

Title: ILLUSIONS OF THE PHARISEES, LUKE 11:14 – 12:3.
(Chatham, NJ; 07/18/10, AM) [S-P, Topical]

Theme: The Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers of Jesus' day used ad hominem attacks, sought signs, and distorted the Law, but these things only exhibited hypocrisy.

Purpose: To expose their hypocrisy, and to exhort us not to fall for such illusions of religion and not to engage in any of them.

Introduction:

1. It is well known that the Pharisees were Jesus' archenemies. They sought to destroy him at every turn no matter how legitimate were his miracles and his claims to be the Messiah.
2. Even after the Resurrection they sought to discredit him, Mt. 28:11-15.
3. In this section of Luke we see some of their tactics as well as Jesus' assessment of what they really were. It is no wonder they opposed him, and no wonder he opposed them!
4. Theirs was a false religious life, a front, and their righteousness was nothing but a lie.
5. But let's illustrate with a contemporary liar, and in doing so we will get a more accurate picture of what Jesus was up against.
6. You should get to know the name Saul Alinsky, a man well-known in Chicago politics and among radicals of the political left.
7. First, Alinsky in his book, Rules for Radicals, he makes the following comment: see Horowitz, p. 16.
8. Second, his essential method was to advance radical goals by camouflaging them; change your style to appear to be working within the system. (At least he admitted being a liar.)
9. Third, one biographer illustrates this in Horowitz, p. 42.
10. It becomes abundantly clear that his entire process was to lie; neither he nor those associated with him cared about the truth but only in advancing their radical agenda.
11. I suggest that such is the nature of the Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers. The legalism we usually ascribe to them was the least of their problems. They were liars.
12. That they don't care about what is true can be seen in the following words of Christ.

I. They accuse Jesus of being demon-possessed, Luke 11:15.

A. An ad-hominem attack.

1. When you can't effectively counter an argument, you attack the person.
2. Similar to the criticism that he "eats with sinners."
3. It is meant simply to discredit.
4. Even if it isn't a valid criticism, people may think it is.

B. Ignoring the logical answer.

1. Jesus gives them a perfectly logical answer.
2. First, a kingdom divided against itself falls, 17-18.
3. Second, how do your own sons manage to do this, 19?
4. Third, if by God I do this then the Kingdom has appeared, 20.
5. They refused to accept this conclusion despite the logic of it.
6. They didn't want logic because they didn't want to see the truth.

II. They sought signs, 11:16.

A. To them the burden of proof is on God. He must satisfy their conditions.

1. They discredited the miracles by blaming Jesus for healing on the Sabbath.
2. They ignored the miracles and focused on his offering forgiveness of sins.
3. Only the signs of their own making were sufficient to bring them to faith.
4. This is tantamount to idolatry, which in Old Testament language is simply another lie; it replaces God with one's own image of God.

B. Only one sign: the sign of Jonah, 11:29-32.

1. Here Jesus ignores Jonah's three days and nights in the fish.
2. He concentrates on Israel for unfaithfulness.
3. The queen of the south and the people of Ninevah demonstrated more faith than the chosen people of Israel.

C. Today's sign-seekers.

1. The parallel is about a personal agenda not so much about the signs.
2. The hypocrites and liars of today don't care about justice and truth; they care only about what advances their cause.
3. This makes them children of the first-century hypocrites: they masquerade as people who care but their agenda is paramount.

III. The leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy; beware of it, Luke 12:1.

A. Cleansing the outside, 11:39.

1. This is only partially about the nature of their religion.
2. It goes deeper than that: they are people who lie to themselves.
3. They mask their true intentions: for example, tolerance is not really about tolerance but about others accepting them on their terms; otherwise they would tolerate those who oppose them, and they have no intention of doing that.
4. Jesus counsels them to give those things that are within, in other words, circumcise the heart not just what is visible.

B. Not lifting a finger to help, 46.

1. Tie heavy burdens on others but not lift a finger to help.
2. Sometimes they simply exempt themselves from the burdens.
3. Even with a weak economy the members of the South Carolina legislature voted themselves a pay raise but did so with a ballot process in which they didn't have to reveal their vote.

Conclusion:

1. It is no wonder that Jesus reserved harsh judgment for such phoniness.
2. These people masquerade as angels of light.
3. He ends this section with a warning to the disciples: beware the leaven of the Pharisees.
4. He issues this warning because we are all prone to the self-deception that religious activity is enough to demonstrate genuine love for God and others.
5. We must allow God to change the inside, not merely the outside.
6. To this God calls us and all men. The end result is hope, forgiveness, and eternal life. You won't get there any other way by making a good show of it.
7. Invitation?