

Be Godly for Godly Reasons

Luke 11:37-54 • January 11, 2026 • Ryan Wildauer

We must _____ the threat of _____ godliness. (vv. 37-41)

_____ godliness is _____ first by our love for God. (vv. 42-44)

The godly humbly _____, _____ and _____ God's message. (vv. 45-54)

Luke 11:37-54

³⁷ While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. ³⁸ The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. ³⁹ And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

⁴² "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ⁴³ Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴ Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."

⁴⁵ One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also." ⁴⁶ And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. ⁴⁷ Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. ⁴⁸ So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' ⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from 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 sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation. ⁵² Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."

⁵³ As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, ⁵⁴ lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say. (ESV)

Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions

Open: Most of us have routines that we do without thinking. Share about a time when running on autopilot created a problem for you?

Read & Discuss: Luke 11:37-54

1. Jesus asks in verses 39 and 40 why focus is being given to the “outside” when God is the Creator of the “inside” as well. Why is it often our default to prioritize the maintenance of our exterior image over the purity of our internal motivations? In verse 41 Jesus suggests that true “cleanness” is found by giving generously from what is within. How does internal purity act as a “detergent” for our external behaviors?
2. The Pharisees were meticulous about tithing herbs (v. 42) but “neglected justice and the love of God.” Why is it often easier to perform specific religious duties than it is to live out heart-level virtues like justice and love? How can a person or a community maintain biblical obedience in a way that is driven by God-honoring motivations?
3. **Read Micah 6:8.** How might this triad of motivations (Justice, Kindness, Humility) provide a helpful test for evaluating whether our daily actions are truly pleasing to God? **Read Hosea 6:6.** Why would God not be interested in worship that does not flow from steadfast love of Him?
4. In Luke 11:44 Jesus compares these leaders to “unmarked graves” that people walk over without knowing they are being defiled. What could the spiritual “fallout” be for a family or community when a Christian’s hidden hypocrisy eventually infects those around them? How should we evaluate our own influence to ensure we aren’t leading others into a hollow or “unclean” spiritual experience?
5. Jesus accuses the experts of the law of loading people with “burdens” that they themselves would not touch with one of their fingers (vv. 46, 52). What are some “unnecessary burdens” we might place on others in our modern church culture? What does it look like to practically hold the “key of knowledge” (v. 52) and use it to open doors for others rather than using it to lock them out of a relationship with God?
6. In Matthew 11:29-30 Jesus contrasts the “burdens hard to bear” placed on people by religious experts with his own invitation to a “yoke that is easy and a burden that is light.” What does’ Jesus lighter yoke entail? What are some unnecessary “religious burdens” you are currently carrying—that you need to trade for the grace of Jesus?
7. In Luke 11:47-51 Jesus challenges the hypocrisy of the lawyers building monuments to past prophets but ignoring the guilt of their fathers (and by extension themselves) to heed the messages God has been sending. Why is it often easier to embrace truth spoken to others than it is to listen to words of correction directed at us? Jesus mentions the murder of Zechariah “between the altar and the sanctuary” (v. 51). What warning did this leave them? How can we apply such a warning to our circumstances?

Apply: How can you focus on the internal motivations of “justice and love” in practical opportunities that are likely to come up this week? Where has hypocrisy taken place in this past week for which you want to repent?

Pray: Pray for your heart and hearts of our church family to remain sensitive to God’s correction and leadership. Pray that we would be a people moved by love and justice, while walking humbly with God.