

Exposing Abusive Hypocrisy

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Date: 22 December 2024

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[0 : 00] Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 11. We conclude chapter 11 this morning.

I don't know if you've noticed in our walk through Luke, but Jesus' words are becoming a bit more severe, a bit more hard.

Yeah, well, let's read and see. Luke 11, we'll be looking this morning at verses 37 through 54, so the last section of Luke 11.

So if you're able, please stand as I read beginning of verse 37. While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table.

The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. And the Lord said to him, now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

[1 : 25] You fools. Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

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. Woe to you Pharisees, for you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.

Woe to you, for you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it.

One of the lawyers answered him, teacher, in saying these things, you insult us too. And he said, okay, 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.

[2 : 43] Woe to you, for you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses, and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs.

Therefore also the wisdom of God said, I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world may be charged against this generation.

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.

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.

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, lying in wait for him to catch him in something he might say.

[4 : 07] So it reads, let us ask the Lord. Father, grant us eyes to see and ears to hear. Help us to hear these words not simply as a condemnation of religious leaders in the past, but help us to hear what words here today relate to us.

I pray especially, Father, for those who have been hurt by people that Jesus is talking about, and help us to hear these words with grace and insight.

Speak to us today, Father, we pray. We need your word. Feed us today, we ask in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. We're in a season where we are celebrating Christmas, right?

I mean, just a couple of days away. Does it feel like Christmas? We rejoice that the Father has so loved the world that he sent his Son to save us from our sins.

[5 : 41] That's why he was named Jesus. The problem is, as gospel tells us, he came to his own and yet his own received him not.

They dismissed him. They rejected him. They did not want him. They did not need him.

The problem in the world today is the very same thing. People think they are okay. They do not need God. They do not want God. They believe they can fix themselves. They believe their problems are not that bad. Besides, the church is full of hypocrites. Well, Jesus exposes this very attitude as hypocrisy. I want you to note what Jesus is doing here. [6 : 47] He is very deliberately drawing some battle lines. He is laying down the gauntlet. And if we were an outsider, we might look at what Jesus is doing this early on, not quite several months yet from Jerusalem, as a little early.

I mean, the kind of things he's saying might cause people to get angry. Maybe angry enough to kill him. Well, that is the plan.

Here we hear Jesus. What Jesus' words remind me of is the words of a prophet.

One of the Old Testament prophets who's laying down the line, who's giving the warnings and the woes, calling people to repentance, calling them out for what they are.

Well, that's exactly what Jesus is doing. The setting is he dines with a Pharisee. The Pharisee invites him over for dinner. And yet we find in verse 38 that as Jesus reclines a table, Jesus did not do something that everybody else in the Jewish community does.

[8 : 00] He did not wash his hands. He did not wash his hands. By washing hands, he does not, he's not talking about good hygiene.

He's not talking about, you know, like mom taught us to wash our hands before dinner. He's not talking about that. This is a different kind of washing. This is a ritual purity.

This is symbolic. This was a tradition of the Jews. Well, a tradition of, to be more clear, the Pharisees and the scribes.

These were laws to wash your hands. Now, the Old Testament does not talk about washing of hands except by the priests. Did not apply to the regular folks.

It was about the priests washing their hands before an offering, a sacrifice. But the Pharisees and the scribes had made this a rule for everybody.

[9 : 00] We should all do this. It's a tradition of the Pharisees. Now, note Jesus' response in verse 39.

It says in 38, the Pharisee was astonished. It does not say that he said anything. Yet, Jesus launches into a confrontation exposing their hypocrisy.

So, why pick on these guys, the scribes and the Pharisees? Well, we learned earlier back in Luke chapter 7. Remember, Luke had told us that the Pharisees and the lawyers had rejected God's purpose for themselves.

Well, how did they do that? Well, because they did not participate in the baptism of John the Baptist. Therefore, God sent John the Baptist before Christ.

John the Baptist called people to repentance. The Pharisees and the scribes said, we don't need to repent. We're fine. Therefore, they rejected God's plan. God said, everyone must repent.

[10 : 11] These folks did not feel they had to. So, here we have Jesus. He doesn't pull any punches. He draws the battle lines. He gives a severe rebuke.

Calls out their hidden sins. Calls them fools. Warns them of doom by a series of woes. Woe.

Woe. Which is a warning of impending disaster. Woe. We see in verse 45 that they are insulted by this.

The word can mean humiliated. Humiliated. and it fuels their hostility to the point where we see at the end of the chapter, now they are going to press him harder.

They are going to provoke him to say something that they can humiliate him over. They are going to lie in wait. They're going to seek to ambush him that they might catch him finally.

[11 : 22] And persecute him. Why does Jesus do this? Why humiliate them? It's a situation where he goes, it's not just him and the Pharisee.

There's clearly other leaders there. He speaks to Pharisees, plural, verse 39. You Pharisees. The lawyer is there.

He's one of the lawyers. There are several lawyers there. This is a whole group. This may have been a gathering with the intent to question Jesus and try to trap him there, but he turns the table on them before they can start.

What is he doing? He is clearly denouncing their hypocrisy. He's condemning them. He's condemning by the Pharisees and the lawyers, also known as scribes, by taking those two groups of people, he is attacking the religious establishment of Israel.

These are the conservatives. These are the mainline people. There are other groups in Israel. There are the Sadducees. There are the Herodians. There are other folks.

[12:41] These Pharisees and scribes or lawyers compose the main group that lead, the folks that Jesus speaks to. These are the folks that compose the Sanhedrin.

These are the religious representatives of the nation of Israel. So, I want to just kind of pull apart how does Jesus expose them?

And what he exposes is not just their hypocrisy, but their abusive hypocrisy. There are different kinds of hypocrisy, I hope you understand.

There is the kind of hypocrisy that Jesus is going to condemn here that is a hardened, stubborn, blind, unrepentant hypocrisy.

They're just playing the game. There's another kind of hypocrisy that you and I can participate in. We can fall prey to it, right? And to be honest, we're all hypocrites on some level, are we not?

[13:53] The difference is, do we recognize it and repent of it? People who say the church is full of hypocrites, yes, amen, join the crowd. We all got that t-shirt.

The question is, are we sensitive to it? Do we recognize it? Of course. We're subject to it. We're vulnerable to it. We fall into those kind of, let's just check the boxes. That happens.

That's not the kind of hypocrisy Jesus is attacking here. And we might ask the question, why is he going so hard? Why so hard?

I think because it may be the only chance these men have. Because the soft words of the gospel are not going to appeal to them. They may need to be hit over the head to wake up to hear.

Sometimes that's what God must do to us. Huh? So, how does he do it? So, two charges. He, in verses 39 to 44, he attacks the Pharisees, okay?

[15:03] He attacks the Pharisees. And he gives them three woes. And then in verse 45, the lawyer speaks up and he says, hey, you're assaulting us too.

So, Jesus says, oh, okay, you guys want attention too? Let me tell you what you're doing. So, in verses 45 to the end, then he attacks the scribes or the lawyers.

And again, three more woes to them. So, who are the Pharisees and who are the lawyers? The Pharisees are the laymen. They are the, they are the keeper of the rules.

They are the enforcers of the rules and the traditions that the Jews have. And these traditions and rules are not based on the law. They're added to the law, okay?

There are all these commands, there are all these rules about what you can and can't do on the Sabbath, how you wash your hands, how you, how you do whatever. They've got hundreds of these rules.

[16:07] And they did those to guard the law. If you keep those rules, you'll never break the law. That's what they thought. Now, the Pharisees, when they first started, they started, Zach read Daniel.

Daniel talks about the Babylon captivity, right? The Israel has been sent away, exiled out of the land. Why? Because they didn't keep the law. They've been disobedient, right? They didn't care what God said.

They're unfaithful. So when they come back, guess what the response was? There's a group of men that said, we got to make sure this doesn't happen again.

We need to make sure we stay faithful to God, that we keep His law, that we stay attuned to God. So what do they do? Well, they have the law, but then they add to the law.

It was well-intentioned. Okay? The Pharisees started to separate. The Pharisee means separatists. So they separated, right, from the nations.

[17:09] The problem with Israel was they were joined with the nations. They were worshipping their gods. They were, right? That's why Israel got exiled. So they come back. They, let's make sure we stay separate.

Let's make sure we stay true. And so they began to set up these rules. Let's make sure we don't break. Why did they stay in the, why were they in Babylon for 70 years?

Why 70? Because that's how many Sabbath years they broke. So let's make sure we keep the Sabbath. So we're going to set up all these rules.

So I just want you to understand the background. When it first started, it was well-intentioned. But after 400 years, guess what it degenerates into? Just an external formalism.

Right? What dad thought of and meant well, the son receives on a different level. Doesn't have the same spirit of that. That's what happened. That's just what happens. So that's where, the Pharisees were not always bad guys.

[18:12] And some of them, by the way, Jesus does get through to. Okay? A few. A few. There's Nicodemus. There's Joseph. Okay?

Then the lawyers. Well, who are the lawyers? Well, the lawyers are the scholars. They're the interpreters of the law. So they're the ones that make the rules. And by the way, they're the scholars of the law.

But what I read is what the scribes and lawyers actually studied was not so much the law, the Torah, the original Old Testament. What they studied was what the rabbi said about the law. They studied the Mishnah, the commentary. That's what they focused on. Instead of going back to the text, they went to the interpreters of the text.

What did Rabbi so-and-so say? Well, I like this rabbi, not that right. That's what they did. And so the lawyers make up the rules. The Pharisees enforce the rules.

[19:12] Okay? That's how they relate. So what does he say to the Pharisees? Well, here's his indictment of the Pharisees. The Pharisees are guilty of the hypocrisy of external performance without internal reality.

That's the indictment. That's the summary. They're guilty of hypocrisy of external performance, doing the outside stuff without the internal reality.

It's all formalism. He levels a condemnation against them in verse 39. He says, you wash the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you're full of greed and wickedness.

Outside, inside. You're hypocrites. Hypocrisy means to act apart, to pretend to be who you really are not. It's a sham of righteousness.

So Jesus talks about this outside, inside conflict. It's all appearance. You wash the outside. You look all good and clean on the outside.

[20:20] You have the appearance of godliness, but you deny its power. It's an external performance. It's kind of checking the box.

It's all a facade. And interesting here in verse 40, Jesus calls them to a remedy, to a cure. Okay? Verse 40 says, you fools, you know, think this through. Did not he who made the outside make the inside also when God created you?

He didn't just create you as a shell. He created the inside too, so that's important too. So what does he say? Verse 41, here's the cure. Give as alms those things that are within and behold, everything is clean for you.

In other words, you focus on the externals, you focus on the outside, you get the kind of, you look all good in the appearance. He said, it's the inside that matters.

[21:25] Clean the inside. Start the inside. You guys have it all backwards. The cure is to start with your heart. Your heart needs cleaning. Start on the inside.

And he talks about alms, right? Give as alms. In other words, your acts of charity. So give your acts of charity from within. Do it from the heart.

Don't just give away things to check a box. I put my offering in the plate. Do I do that because my heart is right? Or do I do that just to, oh yeah, I got to do that.

I mean, that's easy to do, isn't it? It's easy to kind of get into those kind of things. I give to something, a true need. Do I do that from my heart?

Do I do it out of compassion? Or do I do it because, oh yeah, it's the right thing. I should just, I should do that. See what he's saying? And then he exposes, then he gives them three woes.

[22:33] Three cases. Verse 42, 43, and 44. In verse 42, he talks about what they do. In verse 43, he talks about why they do it.

In verse 44, he talks about who they are. Verse 42, what they do is they focus on the minors and ignore the majors. He says, you tithe mint and rue and every herb and you neglect justice and the love of God.

These you ought to have done without neglecting the others. Tithing's great. Do the tithing. Go for it. And these guys are scrupulous about all the everything. You know, if I get a little bit of an herb from my garden, I gotta make sure I get one tenth of it and I gotta give it back.

You know, well, that's fine. That's great. You're scrupulous about the minor things or checking the box because those are easy.

Those are easy. How about justice and love of God? How about that? Those are harder.

[23 : 40] See, justice is harder because then I gotta determine where justice applies. You know, justice to the widow, justice to the orphan, justice to the poor. I gotta think about, okay, how do I apply all that?

I can't just check a box on that. Love of God, that's a whole other thing. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and all your mode, right?

Well, that's not a check the box thing either. Let me just do the tithing thing because I can kind of write the check or I can give the money and I can feel like I'm good for me.

Done my duty. See, that's what Jesus is saying. That's what you do. You look at the minors and you forget the more important things. Verse 43, why do you do what you do?

Well, it's all about me. You love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. That's what it's about. I want the prestige. I want the honor. I want the attention.

[24 : 43] Remember, Jesus talked about when you pray, don't go on the street corner like the Pharisees. Don't pray out there where everybody sees you. You get your reward there. Wow, look how spiritual they are. Go into your inner room.

It's just you and daddy. It's just you. The reward is from the father. That's what you want. Not what men think. And then, who are they?

Verse 44, here's an odd statement, huh? Woe to you, verse 44, for you are like unmarked graves. What? What's that? Well, they would have got it right away.

We don't get it because, you know, we're 20 centuries later and not Jewish. What's a marked grave? In Israel, they were scrupulous about marking a grave.

Why? Because if you come in contact with a grave, you are now unclean. And you got to go through the purity a week or so of, you know, cleansing and all this stuff.

[25 : 45] See, that was a ritual thing. That was a religious thing. Sometimes we come in contact with the dead body. That's just part of life. But as a result, you are now, you're ritually unclean.

You can't go to temple. You can't, you know, you have to be separated. Well, so if they're unmarked graves, what happens? He says, people walk over you without knowing it.

You're like an unmarked grave. In other words, you are a source of defilement. And people unknowingly coming in contact with you are now defiled.

They would have got this right away. We're an unmarked grave. We're unclean. We're like dead people. Jesus is saying, yeah, you're like dead people.

In fact, the people that you influence are in grave danger because you are defiling them. You are deceiving them.

[26 : 46] You are a destructive influence in their lives. If we have a religious leader who is a hypocrite, who is all external and no internal reality, how is that going to go for us?

If it's all just the facade. Okay. I agree. So what's this whole focus?

So this is why Paul warns us about people like this. In 2 Timothy 3, 5, Paul says, these are people that have the appearance of godliness but deny its power.

Avoid them! Paul says that. You know, Paul says there's people to avoid. Oh, we're supposed to be nice to everybody, aren't we, as Christians? We're supposed to...

No, there's certain people. You stay away from them. People that have the appearance of godliness but deny its power, stay away from them.

[28 : 02] That doesn't sound very Christian. No, that's absolutely Christian because they have a destructive influence. Have nothing to do with that. This dawned on me back in Illinois at one point where I struggled with this one person continue to have conflict and I read this and I got, freedom!

I just started avoiding that person. Unfortunately, that person, somebody I had to deal with every day. But I realized it was a poison on me and I just needed to start separating as much as I could. Now the people say, well, how come you do that? I said, here's the verse. So what's the whole thing about outside insight?

Well, in another passage where Jesus is dealing with a similar kind of issue, here's what Jesus says in Matthew 15. He's talking about, you know, washing hands about unwashed hands.

He says this in Matthew 15, do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth, so talking about things from outside. Something going into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled.

[29 : 21] But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart and this defiles a person. This is what makes you unclean. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual

immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone. See, the real issue is not outside of us.

That's why, see, the Pharisees thought everything out, it's the externals that make me unclean.

That's why they avoided being around sinful people.

And Jesus started hanging out with sinful people. They had a problem with that. How can you do that? They're gonna, they're gonna contaminate you. Jesus is like, what's wrong with you?

Everyone's sinful for one thing.

It's not the outside stuff that make us unclean. It's not the outside stuff that, that, that make us sinful.

The, the things we do on the outside are sinful.

[30 : 34] They are symptoms of our problem, but they're not the problem. They're simply the outside action of it. They show that there's a problem.

The real problem's inside. It's from the heart, Jesus says. It starts from within. It's our thoughts. It's our desires.

It's our motives. It's our hypocrisy. It's our deceit. It's our lies. All of that starts from within and it comes out. It's revealed coming out. And particularly coming out of our mouth, isn't it?

Things that come out of our mouth particularly expose who we are, what's inside, what, why we need cleaning on the inside.

So, so Jesus exposes the Pharisees first of all of a hypocrisy of external performance without internal reality. So, verse 45, a lawyer steps up and says, you know, you're insulting us too.

[31 : 36] You're humiliating us too. Okay, let's look at you guys. So, Jesus indicts the lawyers, the scribes, the experts in the law, the teachers of the law, the teachers of God's word.

He indicts them of spiritual abuse. They are spiritual abusers who are callous and blind teachers of God's word.

How is that possible? How can there be people, teachers of God's word, who are callous, blind, and abusive?

Well, folks, it happens a lot. In fact, I believe one of the reasons people, there's a lot of people not coming to gather in a church as much as because people have been hurt by people in the church. People have been hurt by religious leaders, by elders, by pastors, by teachers, by Sunday school teachers. They've been hurt.

[32 : 45] They've been shamed. They've been, you know, you gotta fit this box, however it works. When I, there was a time where I would go up to another area and study the Bible and there was other folks around and people say, oh, you're studying the Bible.

What's going on? And I'd say, what's going on? And they'd say, oh, I used to go to church. I saw, what happened? I got hurt. Full of hypocrites, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

I said, oh, I got that t-shirt too. But I don't give up on the church. Why would you give up on the church? Well, the church, it hurts me. No, people hurt you. And the church is full of people that can hurt other people.

They're people. It's like, you get it in the world, you get it in the church. Church, you got more hope. A lot of people have given up on the church because of that whole thing.

I don't want to get hurt again. I get it. I get it. I don't want to be betrayed again. I get it. But the church is also our only hope.

[34 : 07] Not by itself. Not by itself. I don't mean that. But a church that is gathered for the purpose of serving Christ and teaching Christ and following Christ and loving one another.

I mean, why are the letters of Paul filled with, would you forgive one another? Would you bear with one another? Why does it say that over and over again? Because that's what happens in the church.

It's where we learn to forgive. It's where we learn to bear with. It's where we learn to forbear with one another. Not get mad and go somewhere else and then corrupt that congregation.

Are you with me? This is not an easy thing. I think we... You get hurt in church and it's absolutely tempting and understandable to want to leave and to not want to be part.

But it's not the remedy. We have to trust God's word. This is how God has formed his people on earth by a gathering. I will never find peace if it's just me and Jesus.

[35 : 16] I will never find peace. I will never find victory. I will never find growth in my Christian life if it's just me and Jesus. In fact, I will find a recession in my spiritual faith.

Please don't do it. Please don't do it. I'm talking to people listening. Maybe people listening online that never go to church but they listen online. It's great that you can listen online but if it never brings you to assemble with the body of Christ, maybe try something else.

Hate to say that. So the lawyers are indicted for spiritual abuse as callous and blind teachers of God's word.

Here's what they do. He focuses on them in verse 46. He says, Woe to you lawyers for you load people with burdens hard to bear and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.

Notice the spiritual abuse here. They load people down with excessive burdens. Is that what a good teacher does?

[36 : 27] Load people down with excessive burdens. Is that our job? Now there's one thing where if the Holy Spirit brings conviction, yeah, great.

It's not my job to bring conviction. But I'm sure there's times I've said things that have shamed people and I regret that.

That's not my job. To guilt people. So they load them down and then they don't want to help.

They don't even want to lift a finger. Now I don't know if he means they don't want to lift a finger to help that person or if he means they lay down the burdens but they don't do them themselves.

Could mean either way, the way the language is.

But I think it's more that they like to load it down but then, you know, they give them all this excessive baggage and then they offer them no help. They don't lift a finger to help them know how to do it.

[37 : 28] See, a good teacher, a good teacher, a good pastor should not just teach but help them see how I do that. How do I apply that? What does that look like? Not just facts but wisdom, insight.

And here we have folks where all the rules overwhelm them. It's too much. It's crushing. And you have to understand in the first century all the rules that the Pharisees and the scribes had laid down on people were just too much to bear.

I mean, how do you keep all that? I mean, what in the world can you do on a Sabbath? Nothing, basically.

So these folks are abusive teachers and they're uncaring about the impact that they make.

Remember what the Lord Jesus said on the contrary.

He said, come to me all who are weary and heavy laden. Yeah, you got a bunch of, come to me. I'm going to give you a rest. I'm going to give you a break from that.

[38 : 41] You're overwhelmed, come to me. Take from me. I got stuff for you. I got stuff for you. But it won't be overwhelming.

My load is light. There's a load, but it's light. It'll be just right for you. Oh, there'll be days where you think, no, it's too much, but it's just, it's just right for you because I'm with you.

Right? So then, verse 47, another woe. Woe to you for you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed.

So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers for they killed them and you build their tombs. So here's a condemnation. It talks about, first of all, about who they, who they are. They're the tomb builders. They build the tombs of the, of the prophets, but in reality, you know, they're honoring the prophets, but in reality, they're disobeying the prophets.

[39 : 40] Because they consent with their fathers. They're just like their fathers. What fathers are we talking about? We're talking about the fathers of Israel who disobeyed the Lord.

God sent them prophet after prophet after prophet after prophet. They disregarded them, disregarded them. Finally, they find themselves destroyed and in another country. And we see in Ezra and Nehemiah where God finally brings them back, a remnant of them back, not all Israel, but a remnant of them come back to Israel.

And, they come back to the land, but it's not their land anymore. It's not their, it's not their capital anymore.

It's not their kingdom anymore. They don't have a king. They haven't had a king since. King Herod doesn't count. He's not even a descendant. To this day, folks, to this day, now, Israel has some of the land back, but they only have a portion of Jerusalem.

They don't even have Jerusalem. They got a quarter. What's God doing? So, so, they, they, sorry, got off track there.

[41 : 13] They're honoring the prophets, but not listening or obeying to them. You wonder today, are they, are they listening yet to the prophets? Are they hearing Isaiah?

Are they hearing Zechariah? Are they hearing Malachi? Oh, Jonah. How about Jonah? Jesus said, you got Jonah.

So, he says, they're a witness and they're consenting with their fathers because, yeah, they honor, again, they're externalists. They, they, they, they adorn the, the, the, the tombs of the prophets. Oh, yay, Jeremiah, yay, Isaiah, but they don't obey him or listen to him and don't care what they said. It's, it's all about a facade. As their fathers ignored them, they have ignored them and dismissed them.

And so, Jesus says, verse 49, therefore, also the wisdom of God says, I will send them prophets and apostles. So, now Jesus is prophesying.

[42 : 19] He's saying, here's what's going to happen. I will send them prophets and apostles. Apostles gives us the big clue that the wisdom of God is Jesus himself saying, I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute.

And they will do this so that the blood of all the prophets, this is heavy, the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world may be charged against this generation.

The people Jesus is talking about are going to be guilty of all the blood. Not just the blood of Jesus and Paul and Peter, but they're going to be guilty of all the blood of the prophets.

Wow. Why? Because the ultimate one came in their generation. Because the very personification of the wisdom of God came in the flesh in their generation.

because what we're celebrating this week with Christmas dawned on that generation. The virgin bore the holy child.

[43 : 29] The holy child became the savior of Israel, yet they rejected him. it's one thing to dismiss Jeremiah.

It's one thing to dismiss Isaiah and Elijah and all the others. It's a whole other thing to dismiss Jesus.

The son. The only unique son of God. God that's why the blood will be charged against them.

And then he says verse 15 from the blood of Abel. We're going all the way back to Genesis 4. Abel was a prophet. Did you know Abel was a prophet? Did he say anything? No, but he did something. And what he did spoke volumes.

And he was killed. His blood was shed. His blood cried out. All the way to Zechariah who perished between the altar and the sanctuary.

[44 : 36] Oh, Abel to Zechariah. A to Z. That's what he's talking about. A to Z, right? It's kind of a, no, it doesn't work. In Hebrew, Z is like the sixth letter. It's not the last letter. Alpha and omega, right?

So it's not, so it's not, he's being chronological. Abel was the very first prophet who was killed. Zechariah was killed in 2 Chronicles 24, which is the end of the Jewish Bible, which is the end of the Jewish history when they were exiled to Babylon.

He was the last prophet killed before the exile. One more woe that Jesus gives them in verse 52 that shows that they're spiritual abusers.

He says, woe to you lawyers for you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves and you hinder those who were entering. What's he talking about? Key of knowledge of what?

Knowledge of God? Well, they certainly talked about God. What, what is he talking about? What's, what key? Key of knowledge. A key is something that opens a door, right? Opens away, gives access to something.

[45 : 55] And he talks about, he goes on to explain it by talking about entering. You don't enter and you're not allowing others to enter. So what are we entering? What did they stop people from entering?

The kingdom. The kingdom, which is salvation. And preventing people from entering salvation.

Now, now the scribes and the Pharisees, the lawyers, oh no, no, we're showing the way of salvation. How did, how did the first century Jews view salvation? How do you, how do you become saved in Israel?

What must you do to inherit eternal life? Keep the law. Keep the law. They believed if you keep the law, you will be saved.

You will be blessed. You will be, you will receive rewards. You keep the law. And so by teaching that if you keep the law, I mean, that's what the law says, doesn't it?

[47 : 11] God himself said, if you keep this covenant, if you keep my words, you will be blessed beyond measure. Yeah, that's true. If you keep it.

What's the problem? Can't keep it. If you're honest, if you're an honest reader of the law, and honest, not just saying, oh, I keep it, you know, on the outside.

Okay. Take the name. Any other gods put before me, that's the first commandment. Anybody had it? Anybody no problem with that? Ever put another god before God?

Sometimes. Right. That's pretty, you know, we have all kinds of different idols that we put up, that we trust in, right, find security in.

What about taking God's name in vain? Anybody ever done that? Okay, I'm dead. Let's go with an easy one. Let's just go to the 10th one.

[48 : 14] We'll skip the, you know, we'll skip the murder and the, you know, stealing and all that stuff. We'll get to the 10th one. What's the last one? Because if the other ones don't get you, the 10th one will nail you.

It's about coveting. Coveting somebody else's stuff. Well, who hasn't done that at some point? And then if you want to go to the, what's the nutshell of the law?

What is it? It's the two greatest commandments, right? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Okay, we're dead. I can't keep the law.

In fact, Paul says the whole point of the law, whole point of the law is to reveal your sin, to break you, to bring you to the point like David was where he cried out for mercy.

Unless you show mercy, unless you forgive me, Lord. Like Daniel, as Zach read Daniel's prayer today, same thing, isn't it? We have sinned. To us belongs open shame.

[49 : 17] We haven't done what you called us to do. We didn't listen. We dismissed you. We disregarded you. But here's these folks who think that obedience to the law saves them, which makes them blind teachers of God's word.

And see, there's Christians today that think the same thing. There's Christians today that still want to hold up the law. And the law is holy, righteous, and good.

There's absolutely nothing wrong with the law. The problem's not the law. The problem's us. That's why Jesus brought a new law, a new commandment.

That sums up the whole thing. Love one another. That's it. Love one another. Because if you love one another, you love God.

Because you wouldn't love one another if you didn't love God. And you're covered. If you love one another, guess what? You don't break any of those commandments. And if you're loving one another, that means you're loving God.

[50 : 25] If you're loving God, you're not breaking those commandments either. So if it's not as easy as checking a box, is it? It's a daily recommitment.

It's a daily activation of my faith. It's a daily renewal. I get tired and I just want to check a box today. There we are. So Jesus mentions the wisdom of God.

That got me curious. How does the wisdom of God say that he sends people and people don't listen? Well, you know the book in the Bible that talks about the wisdom of God the most?

Anybody have an idea? What books talk about wisdom? Proverbs. Proverbs. Chapter 1. Here, just listen to these words. This is the wisdom. Listen to these words.

Proverbs 1, verse 20. Wisdom cries aloud in the street. In the market, she raises her voice. At the head of the noisy street, she cries out.

[51 : 38] At the entrance to the city gates, she speaks. What does she say? She says, How long, O simple ones? Will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?

If you turn at my reproof, here's the offer, here's the remedy. If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit on you.

I will make my words known to you. But because I have called and you refuse to listen, I have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded.

Because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I will also laugh at your calamity. I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer. They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Why? Wow, that sounds harsh. Why? Why?

[52 : 48] Because they hated knowledge and they did not choose the fear of the Lord. Lord, they would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof. Therefore, they shall eat the fruit of their own way and they shall have their fill of their own devices.

For the simple are killed by their turning away and the complacency of fools destroys them. It's their own fault.

But still hope. Wisdom always gives hope. But whoever listens, whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease without dread of disaster.

Can you hear wisdom calling? Can you hear wisdom calling? It's not mysterious. It's not a cloak. It's very open.

It's very clear. The beginning of wisdom. What's the beginning of wisdom? Fear of the Lord, right? What does it mean to have fear of the Lord?

[53 : 59] It means to seek Him, to listen to Him, to trust in Him. It means to accept His reproof, to heed His word, to turn back to Him. The leaders of Israel Jesus called complacent fools.

Complacent fools. They think they're okay because they keep their rules. they think they do not need repentance. But as I said, the honest reader of the law does not think He's okay.

The honest reader of the law will recognize that the law points out my sin, shows my failure, shows that I need a Savior. I need that Christ Savior that the Father sent into the world at this time, right, to save me from my sin.

The one who would lay down His life as a substitute for my sinfulness, my wickedness, my rebellion. And if I would look upon Him and receive Him by faith in all that He is, I will be okay. secure. Wisdom said, if you turn at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit to you and make my words known to you.

[55 : 32] Have you been hurt by spiritual abuse? I'm closing now. Have you been hurt by spiritual abuse? Maybe in the past, maybe you have been hurt. Maybe a leader has betrayed you.

Maybe somebody has shamed you. Maybe somebody continued to push upon you that you don't measure up enough. And you got to the point where you're tired of trying to measure up.

Because you can't measure up. And so you said, I'm done. I'm done. And I don't trust leaders anymore and I don't trust the church anymore.

If you've been hurt by spiritual abuse, the remedy is not to run away from Jesus' church. It is not. The remedy is to trust God and to rely upon His word.

To believe what He says not only about Himself, but about His people. His people will let you down. His people will fail you. His people will hurt you. But that's why we love His people and we bear with His people and we forgive His people.

[56 : 43] And sometimes we confront His people. But we don't run away. Because if we run away, we have no remedy.

We have no remedy. Whoever listens to God's wisdom in Christ will dwell secure and be at ease without dread.

I'm going to close with some words by David Crowder, one of my favorite songs. He says, Come out of sadness from wherever you've been.

Come brokenhearted, let rescue begin. Come find your mercy, O sinner, come kneel. Earth has no sorrow that heaven can't heal.

So lay down your burdens, lay down your shame. All who are broken, lift up your face. O wanderer, come. Come home.

[57 : 41] You're not too far. So lay down your hurt, lay down your heart. There's hope for the hopeless and all those who've strayed. Come sit at the table, come taste the grace.

There's rest for the weary, rest that endures. Earth has no sorrow that heaven can't cure. Let us pray.

Father, we thank you for the word. We thank you for the words of Jesus that can be hard, but we believe our Lord Jesus speaks the truth in love.

And sometimes we need to hear your word straight and unadorned. Sometimes we need to hear your word that is severe and warns us. So give us soft hearts, Father, to hear today what we need to hear.

Help us each, Lord, to listen to the wisdom, to heed the rebuke. Help us, Lord, those of us that are vulnerable to hypocrisy, are vulnerable to just checking the boxes, going through the motions.
[58 : 56] Help us, oh, Father. We want that reality in our lives. Thank you for the hope of wisdom that calls us to turn and to listen.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.