

Hard Words: What's on the Inside? Pt.2
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Luke 11:33-44

This morning we continue on from last week. Looking at these words of warning and challenge from Jesus.

We started back in Vs 14 with Jesus healing a man who was mute. Jesus casted out a demon from the man, which started a controversy about Jesus' power. Some claimed that Jesus' power came from the devil.

Jesus claimed to be "the strong man", the one who could defeat evil and all the forces that rebelled against God. Jesus' power and authority was greater than all other powers, and in seeing this everyone should have understood that the kingdom of God was in their midst, even as Jesus was in their midst.

Now hopefully you have your Luke books out, and this morning we are going to begin at Vs 33. Jesus talks about light and our eyes and darkness and seeing.

Vs 34 - "When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. Therefore, be careful lest the light in you be darkness."

Does that remind you of any other passage of scripture?

The one that comes to mind first is from John 1.

In the beginning, the Word was already there. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were made through him. Nothing that has been made was made without him. 4 Life was in him, and that life was the light for all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness. But the darkness has not overcome the light.

6 There was a man sent from God. His name was John. 7 He came to be a witness about that light. He was a witness so that all people might believe.

8 John himself was not the light. He came only as a witness to the light.
9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

“The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.”
And in our passage the true light that gives light to everyone was speaking.

Who is the light of the world? Jesus.

Vs 33 - “No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light.”

Jesus is the light that is on display for all to see, that everyone may have light. He is the true light that gives light to the world.

Jesus continues, “Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, when you see rightly, your whole body is full of light.”

But what happens when you substitute that light, the true light, for another? What happens when an idol, like money, or science, or education, or some human philosophy, something other than Jesus, becomes the light you see the world with?

Jesus says, “then your eye is bad, and your light is darkness.”

The starting point is Jesus, seeing him rightly, understanding him rightly, then everything else finds its proper place. Then your eye is healthy, and your whole body is full of light.

But when you see Jesus, not as what and who He is, but as an agent of demons, as some people in the crowd did, or you see Jesus as a threat to you and your power, as the Pharisees did, then your eye is not seeing properly, and again your light is darkness.

Then our gospel writer tells us that the Pharisees, having dinner with Jesus were astonished that Jesus didn't wash before dinner. There were purification rituals, and Jesus did not keep them to the extent that the Pharisees did. Jesus' outward righteousness did not meet with the standards of the Pharisees.

Jesus criticizes the Pharisees because though they followed the right traditions and rituals, their hearts were filled with greed and love of being respected by others. Jesus has a knack for seeing the truth about hearts.

The Pharisees tithed and kept the Law, the rules given by Moses, but those rules didn't do in their hearts what they were meant to do.

In Vs 42, Jesus says: "But woe to you Pharisee! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."

First, what is a tithe? It is 10% that was to be given first.
Why are we commanded to tithe, to give 10% of all we have?
Why are we commanded to give first of all we have to God?

There are at least two reasons for this command and all the commands given by God.

The first is to show our love of God and our love of neighbour.
We give our tithe because in giving we acknowledge that all we have is a gift from God. God has given us everything and so we give back to God the first and the best of what we have. We give our tithe because that gift provides for worship and for care of our neighbors, especially the most vulnerable in our midst.

I once asked some kids why do we give money to the church and to God? They answered because there were people in need. And that is one part of the answer. We give because God's church, God's mission needs money.

In the early Christian church, everyone brought the money they had so that the Apostles could devote themselves to teaching Jesus' message. And people brought additional gifts to care for the poor, especially the poor widows and orphans, who were in the community.

But what if suddenly the church didn't need any money, and we didn't have any poor people? Do we stop giving? NO. We still need to give.

Greed, making money an idol, trusting our security, investing our status and our worth in our finances is always a great temptation. We need to give.

God knows we need to give. God teaches us to give to God first, 10%. And then God teaches us to give more, to give generously, in love.

The Pharisees had learned to do the mechanics of giving 10% but missed the heart of the teaching of God. That's the problem with just obeying the rules. You can do the mechanics of it but miss the point of loving God with your heart and loving your neighbour as yourself.

Greed and love of power and prestige still filled the hearts of many of the Pharisees, and they neglected the needs of their neighbors. When Jesus confronted them with the truth, their response was to begin a plan to kill him.

Jesus came as the light of the world.

When we start to see him rightly, then His light floods all we do, all we think, how we love, how we give, who we love and how much money we give in generous love.

We learn to trust Jesus' ways of generous love, we dare to give to God first of all we've been given, we learn to tithe and give more.

It is very much like taking up a cross daily and following Jesus because we love him, and we trust Him and his ways that lead to eternal and abundant life today.

Thanks be to God.

Let us pray: Jesus you came to bring light to our lives and to our world. Help us to see you rightly so that we might follow you and trust your ways. God, you know how easily our hearts become greedy and we crave approval and respect. Help us to open our hands and our hearts to you, to give first to you of all we have, generously, in love. Amen.