

## Luke 16:14 - 18

*14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him. 15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. 16 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. 17 "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail. 18 "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.*

This morning we come to a portion of scripture that is just loaded. It is dense with truths for us. And we want to carefully mine all of the riches we can from what Jesus says here.

This is a diatribe, a catalog if you will, of everything we need to know and understand about false religion. False belief systems. Including our current one which is very different from what Jesus is responding to, secularism. But all of the categories apply.

On October 29th in Nice, France; *A 60-year-old woman is beheaded in a church, and two other Catholics are stabbed to death - including a mother of two - by a Quran-carrying migrant shouting praises to Allah.*

I wanted to quote that incident in the beginning to draw your attention to something in vs. 14 but I had a hard time finding it. As I write, that incident was 15 days old, and I went to the web pages at [thereligionofpeace.com](http://thereligionofpeace.com) and I had a hard time locating it. The problem was, in 15 days, that was old news. There were 185 other deaths in the ensuing 15 days after the ones in France, and it was on a different page, way down the list.

Only three from the top because it happened yesterday, 11th November; *A Christian woman and her son are lynched in broad daylight by a Muslim mob*

*angered over alleged "blasphemy".*

Blasphemy is the issue. 185 murders in 15 days because of blasphemy.

What could this possibly have to do with what we just read from the friendly gospel of Luke?

*14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him.*

If you scoff at Mohammed, your head may be severed from your body. What happens if you scoff at Jesus?

Deuteronomy 32:35

*Vengeance is Mine; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; for their day of disaster is near, and their doom is coming quickly.*

The judeo-christian ethic is based in a peace that believes God's justice will eventually take place. But can you imagine if scoffing at Mohammed, who is nothing, or Allah who is nothing, costs you your head, what God must have stored away for these Pharisee's who scoffed at Jesus? Oh my! Talk about blasphemy! Scoffing at the living Son of God.

Jesus has been answering the pharisee's and the scribe's complaints that He receives sinners. The lost sheep, sought and found. The lost coin, sought and found. The prodigal son returned. And in every case, the joy in heaven over sinners who repent and come home to God.

And then the parable to the disciples about paying it forward. Taking unrighteous wealth, that is temporal and doesn't belong to you anyways, and purchasing with it, friends who will greet you in heaven. Voices who will sing glory to God with you for eternity

All of it is like a foreign language to the false religion of Israel. They have no category for grace. No category for a God who not only forgives sinners but

all of heaven rejoices over every one who is forgiven and regained.

So the trigger for this discussion is the mocking sneering dismissal of the Son of God, God incarnate. And the mockers are false religion. Always. You may think it's a stretch to call our modern secularism a religion, but it has all of the same traits that Jesus will point out to these mockers, the scribes and pharisees.

A few weeks back we spoke of how false religion has been hating and murdering those who belong to God non-stop since Cain murdered Abel. The battle actually is rooted in Satan's and his demons war with God. The pharisee's are just the duped slaves of their Father the devil.

And the first trait of false religion in it's war with those who belong to God is in the word mocking. They sneered at Jesus. They turn up the lip according to the greek. What they are doing is shaming Jesus.

This is always the first line of attack for false religion. It shames true religion. It seeks to sway public opinion by casting shame on it's opposition. Pharisee's rolling their eyes and making jokes about stupid Jesus. His parables are idiotic. They have no ground in the real world. His teaching is non-sense. If you listen to Him you can join in His shaming. Mockers.

In this case, unlike the Islamic problem, this really is blasphemy. They roll their eyes at Jesus and cause those who might begin to believe to stumble. Those who are on the fence, listening, trying to understand what Jesus is teaching.

These pharisees are doing their best to sway them away from God and towards evil. They are shaming Jesus. What a loser. What a mad man. He is connected to Satan. That's how He does the miracles. He's demented and demon possessed. All of that is included in the word scoffing.

In chapter 23 the same word appears again when it says the rulers were scoffing at Him while He was on the cross. It's the lowest form of hatred. It's

ridicule. In chapter 15 it told us that these men were grumbling. This word is a step up in the game against Jesus. Murmuring is onomatopoeic. murmurmurmurmur. It's quiet. Scoffing is louder. Shaming someone in a way that sways people on the fence to walk away from the loser and join the scoffers. The mockers.

But Galatians 6:7 using the exact word says God is not mocked. What a man sows he will also reap. Can you imagine the return, the harvest in hell of these men who mocked God in human flesh? Psalm 2:4 says God will have the last laugh. *He who sits in the heaven laughs*. The Lord scoffs at them.

I get in trouble when I talk about our current situation. Remember that I told you that in the war of evil against God's elect, shaming is going to get used more and more. Christians, real ones, Bible believing Christians are going to be shamed publicly. But that's only the beginning.

These clickity clack computers add an entire new dimension to shaming. I think we're a blink away from all of our associations and behaviors on line being recorded and eventually used to shame believers. Good points for what the secular society calls good behavior and demerits for what the secularists consider a threat to their causes.

It's already happening in China. Want to get stuff done in China? Behave like big brother says, or lose opportunity and freedoms. Connectivity will be the new means of not only shaming, but barring. Secularism is a false religion with lots of defined goals, and Christians who believe the Bible are shameful people. Dangerous people. Shaming may correct some of them. Others will need to be totally cut off from society and culture.

OK, False religion is on the attack. They were triggered by Jesus talking about unrighteous mammon. And the first attack is to mock Jesus. Convince the simple who may be believing to reconsider being on the side of this person who they are shaming.

Jesus had something to say about that. In Matthew 18:

*6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 7 Woe to the world for the causes of sin. These stumbling blocks must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!...*

The purpose of mocking and shaming Jesus is to cause little ones, simple ones, to not believe. Frightening what God's word says about false religion that mocks truth and causes little ones of any age to stumble. Serious business.

So Jesus is going to give us a catalog here of identifying marks of false religion. Luke starts us off; *14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money,*

Motivation. Why do people get sold out to false religions? Why did Judas Iscariot become a disciple and follow Jesus all over the territories of Israel. His motive was gain. Wealth. Money.

Lovers of money. The greek word is silver. The pharisee's love silver. Their money was all coinage. Silver, gold. Jesus says, it's going to go up in smoke. Give it away to purchase souls for heaven. Leverage this evil wealth into glory that lasts for eternity in heaven. That's what you do with unrighteous mammon.

And the pharisee's are rolling their eyes. They love money. They're in it for the money. Giving it away? That's the talk of fools. They were selling widows houses, putting them on the streets homeless and taking the wealth.

Love of money is a sign of false religion. Greed for more wealth is a product of false religion. It's one of the fruits that is in the catalog of traits of false religionists. They love money. Money motivates.

*15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among*

*men is detestable in the sight of God.*

False religion, including our current secularism has a defined righteousness. Now the righteousness of our current secularism is quite different from the righteousness of these pharisees. But the end is always the same.

Group think. Pack mentality. Then and now these folks are constantly justifying themselves in the eyes of other men. Their peers. They're all cleaner than the wind driven snow. The pharisee's of Jesus day, and the elite secularist thinkers of today. Righteous folk. Different rules now, but the same game.

You're righteous according to whatever the prevailing rules are, in the sight of men. So righteous. Beautiful people. Except God doesn't look at the outward show. He looks inside of men's hearts.

These pharisee's were all show. They paraded their righteousness around for people to see. Your peers may be impressed. God isn't.

*for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.*

That word detestable is interesting. It has the idea of foul odor attached to it. We spoke at length about this recently. I don't want to wear you out talking about gross things. Dead things stink.

These pharisees are the pinnacle of perfection in man's righteousness but to God, it's a foul odor. The smell of death. Vile. For that which is the pinnacle of perfection in mans righteousness is sewage to God. The pharisee's and indeed the false religions of our day are all about being esteemed by men.

Did you watch the drama when congress held hearings to see if Amy Coney Barrett was righteous enough to be confirmed. The righteousness parade. The parading around of men for men. Women for women. All of it calculated drama. Do you think God was impressed? So much righteous drama.

That's who these men are. These pharisee's who mocked Jesus were the congressmen of their day. Parading their righteousness around. A big show of righteousness for the other righteous men to esteem. Mocking the Son of God.

In God's vision it is open sewage. Detestable. Man's righteousness is detestable to God. Vile. False religion folk are very very righteous. It's a trait. They love money and they're very righteous. But that righteousness for the esteem of men is foul in the nostrils of God.

And then Jesus launches into a statement that will seem very obscure until we think about it a little bit. How do these next verses fit into a catalog of conflict between true religion and false religion?

*Vs. 16 The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.*

Look at those words, *since then*. Jesus is drawing a line in the sand. A demarcation. In the history of God's dealing with men and His redemptive plan, something changed at John the Baptist. Before John is the old, and after John is the new.

We would say John is the final, the last Old Testament saint. After John, a new pathway into the authority to reign of God, the kingdom of God, is begun. What happened? John announced the presence of the Messiah. The seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the One in whom all of the promises are realized, is here. He's in your midst.

That began Jesus ministry and He began announcing the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

*The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John*

Who speaks for God? Who is the channel for the revelation of God to be

delivered to men, and what does that message tell us about how to be acceptable to God. How are men to understand and be right with a Holy God.

The law and the prophets. The law showed us our failure. We cannot attain to the holy perfections of God that are pictured for us in His law. The law is a mirror image of God and us and it shows us that we are broken. Hopelessly broken. God is holy, we are not. God in order to maintain His holiness must punish and reject rebellion against Him. Sin.

The Old Testament, the law and the prophets presented a way for forgiveness. It was a bloody river of sacrifices, none of which actually remitted sin effectively, but they looked forward to the seed of the woman, the promises to Abraham that would be the lamb of God, the final sacrifice that actually could effectively remove sin.

The law and the prophets looked forward to that promise, that person, that day, that time. They were the voice of God through men, to men. God will provide the lamb.

But John is the line. The end of the old. The Lamb of God arrives and is announced by John. The old is finished, the new has come.

What Jesus is teaching about false teachers in these words is that there is a conflict. Since John, there is a conflict over who speaks for God. It's really just the same old conflict presented in a new way. Because Satan has been busy giving the world false information and false teachers as long as God has been revealing truth. There's nothing new about false teachers presenting Satan's plan for salvation.

But since John the baptizer announced Jesus the Messiah, the false teaching conflict with truth has taken a new form. And what you have on this occasion is two conflicting teachers offering two path's to God. One is false. One is true. *The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.*

Forcing his way into it. In the greek that's a single word. And the word itself is the word for violence. A seizure by violent taking. It's only used twice in the new testament, and in Matthew's gospel it appears in a very similar statement by Jesus.

In Matthew 11:12 Jesus says; 12“*And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.*

There is a war in this world over who is the voice of God and what is the message of God. There is truth and there is error. Satan's lies. God's truth. And Satan uses violence to gain control over men in order to keep them in his domain.

To bring this back home to our passage this morning, Jesus has just been proclaiming God's grace to receive repentent sinners and not only to forgive them, but to shower them with true riches.

The pharisee's have a very different message. They mock Jesus. They mock God's grace. They do not want forgiveness. They do not need forgiveness. They can ingratiate themselves into God's presence by keeping a set of laws that are radically different than the original law of God, which they can't keep.

Under their plan, if they can get you to believe that they are the voice of God to men, you will be burdened with endless laws and cleansings and stuff to do, do, do, in order to be righteous before God.

Jesus just told them, all of that stuff is the odor of sewage to God. Your righteousness makes God want to vomit. It is foul in his nostrils and disgusting.

Two voices with two messages about entering into God's presence, God's kingdom. Works righteousness or grace. And between those two opposing ideas there is conflict. False teachers are in direct conflict with truth.

False teachers are violent in the war against truth. The battle never ends. In the reformation 500 years ago thousands of protestants were burned at the stake. The battle over who is the voice of truth has raged continually since John announced Jesus the Messiah. Works righteousness done by men in opposition to God's grace given to men who recognize they are bankrupt before God and repent and ask for forgiveness. Same battle. Same violence. From that day to now.

*17 "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.*

The battle for who is the voice presenting truth must have a basis. An anchor that is constant and never changes.

In Jesus day there were competing voices. Hundreds of competing voices and ideas. In our day, with the internet that number has become billions. Maybe trillions. Voices shouting their ideas at me. It changes daily and new ideas are added hourly. It's a constant non-stop barrage of words that form truth claims.

Our president introduced a new word to the dictionary lexicons. Fake News. We all grew up with Walter Cronkite. We rarely questioned what the news forecaster was telling us. Those days are forever in our rear view mirror. Now we have a multitude of voices shouting everything and nothing at us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

So many voices. So many ideas. So many truth claims. Who's right? Who's wrong? You want to bury your head in the sand like an ostrich. I've gotten to where I refuse to listen to KNPR. At all. And I find myself even turning the knob to off most of the time with the idiots in Goldfield.

Jesus says, there is a source. You can listen to the trillion voices if you want. But here's the bottom line. When they agree with the words of this book, they're right. When they say something different from the words of this book, they're wrong. Pretty simple, really. This book isn't that tough.

I've been having an argument with a Jewish man who is impossible to argue with because he says, the book isn't reliable. The single constant anchor is neither constant or an anchor. Argument over. You can only argue if there is a base line that is always constantly never changing truth.

Jesus says this book is that baseline. That constant. Listen carefully to what Jesus just said; 17 *"But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail."*

That's really good news. Because what Jesus is claiming, is not only that this book is the single source of truth, He's also saying God is in the transmission business. And I don't mean Aamco.

God revealed this book. God inspired His servants to write this book. The words of this book are alive. They are His words. And Jesus has just given us a transmission guarantee. What we have before us is accurate and complete right down to the tiny little hook that changes the character and meaning of a single alphabet character.

Jesus just said that until heaven and earth pass away, that little hangy down thing that turns a P into an R will not pass away. Until heaven and earth pass away that little sticky out thing that turns a C into an E will not fail. God provided the truth in the first place and God has overseen the transmission of His truth through all the ages.

My friend wants to argue that what we have in front of us, especially the Christians, is an invention of men that has changed constantly and been corrupted until what we hold is completely foreign from what was given. He isn't arguing with me. His argument is with Jesus the Son of the living God, born of a virgin, the seed of the woman prophesied in Genesis 3:15. We'll see how that goes for him in his next life when he faces Holy God.

False religion is based in uprooting and changing the "*once for all delivered to the saints*" truths of this book. They twist it and change it and mis-quote it

and ignore it and come up with non stop reasons why it doesn't mean what it clearly says. That's part of the catalog of a false teacher. The war, the conflict is over the truth that God revealed to men in this book.

Therefore, it behooves you to know what the book says. You're an easy mark if you have no idea what this book says. You're an impossible mark if you believe these truths are unchanged and unalterable, and you know what they are.

That's why I wear you out, week in and week out, teaching you what the words of this book say. I'm trying to give you that foundation root system so that when the storms blow against you, the roots hold you fast to the truth. That's really the only job of every preacher. And yet the evangelical church is dismally ignorant. Satan blows us down like a piece of down feather in the wind. How sad.

And then, Jesus re-iterates that He is not teaching anything different or new that isn't written in God's book of revealed truth. That's what false religion is claiming. He's trashed the law of God. He eats and drinks with sinners. He is anti-nomian. That means against law. Jesus is diminishing and ignoring God's law with all of this grace and forgiveness stuff.

The eyes roll. The mocking comes. And Jesus has an answer for them. Besides what He just said about God's truth never changing one iota as long as heaven and earth remain. He's got one more little argument for these righteous men who claim to love the truth. Claim to be the protectors of the truth.

*18 "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery."*

These false teachers have a problem. They can't keep their pants on. It's the same today. Scandal after scandal after scandal. False teachers talk the talk but they can't seem to keep their pants on.

Old Joe Smith had a good thing going on. He was writing his own truth. So when the pants thing got to be a problem, he just got a new message from god. Multiple wives. The more the merrier. That was one way to solve the pants problem. Write new scriptures.

There's nothing new under the sun. False teachers have at least some and many times all of these problems identifying them. Here is a catalog from these verses this morning, spoken by Jesus. Traits of false teachers;

- They love money. They hate God. Lovers of money are haters of God.
- They use shaming to silence their opponents. They mock.
- They are self righteous. Oh SO righteous are they all. Putridly so.
- They get violent about their claim to speak the new truth.
- They mess around with the book. They find ways to undermine and cancel out the book. They lie.
- They are sexually immoral. They can't keep their pants on.

That's a good catalog of identifying traits of false teachers. Jesus said it. You can take it to the bank.

Our war with the secular religion of this day and time will be over the truth claims of this ancient book. It will be associated with all of the traits I've just outlined. There will be open hatred of Bible believing Christians. There will be shaming. There will be violence.

The war will be over what is truth. The words of the book, or the current loves of the culture. The war will be based in sexual immorality. Oh, and your opponents will be able to outspend you. For one thing, they will be able to fine you and take your money away from you. They're in the drivers seat.

The night before His death, Jesus told his disciples: 18 *“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

Solomon said "there's nothing new under the sun". The ages long battle for truth, for good and evil rages on this morning, unchanged through the eon's because the principles are the same.

This is the war of Satan's rebellion with God. What IS new, at least for us, are the changing dynamics of the battle front.

The war isn't being engaged between Jews and christians any more. The battle for truth now is with secular society that has rejected God's truth, along with God Himself, wholesale, and they are out of patience with people who belong to God and uphold the truths of this book.

I grew up in a world where the moral truths of this book were unchallenged. In my lifetime that has completely flip flopped. Now every single truth in this book is under the fire of warfare. The Book itself is hated because of the truths that are in it.

All of this has happened so fast, that christians are sort of baffled. Why would we be baffled? Same old war, just new fronts. We need to stay sharp in that battle. We need to be people of the Book.