

Connecting with Others Like Jesus Did

Session 4

July 28, 2026

Calling Out Sin

The Point: As we call out sin for what it is, we can point others to God.

Session Passages: Luke 11:37-46; 12:1-3

Luke 11:37-41

Connection to the Point: Jesus pointedly reminded a Pharisee that it's what's on the inside that matters.

As he was speaking (v. 37). In verses 33-36, Jesus contrasted light and darkness. While speaking on this contrast, the Pharisee invited Him to dine with him. This interruption in the plot seems to suggest that the host is someone in darkness. Jesus then proceeded to further point out Jewish people and Jewish leaders' positions in darkness by condemning their unbelief. The Pharisee's unbelief was what kept him in the darkness.

A Pharisee asked him to dine with him (v. 37). Typically, such an invitation was a sign of friendship. Such an invitation would have been an unusual action for a Pharisee, especially since Jesus had just denounced the nation's unbelief. In addition, no upright Pharisee would have shared a meal with a non-Pharisee such as Jesus, who was continually in the company of common laborers, tax collectors, harlots, and other kinds of people the Pharisees considered sinners. Likely, this invitation to a meal was not intended for fellowship but rather for an opportunity to criticize Jesus.

Pharisee saw this (v. 38). The Pharisees were constantly watching Jesus. In Luke 5:17, Luke tells us that the Pharisees and religious leaders were present to observe Jesus. As His enemies, they were alert to anything He said or did that might be against the Mosaic law or their manufactured laws. They noticed his perceived "mis action" right away—that he did not pause for the ceremonial washings. In the Gospel of Luke, the Pharisees watch and confront Jesus over twenty-three times.

Ritual washing (v. 38). The Pharisees had devised an elaborate system of washings that included washing before meals. The Old Testament did not call for these washings before meals, and they had no connection to hygiene. These elaborate washings were a ceremonial attempt to achieve holiness in the face of the world's corruption. They had nothing to do with cleansing the heart. These ceremonial washings were all about outward show. Jesus ignored these ceremonial washings because they had little value. The Pharisees probably interpreted Jesus's actions as an insult. Luke does not record any direct words of criticism from the Pharisee. But Jesus read his mind and immediately used the man's attitude as a launching pad for a scathing denunciation of the Pharisees and the scribes.

Clean the outside (v. 39). The Pharisee's amazement at Jesus not washing His hands moved Jesus to rebuke the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. The Pharisees were primarily concerned with externals. Their righteousness was a matter of doing what they believed to be the right thing, externally. Jesus, however, condemned them because their hearts were wrong. External actions may appear good, but people's true nature is found in their heart. These Pharisees had allowed a once vibrant relationship as God's chosen people to degenerate into cold, ritualistic formalities. As such, they might have appeared right on the outside, but on the inside, they were unclean because they were also sinners and failed to receive Jesus as the Messiah.

Greed and evil (v. 39). Jesus elaborated on the inner person of the Pharisees by highlighting two areas of sin in their lives. The first was greed, from a Greek word (*harpagē*) which means to pillage or plunder. Later, in Luke

16:14, Luke describes this sinful attitude of the Pharisees: The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, listened to all these things and scoffed at Jesus. Jesus pointed out that one cannot serve God and money equally. The Pharisees scoffed at this teaching because, for them, money was the most essential thing in life. At another time, Jesus also criticized the scribes and Pharisees for their issues with greed and self-indulgence (Matt. 23:25).

Evil was also inside the Pharisees' hearts. The Greek word for evil or wickedness (*porneia*) is the root from which we get the term "pornography." The key thought is that one can hide the sins of greed and evil on the outside, but they still make the heart unacceptable to God.

Fools (v. 40). In the Old Testament, this term refers to those who are blind to God or deny God's existence and live in ways that are contrary to God and His law. He who made the outside made the inside (v. 40). God is concerned both with outward behavior and inward attitude. Jesus taught that the inner person is the source of all outward action (Matt. 15:18-20).

Give from what is within (v. 41). In calling on the Pharisees to give to the poor, Jesus was striking at the greedy hearts of these hypocritical religious leaders. He had already condemned them for being greedy. Jesus's charge was a challenge for the Pharisees to undergo an inner transformation that would be evident in their outward actions and render them truly clean before God. The first step in the inner transformation is believing in Jesus, God's Messiah.

Luke 11:42-46

Connection to the Point: Jesus pointed out that love and justice are greater than any religious ritual.

Woe (v. 42) is an expression of grief, condemnation, or lament. Jesus used this term repetitively in Luke 11 to denounce the Pharisees and the scribes.

Give a tenth (v. 42). The first word of condemnation regarded the practice of giving the tithe by the Pharisees. The Old Testament is clear that God's will for His people was that they offer a tenth of their income to the Lord. According to Deuteronomy 14:22-23, the purpose of the tithe was to teach God's people to honor Him by putting Him first. The Pharisees failed in this in that, for them, often the tithe was a way to call attention to their self-righteousness. To demonstrate their piety, they even tithed on such minute things as the herbs used in cooking.

Mint, rue, and every kind of herb (v. 42). The herbs mentioned were prevalent in first-century society. The Pharisees' practice of tithing small items such as culinary herbs were notably excessive, as this was not mandated by rabbinic tradition.

Justice and love for God (v. 42). Justice points to treating others fairly. Love for God entails giving Him His rightful place in the heart. These represent the two greatest commandments of the law of Moses—love for God and love for others (Matt. 22:36-40). These two commandments cover all the relationships of life—horizontally with others and vertically with God.

Should have done without neglecting the others (v. 42). For Jesus, it was not a question of either/or, but both/and. Yes, they should have practiced giving the tithe as prescribed in the Old Testament. But they should have done so without neglecting the treatment of others with dignity and fairness, nor should they have failed to give their highest loyalty to God. Jesus challenged them and us not to pursue the secondary at the expense of the primary in our walk with Him.

Front seat in the synagogue and greetings in the marketplaces (v. 43). The second woe went to the very heart of the problem of the Pharisees. Everything they did was to call attention to their self-righteousness. They craved attention from others for their outward signs of righteousness, driven by their selfish vanity and pride. The synagogue reserved seats up front for dignitaries who might attend worship. Their roles with the synagogue also gave them extravagant titles and reverence in the marketplace. Jesus condemned them for always seeking prominence. They ignored the needs of others while simultaneously expecting others to show them respect and admiration. They exhibited anything but the kind of humility that Jesus taught to His followers (Matt. 23:11-12).

Unmarked graves (v. 44). Jesus's third woe on the Pharisees involved their poisonous influence on the people who crossed their paths. In the law of Moses, a person who came in contact with a dead person was rendered ceremonially unclean for seven days (Num. 19:11). To avoid this, the Jews marked all of the graves in the land by whitewashing them so that they could be easily spotted and avoided (Matt. 23:27-28). The Pharisees might have appeared holy on the outside, but inwardly, they had evil thoughts and contaminated anyone who associated with them.

Insult us too (v. 45). A scribe, an expert in the Mosaic law, was also seated at the table. A scribe's primary task was to interpret and apply the law of Moses, as well as the traditional interpretations of that law by the Pharisees. These lawyers were closely associated with the Pharisees, with many of these scribes also being Pharisees (Mark 2:16; Acts 23:9). For Jesus to deliver scathing remarks against the rules and regulations of the Pharisees was also to insult the scribes who developed and taught them.

Load people with burdens (v. 46). The problem with the Pharisees' rules and regulations was the almost impossible challenge of keeping them. Far from helping the people grow closer to God, they pushed them away. These manufactured traditions had no power to change a person or gain righteousness in the eyes of God. They did just the opposite—they became a source of discouragement. No one could fulfill these requirements.

Don't touch these burdens (v. 46). Not only were these traditions impossible for the Jewish people to keep, but these scribes (and, by association, the Pharisees) failed to keep them as well. The phrase "don't touch these burdens" refers to touching lightly the burdens of the interpreted law with the fingers. The scribes found ways to avoid even attempting to keep the traditions of the Pharisees. They had devised various ways to circumvent the requirements while expecting others to adhere strictly to them.

Luke 12:1-3

Connection to the Point: Sin will be exposed by God.

Meanwhile (v.1) links the next words of Jesus to the preceding condemnation of the Pharisees and scribes. The Greek structure suggests a transition from Jesus's confrontation with His enemies to His instructions for His followers.

Many thousands (v. 1). The Greek word *urias* means tens of thousands. The crowd was huge. What they were witnessing was the confrontational debate between Jesus and the Pharisees. The discussion, which had begun around the Pharisee's dinner table, had spilled into the roadway where the crowds had gathered who were following Jesus. Thousands of others joined them to listen to Jesus's denunciation of the Pharisees.

Trampling on one another (v. 1). This phrase painted a picture of the crowds pushing and shoving and stepping over each other as they strained to hear every word between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes. The people were drawn to Jesus not because they realized His words had life but because He fed and healed them

(John 6:26). They trampled one another to touch Him or get His attention. The picture Luke painted was almost like a mob scene as the argument continued between Jesus and the Pharisees.

His disciples first (v. 1). While the multitudes listened, Jesus addressed those who were His faithful followers. He warned them against the false piety and hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The potential for some in the crowd to learn and follow Him was present, but initially, Jesus directed these words to His disciples.

Be on your guard (v. 1) has the meaning of “watch yourself” and “take heed to yourselves.” This phrase was a strong warning from Jesus to those who followed Him. “You, my followers, be extra cautious” would be the sense of His words.

Leaven of the Pharisees (v. 1). In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus warned His disciples about the pervasive influence of the Pharisees’ teaching, when He said, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (16:6). Leaven, or yeast as we know it, can quickly permeate the dough surrounding it. In the same way, the teachings and hypocritical lifestyles of the Pharisees, scribes (and, according to Matthew 16:1, the Sadducees) could corrupt a person in a short time. In both the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 2:11; 6:17; Matt. 16:6-12; Luke 12:1), the symbol of leaven stood for anything that could corrupt. Thus, Jesus warned His followers about the corrupting influence of these hypocritical religious leaders.

Hypocrisy (v. 1). The Greek word (*hupokrisis*) originally meant to answer. Over time, it came to be known as elocution, or the art of speaking in public. Later, it evolved to refer to an actor on stage. In that sense, it pointed to one who wore a mask—a pretender. The term was used in ancient Greek drama and referred to actors who played a part that was different from their true identity.¹

Nothing covered . . . uncovered . . . hidden . . . made known (v. 2). This is the first of two proverbs that Jesus used to point to the value of truth. Truth is the opposite of hypocrisy. One day, the truth will reign and expose hypocrisy. Time will eventually run out for the play actor, and the truth will emerge. God the Father is the One who will expose that which is false. Here, Jesus may be alluding to Ecclesiastes 12:14, which speaks of God bringing every hidden act to judgment.

Said in the dark . . . heard in the light . . . whispered in an ear . . . will be proclaimed (v. 3). This second proverb parallels the thoughts from verse 2. Jesus indicated again that sin will be exposed. Speaking and living a lie will not stand the test of time or the test of truth. Within this proverb are additional contrasts. Dark is contrasted with light, and private rooms (literally, storerooms) contrast with the very public place of a rooftop.²

¹ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 566.

² John F. MacArthur, Luke 11—17, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 117-118.