

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 11: 37-44

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. We continue to read Luke chapter 11. Today, we'll we verses 37 to 44.

This chapter begins with the disciples coming to ask Jesus how to be a person of prayers. The most important sentence in Jesus' answer is: when we pray to the Father, will not the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? The teaching concerning the Holy Spirit runs through this entire chapter.

Yesterday we read that the lamp must be placed on the lampstand so that it can give light to the whole house. If the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit, and if the eyes within us are single, then our whole person will be full of light and shining, and the whole body will be full of light. In the next two sections, Jesus uses the Pharisees and the lawyers as a contrast: if you do not pay attention to the Holy Spirit and life within, but only pay attention to outward, surface matters, how tragic the situation is.

Verse 37: "And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat."

Although the Pharisees never had good intentions toward Jesus, and every invitation they gave had many bad motives behind it, Jesus openly accepted the Pharisee's invitation and went in to sit at table with them. When Jesus was ministering on earth, His behavior and conduct outwardly were actually very inclusive. No matter whether your motive was good or bad, if you invited Him, Jesus would probably go. But on the other hand, regarding truth, He was completely unambiguous and made no compromise on truth.

Verse 38: “When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner.”

The Pharisee strongly taught others to strictly keep the teachings of the law in daily life. When he saw that Jesus did not wash His hands before dinner, he marveled. Washing hands before dinner was not for the sake of hygiene, but for the sake of the ritual of cleansing, because a person might unintentionally touch something unclean. Therefore the Pharisees insisted that before eating, a person must perform the hand-washing cleansing ritual to wash away any possible uncleanness. Jesus had no interest at all in such traditions, because all the laws and ceremonial regulations of the Old Testament were actually shadows; they were types of Jesus Christ. After Jesus Christ came, these ceremonial laws should be completely abolished, because the reality had come and the shadow was no longer needed.

Actually, many traditions and regulations, when the first generation began to practice them willingly, were probably very good, done with a heart of reverence or faith. But after a period of time, they gradually became a tradition. What is a tradition? It is when the person doing it may completely not understand the meaning of these things, but because others are doing it, he just does it the same way, and it becomes what is called a tradition.

In fact, in the church, many traditions have unknowingly accumulated; these traditions have become rules and regulations, gradually becoming all kinds of frameworks that restrict people’s freedom. On one hand they restrict people’s freedom, and on the other hand they also prevent the Holy Spirit from freely moving in people’s hearts, instead being restricted by all kinds of regulations. When Jesus was on earth, He completely did not keep these regulations. Today in the church it is actually the same: if you do anything just because of outward rules, but you do not understand the spiritual meaning inside, then doing it is in vain, and keeping it is also in vain.

Verse 39: “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.’”

Jesus showed no mercy toward the Pharisee's question and directly stated their real condition: they only washed the outside of the cup and dish clean. The cup and dish were meant to hold things, yet inside they were full of all kinds of bad things—greed and wickedness. Actually what He was saying is: you people are just like that cup and dish; you wash the outside very clean, outwardly you appear to keep the rules, outwardly you seem to have a very pious appearance, but your heart is full of greed and full of wickedness. What is greed? Forcing what does not belong to you to become yours. What is wickedness? Indulging your own desires to do what you want to do.

Verse 40: “Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?”

We must know that God is the Creator; man's outward appearance was made by God, and man's heart was even more made by God. God created the outside and also created the inside. Why do you only pay attention to the outward appearance but not pay attention to the heart?

Verse 41: “But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you.”

Jesus completely reversed their cleansing ritual, because they were all keeping it outwardly, while inside they were full of all kinds of filth, wickedness, and greed. Jesus instead said: you give alms from what is inside—that is, change all the wickedness and greed inside into willing and cheerful giving to others, from the heart being willing to help people, from the heart being willing to give generously.

As long as your inside is clean, then all things are clean to you. As long as your inside is clean, all things will also be made clean because of your cleanness. Jesus very clearly told the Pharisees: the inside is more important than the outside. If the outside is clean but the inside is still filthy, it is useless; but if the inside is clean,

then even the outside will be clean. Next He pronounced three woes upon the Pharisees.

Verse 42: “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.”

The first woe is about the Pharisees’ giving. They paid attention to the matter of tithing, even to the smallest and most trivial things—they meticulously tithed the mint, rue, and all kinds of vegetables. But the real meaning of giving is justice toward people; yet justice and the love of God they passed by. Therefore Jesus pronounced the first woe upon them because their values were inverted. Originally the important thing about giving was that we are willing to love God; because we love God, we are willing to be just and fair toward people—this is the real meaning of giving. In the end, they only paid attention to some small matters and trivial things, such as tithing all kinds of spices, and instead forgot the most basic meaning of giving.

Jesus also said: “These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” In other words, the basic meaning of giving—justice and the love of God—is what ought to be done; as for tithing, it is also not to be left undone. Jesus’ requirement is: there must be the reality of giving in the heart, and correct outward behavior of giving; only then is it according to God’s heart.

Verse 43: “Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.”

This is the second woe. These Pharisees were very self-centered; they liked to receive people’s flattery and praise. Therefore in the synagogue they liked to sit in the best seats in the first row; in the marketplaces they liked people to greet them, as if they were very important people.

Verse 44: “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.”

This is the third woe. In Jewish law, death is unclean, so people stayed away from graves and anything contaminated by death; if they accidentally touched it, they needed to perform the cleansing ceremonial law. But Jesus said: you Pharisees are like graves which are not seen; inside you are full of filth and uncleanness, but outwardly it cannot be seen; inside you are full of the smell of death, but outwardly it cannot be seen, just like those unseen graves. When people pass by you and walk over you, they are influenced by you and corrupted by you, yet they do not know it.

Through the Pharisee’s invitation, Jesus gave the Pharisees a solemn warning: do not pay attention to outward things, pay more attention to your heart. As long as the heart is gained by God, as long as the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart and makes you willing to love people and willing to give alms to people, then all things will become clean.

Let us pray together: Lord, help us. We confess that we more or less all have some Pharisee-like mentality: we often pay attention to outward appearance and often appear pious before people. But You remind us that we need to pay more attention to our heart. Through every prayer of ours, give us the rich Holy Spirit so that we can live in the Holy Spirit; through the leading of the Holy Spirit, live a holy life every day. Keep my life today so that it may be according to Your heart. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.