

No Defense

We continue today to consider the concerns that Jesus had with the religious leaders of His day. And as we do that, we need also to remind ourselves of a precious truth that is always part of the very heart and the real purpose and reason for why the Lord Jesus came to live among us. His mission was a “mission of mercy”. “He came to seek and to save those who are lost”.

But as we're told in the Book of John, as Jesus came to His own people, many of them would not receive Him, especially those in leadership, the Scribes and the Pharisees.

And as we've found here in our study of this Book of Luke, the resistance that Jesus encountered seemed to center around one manner of sin, the sin of “pride”. The “egos” within those religious leaders would not yield for a moment.

And that is so within every human soul. The “ego” within us can be so very demanding and unyielding, a very difficult stumbling block, and especially for anyone who would truly desire to follow after the Lord.

And again, as we study through these words given here in the Book of Luke, these religious leaders, the Scribes and the Pharisees, suffered especially so from the afflictions of “ego”, manifested especially in their refusal to take responsibility for the things that they might do wrong, defending and making excuses for their behaviors and even going on the offensive against the Lord Jesus when He would criticize them for their conduct.

And folks, as I've been saying to us, God puts these words before us in these scriptures so that we can use them as a mirror that we can look into and see ourselves and our own errant behaviors, that yes, we too have an “ego”, and we also seem to have the persistent need to always be making excuses for ourselves, for the things we say and do, always needing to have an answer back for most everything that's being said. Instead of humbly realizing that we aren't always right and righteous in all that we do, and then remaining silent, we instead quickly make excuses, giving a defense for our viewpoints and our behaviors.

And so before we move forward from these words here in Luke chapter 11, I want us to look again into this mirror of God's word, and give one further

consideration to this conversation and these rebukes being given to these religious leaders by the Lord Jesus.

Follow along with me again as I read these words given here in Luke chapter 11. And recall that the Lord Jesus had been pronouncing some very serious criticisms and woes upon these men for their sinful behaviors and for their misguided leadership of the people. And then listen, beginning in verse 45,

⁴⁵Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, "Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also." ⁴⁶And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. (Luke 11:45-46)

And then in verse 52,

⁵²"Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered. (Luke 11:52)

Certain of these well-educated members of the leadership of the Scribes and the Pharisees were called "lawyers" because they had dedicated themselves to knowing every "jot and tittle" of the law. And it was their privilege to advise and to give interpretations of the many requirements of the law. And because of that, they were accustomed to being highly respected by the Jewish people.

But here, Jesus was directing criticisms and rebukes towards them. But why? Why is Jesus' response to them so direct and so strong? It's because although they should have known the real truths of God, they had turned a blind eye to those truths and chose instead to "defend" themselves!

And that is the universal response to sin, beginning with the first sin that man committed and continuing on down to us today. When Adam was caught in his sin, he made an excuse and defended his behaviors, blaming it on his wife, and also, blaming it on God saying, "It was the woman you gave me. She gave me the fruit and I ate it." And then Eve defended herself by saying, "It was the serpent. He beguiled me!"

And that kind of response has continued as the norm for most all of mankind throughout every generation since. Excuse, excuse, excuse, defend, defend, defend. Never seeming to accept accountability for the wrong choices we

make, always making excuses and defending ourselves and making matters even worse than they were to begin with.

And that is one more of the underlying truths that Jesus wants to bring to your and my mind as we read the words of this particular passage.

Again, we need to always remember one very important truth that needs to be applied to these words of scripture. While yes, these particular scriptures tell us of some of the events that took place in the lives of these particular people, God's intent is not merely to inform us of those events. His real intent is for us to peer carefully into the mirror of His Word, and within it, to see ourselves and our own behaviors and our own responses.

And that is what I want you and me to do with these words, to look into the response of this lawyer and to see ourselves and our responses.

Let's go back for a moment and begin by asking, "What is taking place here in this verbal exchange with these men?" It is this . . . these men, these religious leaders, were specially called of God to be trusted "custodians" over the greatest treasure that God had ever given to men, His truths, His perfect Law.

It was their calling and responsibility to be ever so diligent in their study of it, and in their giving out of those deep and difficult truths, applying them first to their own souls and then teaching them to others.

But they were not obeying their call, their responsibilities. They were instead staring straight into the very "light of God", but seeing only darkness. Why? It's because their own hearts were still dark, too dark to accept the light of God.

Much like us as we would walk into the darkness of a dark room and then turn on the light. The light shocks our senses and we immediately close our eyes to avoid the pain.

That is exactly what the Scribes and Pharisees had done for centuries. The light of God was too bright and too powerful for their spiritless senses to bear, so they kept their eyes closed.

And their blindness had led them to this moment of confrontation with Jesus, who then gave them even more of the same difficulty. That's because Jesus

was the “True Light of the World”, hurting the eyes of their spirit and causing them to close their eyes even tighter, preventing them from realizing that standing before them was the One who was the original “Author” of those truths that they had been entrusted with.

But there is also another unwavering truth being demonstrated here in this confrontation, one more truth that these religious leaders could not recognize. And that truth is that even though those men despised Jesus and wanted to kill Him, Jesus still loved them with an everlasting love and He wanted them to turn from their sinful ways.

And His pronouncements of woes were intended as probes to provoke those men to consider their behavior and to consider their personal commitment to God. Because that is where real faith takes place, not in a commitment to ideals and principles, but in a personal relationship and accountability to God.

But Jesus’ questioning befuddled those men, because they were not accustomed to being the ones who were questioned. Yes, they had often debated the salient points of the law with their fellow Pharisees, but that was different. That was debate among equals.

But this questioning was different. This was not debate. And this Man did not address them as an equal. He addressed them as one having authority, both over them and over the very words being spoken.

And His words brought with them a special kind of piercing effect, penetrating all the way down to their very soul. We know that to be so because of the words in Hebrews chapter 4. The words of God have an irresistible power within them, piercing and convicting. Listen.

¹²For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

¹³And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must* give account. (Hebrews 4:12-13)

Jesus Himself was the Divine Eternal “Word” of God, speaking divine eternal words to these Scribes and Pharisees. And the piercing words that came out of His mouth were the “sword of the Holy Spirit”, penetrating deeply into the souls

of those men. But being unable to understand the “Spiritual truths” Jesus was saying to them, and unwilling to turn from their sinful ways and repent, they resorted to the only thing they understood. They did the thing that came “natural” to their natural spirit, they defended themselves. And as their defense, they chose to “go on the offense” by trying to find something wrong with the Lord Jesus!

God tells us about that inability to understand “Spiritual truths” in the words given to us in 1 Corinthians 2. Listen to those words!

14. . . the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Unfortunately, these religious leaders had the minds and hearts of “natural” men and not “spiritual” men. And they could not comprehend the spiritual things Jesus had been doing and the spiritual things He had been saying. And so, they responded to Him in the only way they knew, as “natural” men.

Again, going back to our words a moment ago, understanding that God has intended this exchange with these religious leaders to be for our spiritual edification, what is it then that God has for you and me to gain from His words?

It is this! Too often, even as devout believers, we respond exactly as these men did. When we are called to account for some sinful behavior, instead of humbly receiving the rebukes given to us, our first response is to defend ourselves.

As I consider my own soul and my own responses, I confess, I very often respond in exactly the wrong way. I really do want to always respond rightly, and in my better moments, I might possibly do it right, but not often, and not as I should.

And I find that my response is much like the responses by these Scribes and Pharisees. When another person is being critical of me, my mind immediately begins to think, “but I had a very good reason for saying or doing the thing I did”. And sometimes I even think, “who are they to be critical of me? They have worse faults than me, so they have no right to attack me.”

Yes, folks, we do have Christ as our Savior and are truly saved. And we have God’s Spirit living within us. But that “old carnal nature” that once controlled us just will not leave us alone in those times of testing.

Those three great enemies of our souls, the world, the flesh and the devil are ever and always at work. And because they do what they do, and they do it well, you and I are ever and always being tempted to choose their ways of handling the difficulties that we encounter. And that most always seems to be some form of defense, either making excuses or mounting some form of attack back towards that other person.

But thanks be to God, He has given us the presence and the power of His Holy Spirit, who is always faithful to give us a moment of hesitation, a moment of warning. And it is then, in that moment of hesitation that we can make a choice, a right choice. We need to understand that any excuses or any defense that we make for the sins we commit are not only worthless, they are an offense to God. So, in that moment of hesitation, we need to make a "right choice". And that right choice will always be to humble ourselves and to begin to take the steps of repentance.

Folks, when we stand before Jesus on that great and terrible day of judgment and we try to make excuses and defend ourselves, He will command us to "be silent.

For us, the only response that we should have regarding the sins that we commit is "humility", recognizing that we really have no excuse, no defense for our behavior. We have let our souls revert back to the condition of our old sinful nature, the nature that is described in Jeremiah chapter 17, where we are told that our hearts are desperately wicked and so deceitful that even we ourselves can't know it.

"Humility", the Humility of Christ, truly is the only acceptable response. To admit and to confess that we are wrong and to ask forgiveness from the only one who has the power to forgive, the Lord Jesus.

That is what those Scribes and those Pharisees should have done and that is what you and I must always do.

One more thought as we consider this matter of our defending ourselves and of our making of many excuses. While we might well know that the answer I just gave to us about the Lord Jesus being our only source of forgiveness and refuge, it seems that within the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 7

that we are being warned that we might always, until we breathe our last, have a lingering propensity to get caught up in temptations and sins like those of always trying to make an excuse for our wrong behavior.

But we need to know that just because that sinful nature is still fighting to regain our souls, that does not mean that it can, nor does it mean that we should give in to it.

Sin and the temptations to sin really are only temporary, for a season. And for those of us who have Christ as our Savior, we really are ever and always eternally saved and eternally protected from the wiles of the evil one. And our solution will always remain the same. For us, it is humility and repentance.

On God's side of the equation, the answer and the solution will always be the same. It is Jesus and Jesus alone. Through His death on the cross, He truly has forever and always "set us free from our bondage to sin and self and death". As the Apostle Paul concluded there in Romans 7,

²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:24-25)

This is our answer, our only answer! We never again need to give an excuse or a defense. Jesus has provided the only excuse and the only defense we will ever need.

And He assures us in Romans chapter 8 verse 1,

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1)

Let's pray!