

Blind-Sided...by Blind-Spots
Week 3---Blind-Sided By Elitism
Luke 12:13-34 / I John 2:15-17

Luke 11:37-53b

³⁷ As Jesus was speaking, one of the Pharisees invited him home for a meal. So he went in and took his place at the table. ³⁸ His host was amazed to see that he sat down to eat without first performing the hand-washing ceremony required by Jewish custom. ³⁹ Then the Lord said to him, “**You Pharisees are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and wickedness!**” ⁴⁰ Fools! Didn’t God make the inside as well as the outside? ⁴¹ **So clean the inside by giving gifts to the poor, and you will be clean all over.**

For these ceremonial washings, special stone vessels of water were kept, because ordinary water might be unclean. In performing the ceremonial washing, you had to take at least enough of this water to fill one and one-half eggshells. You started by **pouring the water** over your hands *starting at the fingers and running down towards your wrist*. Then you cleansed each palm by rubbing the fist of the other hand into it. Then you poured water over your hands **again**, this time from the *wrist towards the fingers*. A *really* strict Jew would do this not only before the meal, but also between each course!

The rabbis were deadly serious about this. They said that **bread eaten with unwashed hands was no better than excrement**. A rabbi who once failed to do this was considered excommunicated. Another rabbi was imprisoned by the Romans and used his ration of water for ceremonial cleansing instead of drinking, nearly died of thirst, and so was regarded as a great hero. (Guzik enduringword.com)

⁴² “**What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.**

-They would literally count out the leaves on their herbs!

⁴³ “**What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you love to sit in the seats of honor in the synagogues and receive respectful greetings as you walk in the marketplaces.**

-They loved to parade their righteousness.

⁴⁴ **Yes, what sorrow awaits you! For you are like hidden graves in a field. People walk over them without knowing the corruption they are stepping on.”**

-These religious leaders loved giving the impression that they were so spiritual, but they actually were defiling everyone they came in contact with. It was **just as walking over a grave ceremonially defiled a Jewish person**, even if they didn’t know it was there.

i. According to Numbers 19:16, everyone who touched a grave was ceremonially unclean for seven days. For this reason, the **Jews sought to mark graves clearly, usually using whitewash**, so everyone would know where they were and would avoid them.

⁴⁵ “Teacher,” said an expert in religious law, “you have insulted us, too, in what you just said.”

⁴⁶ “**Yes,**” said Jesus, “**what sorrow also awaits you experts in religious law! For you crush people with unbearable religious demands, and you never lift a finger to ease the burden.**

-One such law forbade using the bathroom on the Sabbath, others required Cirque de Soleil maneuvering to carry water or other objects on the Sabbath.

⁴⁷ **What sorrow awaits you! For you build monuments for the prophets your own ancestors killed long ago.** ⁴⁸ **But in fact, you stand as witnesses who agree with what your ancestors did. They killed the prophets, and you join in their crime by building the monuments!** ⁴⁹ **This is what God in his wisdom said about you: ‘I will send**

prophets and apostles to them, but they will kill some and persecute the others.’⁵⁰ “As a result, this generation will be held responsible for the murder of all God’s prophets from the creation of the world—⁵¹ from the murder of Abel to the murder of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, it will certainly be charged against this generation.

-Here Jesus simply points out that the contemporary leaders of the days of the prophets that they now honor were so convinced they were right...they killed them...pointing out that the same thing was still going on.

⁵² “What sorrow awaits you experts in religious law! For you remove the key to knowledge from the people. You don’t enter the Kingdom yourselves, and you prevent others from entering.”

-Finally Jesus points out that not only are they missing the point of the whole Kingdom...they cause others to the same.

-In a text in which Jesus spends even more time pointing out blind-spots he goes as far as to say this... Mt. 23:15 ¹⁵ *“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you cross land and sea to make one convert, and then you turn that person into twice the child of hell you yourselves are!”*

⁵³ As Jesus was leaving, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees became hostile

-Ya think? Needless to say, when you have the blind-spot of elitism you are going to feel BLIND-sided by such pronouncements!

---But now that we have taken a look at the incredulous “blind-spots” that set them up for Jesus’ “blind-side”...let’s step back and look at the scene as a whole. One of the overarching truths that we see here in this narrative is the deadly consequences of ELITISM.

-ELITISM leads to personal BLINDNESS

The pride that comes with elitism removes the humility inherent with any serious life-long learner and therefore ironically blinds you from see new truths.

-ELITISM leads to corporate ISOLATION

The sense of special enlightenment one is gratified with by elitism causes them to protect their views by curiously only hanging around with or listening to those who are just like them. Why listen to others if they lack your gift of discernment?

-ELITISM leads to tribal MARGINALIZATION

The sense of superiority that comes from ones special ability to see and know certain things causes them to look down on those who won’t see things as they do. Of course there are also those whom they presume “can’t see” see because they are frankly, just not intelligent enough.

ELITISM is present within every possible world-view. Its goes far beyond theology...that's why we are focusing on the transcendent elitism vs. the more obvious self-righteousness or hypocrisy this text also clearly showcases. It's present in nearly every area of life, every culture, every demographic.

-ELITISM is likely present in one form or another in each of us.

-From the wealthy yes...but the poor also.

-Democrats, Republicans, Tea Party

-Liberals, Moderates, Conservatives

-Strict Parents to Loose Parents

-Cleanies to Messies

-Workaholics to "don't worry, be happy" types

-Early risers to Night Owls

-People who are hot-natured and those who are cold-natured

-Those who like technology to those who prefer simple mechanics

-Those who spend time and money on sports or outdoor hobbies like fishing, camping, hiking and those who spend time and money on the arts or gaming or reading/researching.

-Those who prefer phone calls to those who prefer texts and emails

-Those who FaceBook and those who Twitter

-Those who are for Northwestern, for ISU & for the U of I ☺

-Those who love the Cubs and those who love the Sox ☺

-Those who prefer "less is more" to those who insist more is more ☺

this week's t-shirts contest!

-Those who like long sermons...to those who like short ones ☺

BOTTOM LINE--- if we are not careful...any of these elitism blind-spots can leave us open to the blind-side of loosing family or friends or even, splitting a church a community or nation. These BLIND-SIDES of division, BLIND-SIDES of waking up and realizing you had your ladder laid up against the wrong building...all of these CAN BE AVOIDED!!!...

Square 1...

**HOW CAN I AVOID BEING BLIND-SIDED
WITH MY EYES WIDE OPEN?**

****A) Seek to stir up a Genuine Spiritual Hunger (Ps. 139, Ps. 32)***

****B) Surround yourself with Wise Counsel (Ps. 24:6, Ro. 15:14)***

****C) Submit to Accountability (Eph 5:21, James 5:16)***

****D) Saturate yourself with Fellowship (Hebrews 3:13, 10:24-25 &
Ecc 4:9-12)***

***JUST SO HAPPENS YOU CAN FIND ALL THE ABOVE IN ONE OF
OUR LIFEGROUPS!!!!!!**

DIVE DEEPER---

My thanks again to David Guzik of enduringword.com for his gracious offering of some of the most spiritually insightful and academically comprehensive commentary I have yet to encounter throughout my 20 years of researching texts both in books and online.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS AND COMMENTARY RELATED TO TODAY'S TOPIC...

A powerful text in which Jesus lays out a series of charges against the religious elite of His day. Unlike our text in Luke in which we see the Pharisees actually judging Jesus and hence, His response in Luke 11, this text is just Jesus taking an opportunity to pronounce judgment on them cumulatively. My favorite verse, the most startling verse has to be vs. 15...BOOM!

Jesus Criticizes the Religious Leaders

¹ Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ² “The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses. ³ So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don’t follow their example. For they don’t practice what they teach. ⁴ They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden.

⁵ “Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels. ⁶ And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues. ⁷ They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi.’

⁸ “Don’t let anyone call you ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters. ⁹ And don’t address anyone here on earth as ‘Father,’ for only God in heaven is your spiritual Father. ¹⁰ And don’t let anyone call you ‘Teacher,’ for you have only one teacher, the Messiah. ¹¹ The greatest among you must be a servant. ¹² But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

¹³ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people’s faces. You won’t go in yourselves, and you don’t let others enter either.

¹⁵ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you cross land and sea to make one convert, and then you turn that person into twice the child of hell you yourselves are!

¹⁶ “Blind guides! What sorrow awaits you! For you say that it means nothing to swear ‘by God’s Temple,’ but that it is binding to swear ‘by the gold in the Temple.’ ¹⁷ Blind fools! Which is more important—the gold or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? ¹⁸ And you say that to swear ‘by the altar’ is not binding, but to swear ‘by the gifts on the altar’ is binding.

¹⁹ How blind! For which is more important—the gift on the altar or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰ When you swear ‘by the altar,’ you are swearing by it and by everything on it. ²¹ And when you swear ‘by the Temple,’ you are swearing by it and by God, who lives in it. ²² And when you swear ‘by heaven,’ you are swearing by the throne of God and by God, who sits on the throne.

²³ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things. ²⁴ Blind guides! You strain your water so you won’t accidentally swallow a gnat, but you swallow a camel!

²⁵ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too.

²⁷ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people’s bones and all sorts of impurity. ²⁸ Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.

²⁹ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you build tombs for the prophets your ancestors killed, and you decorate the monuments of the godly people your ancestors destroyed. ³⁰ Then you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would never have joined them in killing the prophets.’

³¹ “But in saying that, you testify against yourselves that you are indeed the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Go ahead and finish what your ancestors started. ³³ Snakes! Sons of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of hell?

³⁴ “Therefore, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers of religious law. But you will kill some by crucifixion, and you will flog others with whips in your synagogues, chasing them from city to city. ³⁵ As a result, you will be held responsible for the murder of all godly people of all time—from the murder of righteous Abel to the murder of

Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you killed in the Temple between the sanctuary and the altar.³⁶ I tell you the truth, this judgment will fall on this very generation.

From David Guzik's www.enduringword.com

Jesus' warnings to hypocrites.

1. (33-36) Jesus warns about inner darkness.

"No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts *it* in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when *your eye* is bad, your body also *is* full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body *is* full of light, having no part dark, *the whole body* will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light."

- a. This section has application to both what went before it (Jesus answers those who thought His miracles were the work of Satan and those who wanted to see more) and what comes after it (Jesus deals with hypocrisy).
- b. **No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand:** Just as a lamp should be displayed out in the open, so all can benefit from its light, so the word and work of God should be displayed. But when Jesus displays His word and works, the religious people of His day won't accept them!
- c. **The lamp of the body is the eye:** Even as a bad eye will make a person blind, so their bad hearts will make them spiritually blind. You have to be spiritually blind to attribute Jesus' miracles to Satan, to ignore the works of Jesus that are right before your eyes, or to live as a hypocrite.
 - i. When you are in darkness, there are two possible reasons why. There may be no light source, or the darkness may be within yourself. Jesus says they know that the darkness is within themselves.
- d. **If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light:** When we have the light of God's word shining in us, when we see and understand the work of Jesus around us, we won't walk in the darkness of spiritual blindness.

2. (37-41) Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their concern for only external matters.

And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw *it*, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. Then 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? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you."

- a. **He marveled that He had not first washed before dinner:** Jesus was not being unhygienic when **He had not first washed before dinner**. He did not follow the extremely technical and rigid requirements of ceremonial washing practiced by many pious Jews.
- b. For these ceremonial washings, special stone vessels of water were kept, because ordinary water might be unclean. In performing the ceremonial washing, you had to take at least enough of this water to fill one and one-half eggshells. You started by pouring the water over your hands starting at the fingers and running down towards your wrist. Then you cleansed each palm by

rubbing the fist of the other hand into it. Then you poured water over your hands again, this time from the wrist towards the fingers.

i. A *really* strict Jew would do this not only before the meal, but also between each course! The rabbis were deadly serious about this. They said that bread eaten with unwashed hands was no better than excrement. A rabbi who once failed to do this was considered excommunicated. Another rabbi was imprisoned by the Romans and used his ration of water for ceremonial cleansing instead of drinking, nearly died of thirst, and so was regarded as a great hero.

ii. If they were as concerned about cleansing their hearts as they were about their hands, they would be more godly men! But we always want to think there is something we can *do* to cleanse ourselves.

c. **Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness:** These Pharisees were careful to maintain the *appearance* of righteousness, but not the inner *reality* of it. They are **foolish ones** because they could be outwardly clean but inwardly dirty.

3. (42-44) Woes to the scribes and Pharisees.

"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. 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*."

a. **For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God:** The Pharisees were so meticulous in their outward obedience that they would literally tithe from their herb gardens, counting out seeds and leaves, and giving a tenth to God.

i. Legalism of this sort assumes that people will only know we follow God if we do all these things associated with rules and regulations. Instead, Jesus said that the real mark of a believer is the love they have for others in God's family.

ii. But the Jewish leaders saw it differently. "The Mishna lays it down that it is more important to observe the scribal interpretations than the Law itself (*Sanhedrin* 11:13)." (Morris)

iii. It is as if a soldier did great in marching drills and put all their emphasis there, but wasn't any good in battle. This would not be a good soldier. Being good at all the outward things of Christianity doesn't mean you are a good Christian.

b. Jesus does not say that their tithing was wrong. Instead, He says, **"these you out to have done."** What was wrong was what they were *not* doing - **leaving the others undone.**

c. The **best seats in the synagogues** were the seats up front facing the congregation. This is where the leaders and prominent people sat. These people thought it was no good to be walking right with God if others didn't *know* they were walking right with God.

d. **For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them:** These religious leaders loved giving the impression that they were so spiritual, but they actually were defiling everyone they came in contact with. It was just as walking over a grave ceremonially defiled a Jewish person, even if they didn't know it was there.

i. According to Numbers 19:16, everyone who touched a grave was ceremonially unclean for seven days. For this reason, the Jews sought to mark graves clearly, usually using whitewash,

so everyone would know where they were and would avoid them.

4. (45-46) Jesus rebukes the lawyers for their oppressive religious system.

Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, "Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also." 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."

a. **Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also:** The lawyer would have done better to keep quiet, but since he drew attention to himself, Jesus will address him also.

i. Remember what **lawyers** were in that culture. They were not so much those who would represent a client, but they represented the Mosaic Law. **Lawyers** were the experts on the Old Testament law and how it applied.

b. **For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers:** Because of the way that they interpreted the law, these experts in the Mosaic law laid heavy burdens on people.

i. For example, they taught that on the Sabbath, a man could not carry something in his right hand or in his left hand, across his chest or on his shoulder. But you could carry something with the back of your hand, with your foot, with your elbow, or in your ear, your hair, or in the hem of your shirt, or in your shoe or sandal.

ii. Or, on the Sabbath, you were forbidden to tie a knot - except, a woman could tie a knot in her girdle. So, if a bucket of water had to be raised from a well, you could tie a rope to the bucket, but a woman could tie her girdle to the bucket!

iii. Another example is how ancient Rabbis took the command to respect proper sanitation in the army camp of Israel (Deuteronomy 23:12-14) and applied it to Jerusalem, considering it the "camp of the Lord." When this interpretation was combined with Sabbath travel restrictions, it resulted in a prohibition against going to the bathroom on the Sabbath.

c. Sadly, today many Bible "experts" do the same thing - use the Scriptures wrongly as a tool of control and oppression.

5. (47-51) These lawyers only admire dead prophets.

"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. 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 to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation."

a. **For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them:** Jesus observes that the leaders of His day would honor dead prophets while persecuting living ones like Himself.

6. (52) Their most terrible crime - keeping others from God.

"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."

- a. **For you have taken away the key of knowledge:** Their legalistic approach has **taken away** understanding and knowledge. When you give people a list of rules by which they will save themselves, you aren't helping them at all.
- b. **You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered:** Those who lead God's people in a legalistic way are guilty of a terrible crime before God - they keep others out of the kingdom.

7. (53-54) The reaction of Jesus' enemies.

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.

- a. **The scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently:** They could not receive Jesus' correction. They preferred to stay in their own sinful thinking and habits rather than repent, and learn from Jesus' rebuke.
- b. **That they might accuse Him:** This is a common reaction when someone corrects us. Instead of receiving the correction, we *counter-attack*.
 - i. Proverbs tells us what those who refuse correction do. First, they hate those who correct them (Proverbs 9:8, Proverbs 15:12). Second, they do not listen to the one correcting them (Proverbs 13:1). Third, they despise their own soul (Proverbs 15:32).
 - ii. Proverbs also tells us the character of those who refuse correction. They are stupid (Proverbs 12:1) and they are foolish (Proverbs 15:5).