly we forget what the Lord wants in us and from us, when treasure is dangling in our eye sight.*

With a "**broken and contrite heart**," God's desires become our desires. Giving and serving becomes part of what we do. All I have belongs to Him. All I am is because of Him. For Him to use as He decides it should be used. Whatever you want, Lord, that's what I want, and will do my best to accomplish. Whomever I need to share with or serve, show me Lord and guide me.

- Woe to you pharisees
- Have we included all we should in our worship of God
- What do we do

Closing Prayer: