

Jesus Confronts Hypocrisy

She's a new member. She doesn't understand," said Tiana to Sheryl. She was talking about Kiara.

Kiara, a church member of three months, had brought 18 family and friends to Parkway Worship Center's women's conference. However, she had not pre-registered them, which was the requirement for winning the prize. Tiana, who had pre-registered four guests said she had rightfully won the \$50 gift card to Red Lobster.

The four guests who Tiana brought had previously been members of Parkway Worship Center before COVID.

Most of Kiara's guests had never been church members.

"She brought 18 people," Sheryl said. "Isn't that awesome! We have been praying for God to grow our women's ministry. Kiara has such a beautiful spirit and heart for God and people."

Sheryl looked and saw Kiara walking nearby with several of her guests. "Sister Kiara," she said, beckoning the young woman over. "I was just telling Tiana what a blessing you've been to our church."

"Thanks so much," Kiara said. "I love being here."

Kiara introduced her guests to Sheryl and Tiana.

"Kiara, you didn't realize you had to pre-register your guests?" asked Tiana

"I think I recall that," Kiara said, "but my heart was set on getting people here to hear the Word and be part of the fellowship."

"You have a beautiful church," said Kiara's cousin, "and the people are so friendly."

1. *In the "greatest commandment," Jesus tells us to love whom?*

2. *How can we be hypocritical in our love for others?*

3. *How can we be hypocritical in our love for God?*

Over Emphasis on the External

Luke 11:37-38, KJV

37 And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.

38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

Luke 11:37-38, NIV

³⁷When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. ³⁸But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal.

After the Lord had taught His disciples about various topics, a Pharisee asked Jesus to dine with him. It is unlikely that the Pharisee who invited Jesus to his home for dinner was seeking an honest understanding of Jesus' teachings to trust in Him more. When the religious leaders sought an audience with Jesus, it was usually to find a way to critique, entrap, and discredit Him. As Jesus sat down to eat at the Pharisee's table, the host reacted in surprise that Jesus had not washed beforehand. Whether the host reacted noticeably or not, Jesus knew the man's heart and would take the opportunity to admonish him for having the wrong focus on where God's priorities are.

In another situation, the Pharisees came right out and asked Jesus why His disciples did not wash before eating, which in their minds was a transgression (Matt. 15:2). After rebuking His detractors, Jesus taught His disciples that in God's eyes, the lack of ceremonial cleansing does not defile the food that enters a person's body. Food simply nourishes the body, with the waste being cast out accordingly. It is what comes out of a person's mouth that defiles, for it reveals one's true heart (vss. 3-20).

4. *Who invited Jesus to dinner?*
5. *What did the host observe?*
6. *What was his reaction?*

Insufficient Emphasis on the Internal

Luke 11:39-41, KJV

39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?

41 But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

Luke 11:39-41, NIV

³⁹Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you."

Having perceived His host's amazement, Jesus took the opportunity to point out that it is not what is on the outside that matters, but rather that which is on the inside—the heart—is what makes a difference in our relationship to God. The Pharisees were concerned over the external appearances and cleanliness, even to the point of obsession, but failed to address the important internal matters. This is clear by the Lord's admonishment that they were filled with "greed and wickedness" (vs. 39). The Greek word for this greed, *harpagē*, refers to the act of plundering, pillaging, or extorting. This speaks of gaining riches in any way possible, including by coercion or even force. Jesus knew the character of the people at that meal.

The Lord then highlighted how foolish they were by pointing out that the same God who made the outside made the inside, as well. Consider a drinking cup or glass. We would think it foolish to drink from it if either the inside or outside were filthy. Likewise, it would be foolish to think that God would consider a sinner's heart to be clean because he or she took a bath that cleaned just the outside. God knows the inside as well as the outside.

Jesus went on to give them an example of what kind of activity would be a good indicator of a clean heart—giving alms generously to the poor. True generosity would come only from a heart that is pure before God, which is why Jesus admonished His listeners to be sure their generosity was pure and true. His people are not to give their alms to be seen and receive praise from others (see Matt. 6:1-4).

7. *What characteristics did Jesus ascribe to the inside of the Pharisees?*

8. *Why did Jesus consider the Pharisees to be foolish?*

9. *What did Jesus say would be an indicator of a clean heart in the eyes of God?*

The Need for Proper Emphasis

Luke 11:42-44, KJV

42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

43 Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

44 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

Luke 11:42-44, NIV

⁴²“Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.

⁴³“Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces.

⁴⁴“Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it.”

Jesus then admonished the Pharisees to find the proper

balance, the right emphasis regarding this matter of true cleanliness before God. Whereas they made sure to give a tenth of all kinds of garden herbs, including mint and rue, they neglected to practice true justice and the love of God toward others. The proper balance and emphasis would be to do both, to tithe to God and to treat others justly and with the love of the Lord. Instead, they were perverting justice and treating others poorly, even hatefully. Though giving offerings to the Lord, as the Pharisees were doing, is good, unless it is accompanied by treating others rightly and justly, the offerings are not acceptable to Him.

Then Jesus admonished the Pharisees for their pride, for they loved to have the best seats in the synagogues and to be greeted as VIPs in the marketplaces. Such special treatment fed their egos and their sinful sense of superiority over their fellow Jews. However, even though their countrymen had a high opinion of them, Jesus knew the religious leaders' hearts and their true motivations. So He likened them to graves that are unseen, with people trampling over them, not even knowing they are there.

Sadly, God's people today may take up some of those same attitudes by focusing on the external rather than the internal. We may judge others by external, superficial criteria rather than by what is in their hearts. If we are not careful, we could also find ourselves greedily coveting after wicked things and believing that giving to the Lord is all we need to do to remain acceptable to Him. We can stand against all this by focusing on the love we have for God and others. When we do, we demonstrate that regardless of our state of cleanliness on the outside, on the inside our hearts will be clean in the eyes of our Lord.

10. *What did the Pharisees neglect?*

11. *What did the Pharisees love?*

12. *How did Jesus describe the Pharisees because of their neglect and misplaced love?*

God's Perfect Timing

The headline reads, “ ‘God’s Perfect Timing’: Three-year-old Receives Life-Saving Kidney Donation from Stranger.” The toddler’s parents, Alyssa and Eric, prayed for this outcome for their son, Finley. Alyssa said, “It’s incredibly humbling that someone would just be willing to sacrifice something like that for someone else. . . She literally was sacrificing a part of her body for a complete stranger that she didn’t know, and it’s so amazing.”

The gracious donor learned of Finley’s journey from a Facebook group that shared his need. The family also appeared on the local news pleading Finley’s need. Although many wanted to help, it took months before the family found what they prayed for—a match from a donor who wished to remain anonymous. Once the donor was cleared for surgery, the parents wanted to personally thank her. Finley’s father Eric says, “We kept wanting to say thank you, and she was like, ‘You don’t have to thank me, I just gave Him what was already His, this was the kidney that was His, and all I did was just give it to Him.’”

“Oh, God is woven through Finley’s story so intricately,” Alyssa expressed. “There’s no doubt that God orchestrated all of this.”

First Corinthians 13 describes love as kind and not self-seeking. Love is the word that best describes this unselfish action that linked two neighbors. Biblical love is sacrificial and internally motivated. People don’t donate a kidney just for the publicity. Our love for others must be based on how we can help and serve them, not on our rewards. As 1 John 4:19 says, “We love because he first loved us.”

13. *Why is true love always sacrificial?*

14. *What sacrificial acts have you seen someone do for a neighbor, especially someone they did not know?*

15. *What concerns have you seen lately regarding your neighbors that you could help with?*

The Most Important Part

When 18-year-old Carl got his first car, he was determined to keep his used car clean and smelling “new” at all times. It was not unusual to see Carl at the carwash at least three times a week. Carl took much pride in keeping his car clean on the outside. Months later, the car started to run rough, and his dad asked Carl if he had his oil changed like he told him to do when he first got the car. The answer: “No.” Oftentimes we are more concerned about our spiritual appearances than having clean hearts that love and serve God.

► *Complete this sentence: “My heart is _____.” You may want to write this sentence on an index card to have this week where you can see it to remind yourself to ask the Holy Spirit to give you the heart you need to better serve God and others.*

KEY VERSE

And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. —Luke 11:39, KJV

Then the Lord said to him, “Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.” —Luke 11:39, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of September 4 through September 10

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 103:1-12—Bless the Lord Who Heals.
- Tue.** Psalm 103:13-22—Praise the Lord of Compassion.
- Wed.** Exodus 20:8-11—Remember the Sabbath Day.
- Thu.** Hebrews 4:1-10—Rest for God’s People.
- Fri.** Hebrews 4:11-16—Enter God’s Rest.
- Sat.** Deuteronomy 22:1-4—God’s People Must Care for Others.
- Sun.** Luke 14:1-6—The Sabbath Is for Doing Good.