

Luke 11:42 - 54

42 *“But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. 43 “Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the front seats in the synagogues, and the respectful greetings in the market places. 44 “Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it.”*

45 *And one of the lawyers said to Him in reply, “Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too.” 46 But He said, “Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers. 47 “Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them. 48 “Consequently, you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs. 49 “For this reason also the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, 50 in order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since 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 house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.’ 52 “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.”*

53 *And when He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, 54 plotting against Him, to catch Him in something He might say.*

You will recall from last week that the setting for this passage is that a Pharisee had asked Jesus to have a meal with him in his home and Jesus had gone in and reclined at the table without performing a religious ceremonial cleansing.

It wasn't a requirement of God's law through Moses, it was part of their traditions that they had added to God's requirements. Man made religion for a

man made righteousness, a righteousness not acceptable to God.

It was a religion of outward busy-ness that ignored the inward decay. Outward show that concealed inward filth of every kind. It had abandoned God's revelation and replaced the clear words of God with traditions of the elders.

There are legitimate studies in modern times that reflect on the recognizable phenomenon of the human condition that we would call *group think*. Or some other names might be *mob mentality*, *pack mentality*.

We can look at history and see this over and over. And it turns out that Adam's fallen race cannot help but repeat this phenomenon that we can recognize and study and define.

Left to ourselves we all fall victim to group think in some way. After the virus has run it's course we will be able with 20-20 hindsight to see how the population was moved along as a group think mob by the news media reports. Just now we are right in the middle and all we can say is group think, whether correct or incorrect is certainly the main driver.

Group think, mob mentality; I was thinking about my little community that I am a member of which is a fringe group of photographers. Large Format Photographers.

So there's this little group of people who all buy giant cameras that use up huge pieces of film. 4" X 5" / 20 sq. in. film sheets is entry level. That's where most in this odd club of odd folk will remain. But 8X10 inches of film gives you 80 sq. in. of real estate for your image to land on. 11X14 gives you 154.

And the mentality of the group think is that we're all trying to be Ansel Adams in a world where Ansel Adams doesn't make any more sense than driving down the road at 30 miles per hour in a Model T Ford with almost literally no brakes.

We've moved way past Ansel Adams and we've moved way past Model T's. Why is there a group doing that? And the group itself is an interesting microcosm to sort of look at the whole group think problem within a group that's pretty harmless.

There are two forums on line where we all chatter and inter-act. And we post our pictures and other group members ooh and ahh, or not and we all sort of egg each other on. And within the community there are leaders and followers. And it's funny to watch what happens in this little bubble community that no one else is paying any attention to.

Some one will resurrect wet plate photography from the 1860's and they're getting some amazing effect and others immediately want to take work shops from those guys and buy the chemicals (which will kill you) and make photos with the amazingly ghost like qualities of Civil War era portaiture.

It's no wonder the indians thought the camera was stealing souls. The eyes in that process become these black eerie bottomless pits. And so someone does that and the herd follows. Or someone does something else and the herd follows. Fun to analyze because it's all pretty harmless. But that little community that no one knows about or cares about is a perfect case study of group think.

Just so you know, in perfect harmony with the rest of my life experience, I'm neither leader nor follower, I'm out in the fringe doing my own thing. I pay idiotic prices for 1910's era lenses that were made for portraiture that by design make fuzzy pictures that sort of glow. Soft focus. At least 95% of my little microcosm community think soft focus is vomit. So I'm actually in the fringe of a fringe community that no one could care less about. I'm obscure.

But that's a good place to stand outside and observe. It's totally group think, leaders and followers, a moving mob making their own rules and chastising the rules breakers just exactly like group think mobs do.

But what happens to fallen man, Adam's race, when group think mob mentality becomes the religion? When group think over a long period just builds layer after layer of group think mob mentality rules for the group.

It starts with Moses and the law, and over a period of 400 years it adds and adds and adds and the mob moves farther and farther away from God's initial intent through His prophets who wrote down the inspired canon of God's word. And ultimately the revealed truth of God, inspired scripture and it's intent become buried under mounds and mounds of group think movement.

Fallen people can't help themselves, that's how we roll, that's how we still roll. And I would add also that what I've spelled out in these opening paragraphs not only defines apostate judaism and how they got to where the traditions of the elders had more weight than the word of God;

It also defines how over centuries the Roman church moved farther and farther away from God's word, even buried God's word to the masses by locking it away in a language that the people didn't speak, and church tradition became weightier than God's word. Church magisterium trumps what the words of the apostles clearly say.

You can follow the whole group think model from the families of the children of Israel who walked into the land God gave them right down until you get to these pharisee's who are apostate and totally removed from the original truths.

And you can follow the church through history from the apostles until you get to an apostate roman catholic church selling indulgences for money to build a cathedral and then a massive correction 500 years ago through the reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin, and you get to us today and if you do a snapshot of what a gallup pole calls christianity, group think has moved us a million miles from those reformers.

500 years seems to be the magic number for group think to move something to a completely unrecognizable distance from where it began. The protestant church 500 years after the correction of the reformation is just about as lost as

the Roman church was when it was selling salvation for money to build cathedrals.

And that number holds true for these apostate jews. It had been 483 years since they were released by the Babylonians to rebuild Jerusalem. And that was after a massive correction, 70 years in Babylonian captivity which they returned from and someone found the book, and a revival broke out. Purity restored.

How do you avoid group think moving you a million miles away from the pure beginnings? It turns out there's only one way, and it's so difficult as to be obscure. Nearly impossible it seems.

The only way to not end up moved from your pure foundation over a long period by group think mentality that we are all prone to, is to be 1) indwelt by the Holy Spirit and 2) committed to study and understand this book, with the Spirit's help, and 3) actually do what it commands.

Jesus gives us this exact formula the night before His death in John 16:13 *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."*

I'll give you an example. By God's grace and providence I grew up in a rare church that has made a 50+ year commitment to what I've just been talking about. Spirit filled. Study centric. Leading to obedience to Jesus commands.

I love to go to their shepherds conference, but even in the last 6 years there has been a shift. A correction had to be made. For many years it was always the same names of excellent men from like minded groups and denominations who came and were the key note speakers at that conference.

That changed rather drastically just this year as the church that I came from had to distance themselves from denominations that, as we speak, are moving with group mentality away from things this book clearly teaches.

Good men, and I love them and still listen to them, but the denominations they are affiliated with are moving. These guys are probably fighting to get those denominations to make correctives and losing their battle, but meanwhile, the church I am a part of and that I try to emulate here on a very small scale, had to separate itself from those groups that are moving or even being forced to move within their designated group.

And that battle goes on *ad infinitum ad nauseum*. That is Satan's work to continually be adding leaven to the pure lump, and the leaven, like a cancer grows until the entire thing is leavened. And finally what you end up with is unrecognizable from it's beginnings.

All of that to introduce you to this passage of Jesus pronouncing judgement woe's on this group that was the religion *du jour* when Jesus the Messiah came to His own people Israel.

Apostate Israel was so far removed from it's beginnings that the group mentality will murder their own Messiah and suppose that they are doing God's work while they are killing God in human flesh.

I think what Jesus says during these pronunciations of judgement will be fairly easy to reconcile.

42 "But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God;

This is where their false religion had moved to. Counting garden herbs and giving the tenth pea or lentil to God.

The law of Moses defines a tithe, and it doesn't get down to this kind of nitty gritty. Get a microscope so you can count mustard seeds and God gets every tenth mustard seed. It was ridiculous. Even bizarre. But that was what the mob was doing. That was the end result of group think. Layers and layers of it.

And Jesus says you're obsessive compulsive about garden herbs while you forget all about *justice*, which is "love your neighbor as yourself, and *love of God* which is the Shema that every child has memorized and every adult forgets about.

You forget about the weighty matters, love for God and love for neighbors and you obsess on counting mint leaves, and rue and every herb. It would be exhausting work. You wouldn't have any time left to love your neighbor or to love God.

but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

Jesus says, if you're going to be a law keeper, you need to do it all. Not just the possible stuff like counting seeds, but the impossible stuff like giving your heart and your stuff away to everyone who has less, and loving God with every fiber of your soul and mind and strength. Counting seeds isn't going to get it done.

God wants a relationship. A religion of the heart. An affectionate warm friendship and love relationship more like newlyweds. God is desirous of a bride. Group think had left love and affection and heart behind and settled on bean counting.

That's the first of six woe's, and it's impossible, but let's move on.

43 "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the front seats in the synagogues, and the respectful greetings in the market places.

This one is fairly straight forward. God made us in His image so that we as image bearers would glorify God, our creator. Our purpose is to glorify God.

These men had it backwards. Everything they work for, their entire motive, is self glory and self love. *For you love the front seats in the synagogues*

Those seats are what we used to call the Elders chairs, up on the platform, behind the podium where the speaker speaks. The important men sit up on the platform, and they love it so. Nothing new under the sun.

It's no accident that I sit out with the rest of you while we sing. It's actually based in scripture right here. *and the respectful greetings in the market places* I've never gotten comfortable with you folks calling me "pastor". I let you do it because I love you, but honestly, for one thing, I'm a marginal shepherd.

And for another thing, if I started to love that greeting, that respect that very probably is not due, it's a short trip to this verse. These men loved being called Rabbi. Father. Bishop. Priest. Teacher. Whatever. The minute you start eating up whatever that little bit of glory is instead of giving back to God, it's a sin. A sin worthy of Jesus pronouncing judgement.

Woe to you if you want to steal God's glory that belongs to Him alone. In 1 Cor. 4 Paul says; *1 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

I was going to change the word servants to the more correct slaves because I assumed the greek word was doulos. Slaves who belong to Christ. But I thought I'd better check first. Turns out the word translated servants here is; hypēretas. A compound word that means under rowers.

In a war ship of that period all of the rowers were slaves. But there were rows of slaves inside the ship rowing, and some of those rows were underneath the upper rows. Let your imagination run wild. You're a slave and you're not even an important enough slave to be on the top row of rowers, you're down underneath those rowers and whatever comes dripping down from those guys lands on you.

Your only possible benefit is if the ship sinks, you're the first guy to go under the water. Paul says I'm no ordinary slave, I'm an under-rower. That was how he viewed his importance next to the God he served. Total opposite of these men who lived for the self glory of the important seats up front in the church

or synagogue and loved the titles of respect.

As a kid working at a **Richfield** station (that will tell you how long ago I speak of if you're a petroliana historian) we used to have a customer with a little sign in the back window of his car that said "CLERGY" and you could count on him having a black vestiture and one of those stiff collars.

And I always thought to myself, What did that buy you? *Clergy*, and you want everyone to know and you expect something special because of it. Did you ever read this verse?? Really??!

It sort of turned my stomach then and it still does today. But now I understand my revulsion a little better. It revulses God. There's an entire separate woe for this one thing. Men stealing glory for themselves that belongs to God alone.

44 "Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it."

This one is sort of comical. The reason they were doing the ceremonial washing that Jesus didn't do was because they might have walked over a grave or brushed against a tomb in passing that was unmarked and so they were unclean and they didn't even know they were unclean, but this final washing was for just in case.

All of the known grave sites and tombs in Israel had to be painted white so you could know to avoid touching the dead and becoming unclean. That's where the term used somewhere else "whitewashed tombs, white on the outside but full of dead mens bones" came from.

And Jesus says you guys are doing the ceremonial washings but the truth is you are in fact like those concealed tombs. And everybody who knows you or brushes up against you becomes unclean because of you.

Instead of helping the people become cleaner, they were actually the cause of

the people becoming more unclean. They were exacerbating the problem, not curing it.

You were in worse shape after you left these teachers and men of God than you were when you got there. In Matt. 23 He says; 15 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”*

You're worse off when you leave these guys than when you got there. Net effect of their ministry and religion is liability, not asset. It's like going to the doctor with a broken arm and he amputates your legs and doesn't set the arm.

45 And one of the lawyers said to Him in reply, “Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too.”

There are two groups represented here within the common group think assemblage of the pharisee's. Within the order of the pharisee's are the lawyers who are the self described experts on the law of Moses and they are actually the ones moving the group by their layers after layers of precedent decisions.

It was not so different from lawyers today with mountains of books to pour through to find some precedent already ruled on with which to build their case and argument.

Except move that idea from civil law into layer after layer of religious proclamation apart from God's clear word. God said something. But what did He really mean when He said that.

The serpent was the first lawyer in a long line. You'll recall his argument to Eve. *“Hath God said”* And then the devil interprets what God clearly said and comes up with the opposite.

These lawyers can trace their lineage all the way to that first interpretive

event. It seems like God said this, but He obviously didn't mean that, He couldn't possibly have meant what He said, We think He must have meant this . . . and so on.....

And in true lawyer like fashion, this lawyer who speaks was trying to separate himself out of the group that Jesus has pronounced His judgement on and he cannot. *“Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too.”*

A wise lawyer. He says, Jesus, you're painting with too broad of a brush sir. You've got us mixed up with them. We hear the broad brush argument often these days. Surely you can't mean us too?? Get a better brush and stay inside the lines please sir. You've included us! He's hoping Jesus will fix it. Not us too Lord? Surely?

46 But He said, “Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers.

The word here interpreted as burdens is phortia. And in classical greek that word isn't used for a hod of bricks that someone actually might be able to carry, rather it's the word used for the tonnage on a ship. A ships cargo sized burden.

The burden itself is a spiritual one. Sin. Crushing ghastly sin. God's law had one job to do. It is a mirror in which you can look and see your sin. But it cannot relieve sin. The purpose of the law is to show you your wretchedness so that you will beat on your breast and cry out to God for mercy and forgiveness.

The lawyers successfully multiplied the already onerous burden. They made the burden ten times greater and told you, get busy carrying *that*. They multiplied the burden but offered no help.

Jesus is the relief for the burden. Jesus says; 28 *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.* 29 *“Take My yoke upon you,*

and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 “For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.” Mt. 11:28-30

The lawyers crush you with unimaginable loads, impossible to bear, and offer no help or hope. Jesus says; Let me take your load away, and take my yoke instead. You've been slave to an evil taskmaster; sin and death through sin. Satan has title on you and the load of sin is crushing with only death as reward.

We give that load of sin to Jesus and then we take His ownership over us. We come out of Satan's ownership and belong to Jesus and the promise is true. His load is light. His yoke is easy. His ownership is rest and delight. Sin is gone, and He has given me new clothes, white and clean to wear instead.

I think we'll stop on this high note this morning.

The Pharisee's had invented an extrabiblical man made religion of law keeping that obsessed on the showy outward laws and ignored loving God and loving neighbors, the weightier inward matters.

And the lawyers had left the law of God far behind and built a system of do's and dont's that had nothing to do with God's revealed truths. They piled up burdens, ship's cargo sized tonnage burdens that no one could keep, and even if they did, God would not accept that man made righteousness.

Jesus offers a new yoke which is light and pleasant and easy and delightful. He pays the unpayable debt for our tonnage of sin we were carrying around. He gives us new white clothes, bright and clean, a righteousness not our own, the righteousness of God, imputed to our accounts.

28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 “For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.” Mt. 11:28-30

