

Sermon 86: Self-Deception and God's Grace: Luke 16:14-18

Text: Luke 16:14-18 "And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery..."

Introduction: The chiasmic flow of the passage:

- **An entitled heart: 16:14** "The Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him..."
 - **A life of hypocrisy: 16:15** "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men..."
 - **A gracious invitation: 16:16** "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached..."
 - **A warning of future judgment: 16:17** "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail..."
- **A shameful abuse of authority: 16:18** "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery..."

Summary: Though people masterfully conceal their motives, God knows their hearts and will one day hold them accountable for their actions if they do not repent and believe the gospel.

Proposition: He wants us to be honest with ourselves and turn to Him.

Truth 1: We are masters of concealing our true motives: 16:15 "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men..."

- **Observation 1: The people had complete disdain for Christ's teaching:** "They derided him..."
 - **The word "derided" means to sneer at someone with intense disdain.**
 - **Another example: Luke 23:35** "The rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God..."
 - **These religious men who presented themselves as righteous, God-fearing people had an intense hatred for Christ's teaching that would ultimately culminate in His murder.**

- **Observation 2: Luke commented on the ultimate source of their disdain:** "Who were covetous..."
 - **The word used for covetous comes from a compound word meaning to "love money..."**
 - **It is also used in 1 Timothy 6:10** "The love of money is the root of all evil..."
 - **These men were greedy and despised Christ's teaching regarding stewardship and a love for money.**
- **Observation 3: Their entitled discontentment manifested itself in numerous ways:** "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another..."
 - **The root of covetousness can run in infinite directions: Exodus 20:17** "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife...nor any thing that is thy neighbour's..."
 - Possessions
 - Positions
 - Reputations
 - Spouse
 - **The Pharisees and the Scribes were evil people filled with pride and self-promotion.**
 - **They were actively creating ways to get around God's laws: Matthew 15:2-3** "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"
 - Rules that excused hatred and lust in the heart.
 - Rules that permitted hatred for certain classes of people.
 - Rules to excuse dishonoring elderly, vulnerable parents.
 - Rules to disband their marriage covenants to marry others.
 - **This was not a new problem: Malachi 2:15** "Did not he make one...And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth..."
 - **They ignored scripture's clear teaching on the sacredness of marriage by creating arbitrary rules to give covetous men and way to justify their treacherous behavior.**

Truth 2: God knows our hearts: 16:15 "But God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God..."

- **Observation 1: They had created ways to personally justify their actions and win likeminded friends:**

- **2 Timothy 4:3-4** "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables..."
- **2 Peter 2:1-3** "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you..."
- **Observation 2: They had created ways to get others to celebrate sinful actions:** "That which is highly esteemed among men..."
 - The people of the day commended these teachers.
 - They celebrated their wisdom and piety.
 - They became popular, wealthy, and influential by their teaching.
 - This may also provide explanation for why Christ mentioned this specific issue.
- **Observation 3: God knows their hearts:** "But God knoweth your hearts..."
 - **Matthew 23:27-28** "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity..."
 - **Luke 12:3** "Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops..."
- **What people think is irrelevant:** "Is abomination in the sight of God..."
 - Though people celebrate these leaders.
 - Though they had profited immensely from their teaching.
 - Their abuse of authority and mishandling of God's word that led to numerous injustices.
 - Their actions, motives, and the fruit of their teaching was an abomination to God.

Truth 3: The gospel is our only hope: 16:16-17 "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail..."

- **Observation 1: Based upon the structure of this section, this is the main point.**
- **Observation 2: Scripture presents a unified story, and every piece of that story will come to pass:** “The law and the prophets were until John... it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail...”
 - **Luke 24:25-27** “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself...”
- **Observation 3: The law presents a perfect standard that points us to Christ: Romans 3:19-20** “We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin...”
- **Observation 4: The prophets present the details that provided anticipation and the ability to identify the Savior. Isaiah 53:10-11** “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities...”
- **Observation 5: John pointed people to the Savior: John 1:29** “John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world...”
- **Observation 6: The preaching of the gospel compels people to repent and believe:** “The kingdom of God is preached...”
- **Observation 7: Tragically, many strive to enter the Kingdom through their own labors:** “Every man presseth into it...”
 - **They are literally “striving with all their might to enter into it...”**
 - **This is what their teaches taught them to do: Matthew 23:13** “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in... ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves...”
 - **This was Paul before his conversion: Romans 10:1-4** “My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's

righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth..."

Application:

- **Learn from the tragedy of the Pharisees:**
 - Heart sins manifest themselves in many ways.
 - It does not matter how we feel or what people think about our actions.
 - We cannot hide our heart from Him, though we can hide them from others.
 - Even those who profit from lies will eventually face His justice.
- **Humbly reflect on God's grace.**
 - He pursues us in our rebellion and spiritual blindness.
 - He keeps calling us to repent and believe on Christ.
 - His grace is available even if we are dismissive of that grace.
 - Our salvation is a testimony to His rich mercy toward us in your sin.
 - Every blessing we enjoy is from His kind hand.
- **Turn to Him while you have time.**
 - You do not know what tomorrow holds.
 - Turn to Him today!