

Luke 11: 37-44

"A Living Sacrifice"

July 6, 2025

1. Intro

2. Luke 11:37-34

- a. *³⁷While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. ³⁸The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. ³⁹And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you. ⁴²But woe to you Pharisees! 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. ⁴³Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."*
- b. Well, if you think back a few months, this is the second time in Luke's Gospel that a Pharisee has invited Jesus into his home for dinner
 - i. The first time was back in Luke chapter 7, when a Pharisee named Simon welcomed Jesus to his table
 1. It was during THAT dinner that an unnamed woman came and cleaned Jesus' feet with her tears and her hair, and then anointed his feet with oil
 - a. Simon the Pharisee was horrified at these events, as he knew that this woman was a "woman of the city" ...
 - i. A sinner who had no place in the home of a Pharisee
 - b. In this encounter, Jesus used the woman as an opportunity to teach the Pharisee about mercy and forgiveness and love
 - i. We weren't told how Simon ended up after this dinner, but it's highly likely that he ended up regretting inviting Jesus to come and eat with him that night
 - ii. My guess is that this Pharisee here in Luke chapter 11 ended up with some very similar regrets
 1. And it didn't take long for things to start taking a bunch of unexpected turns
 - a. I want to remind you that we are STILL in the context of the same day that Jesus cast a demon out of a man
 - i. He had just taught them about the coming sign of Jonah and their need for repentance
 - ii. He had just taught them the importance of keeping their eyes good and healthy, as the lamps that will illuminate their souls
 1. And now Jesus enters the house of this Pharisee, after a day of amazing miracles and teaching
 - iii. And what is the first thing that the Pharisee was astonished by?
 1. He's astonished that Jesus didn't wash his hands before dinner
 - a. Now, it's clear from Jesus' response that the Pharisee wasn't necessarily worried about Jesus having some dirt on his hands
 2. We know this because this was actually the SECOND time Jesus has had to deal with this issue of handwashing
 - a. The first time came in chapter 7 of Mark's Gospel... I'll just read verses 1-5 for you...

- i. *¹Now when the Pharisees gathered to [Jesus], with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, ²they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. ³(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, ⁴and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) ⁵And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?”*
 - b. So, there are two key elements that we learn from Mark 7...
 - i. The first is that the Pharisees were concerned about washing their hands – not because they believed their hands were dirty
 - 1. But because they believed that their hands were DEFILED
 - a. Their hands were SPIRITUALLY unclean
 - b. And therefore, their hands were now unholy
 - i. And of course, if they then use their defiled and unholy hands to eat their dinner
 - ii. Then everything they eat will be unclean
 - iii. And at that point they’d be committing all sorts of sins against God
 - ii. The problem comes with the second principle we learn from Mark 7...
 - 1. And that is – by their own admission, this is NOT a law given by God,
 - a. But instead, it is a “tradition of the elders”
 - i. Mark tells us this in a parenthetical statement in verse 3
 - b. But then the Pharisees and scribes affirm it with their own mouths in verse 5, when they say,
 - i. “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?”
- 3. Now, there were absolutely laws given by God in the Old Testament regarding washing hands that had become spiritually defiled
 - a. But these laws didn’t have to do with coming in from the marketplace
 - i. They had to do with touching dead people or dead animals,
 - ii. Or, from handling the animals that were sacrificed as sin offerings in the Temple
 - 1. And in both of these cases, these laws were specifically given to the priests and the Levites, specifically related to their service in the Temple
 - a. Just a reminder for everyone... the Pharisees WERE NOT priests or Levites
 - b. Nor did they serve within the sacrificial system of the Temple
 - i. And yet, they not only appropriated these laws for themselves...
 - ii. But they then expected EVERYONE ELSE to follow them as well

- b. As the Pharisees so often did, they took a command from God...
 - i. They wrapped it in all sorts of traditions that they themselves made up
 - ii. And then they told the rest of the people...
 - 1. THIS is the new standard
 - 2. And if you do not live up to it, then you are in sin
 - a. Therefore, this Pharisee was astonished that Jesus did not wash his hands before dinner
 - b. How dare he not uphold the traditions of the elders!!
- iv. Well, Jesus knew exactly what was going on here, didn't he?
 - 1. Even though it doesn't say it explicitly, I wouldn't be surprised if Jesus was actually being intentional in not washing his hands in this moment
 - a. Jesus never shied away from exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees when he got the opportunity
 - i. It sure seems like he was making HIS OWN opportunity here
- v. Whether the Pharisee said something to Jesus here, or whether Jesus just knew the man's thoughts...
 - 1. Or whether he could simply see the disgust written all over his face
 - a. Jesus immediately took hold of the conversation and probably made the Pharisee REALLY uncomfortable
 - i. You're worried about your hands being unclean, but you don't even realize that your HEART is full of all sorts of evil
 - 1. Your heart is FULL of greed
 - 2. Your heart is FULL of wickedness
 - a. And you think washing your hands is going to do any good?
 - i. Their thinking is indeed the height of foolishness
 - b. But the Pharisees fall into the same foolish thinking that we so often fall into, don't they
 - i. This is the foolish thinking that forgets that the same God who sees the outside of our body, ALSO sees the insides of our soul
 - 1. For He is the one who made them BOTH!
 - a. This is the same line of foolish thinking that doesn't worry too much about sin when its done in the confines of our home, with no one around to see
 - i. Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?
 - b. This is the same line of foolish thinking that thinks its just fine to be sweet and engaging to someone to their face, but then turn and revile them in our hearts
 - i. Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?
 - c. This is the same line of thinking that leads us to pat ourselves on the back for dropping some money in the offering box, and yet failing to leave here and go and love our enemies
 - i. Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?

- c. The Pharisees get a pretty bad rap in the Gospels... and rightly so
 - i. But if we are willing to be honest with ourselves – and I say this just as much to myself as I do to you...
 - 1. Maybe we aren't as different from the Pharisees as we'd like to think
- c. Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in verses 39 and 40,
 - i. And then he begins to drive his point home in verse 41, as he says to the Pharisee,
 - 1. ⁴⁰"But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you."
 - a. Now, as you all know, the ESV is my preferred translation of the Scriptures
 - i. Not necessarily because I think it is the most accurate of all the translations out there, but more because that is what I've grown used to reading over the years
 - b. But I wonder if maybe the translators lost some of the meaning in verse 40 when they chose to write, "give as ALMS those things that are within"
 - i. ALMS isn't really a word that we use in our language today, is it?
 - 1. We might have in our minds a general idea of generosity when we think of alms
 - a. But in Jesus' day, alms had a very specific meaning
 - 2. We could define it in this way, that an alm is
 - a. "A gift to one who is poor and needy, given from a heart that is full of compassion toward that person's condition"
 - 2. Now that certainly could mean a financial gift to the poor
 - a. Flip over to Luke 12 for a moment...
 - i. We touched briefly on verses 32-34 last week, but it is worth looking at these verses again
 - 1. After Jesus teaches the people not to be anxious or worried about their own food and clothing, he says to them in verse 32,
 - a. ³²Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and GIVE TO THE NEEDY. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
 - i. The ESV does does better here in this passage...
 - ii. The word translated as "give to the needy" is the same word used for "give alms" back in Luke 11
 - ii. This is an amazing response to our own worry and anxiety over money, isn't it?
 - 1. Are you worried about your bills this month, Christian?
 - a. Jesus would say to you, "Fear not, little flock"
 - i. For you have been given A KINGDOM by your Father
 - ii. So go out and be EVEN MORE generous to those who are in need!

- b. Now that is a RADICAL faith in your Father, isn't it?!
 - ii. But we have to return to the definition of alms that I read a moment ago
 - 1. Alms are "A gift to one who is poor and needy, given from a heart that is FULL OF COMPASSION toward that person's condition"
 - a. Again, it is entirely possible for us to give to those who are in need, and yet our hearts are cold and indifferent toward their condition, isn't it?
 - i. It's entirely possible for us to drop our tithes and offerings in the offering box, and yet not really concern ourselves too much about how much of those tithes and offerings are going to the poor and needy
 - 2. Jesus' concern always has and always will be for our hearts
 - a. That's why he says to this Pharisee, "Give as alms those things that are WITHIN, and THEN everything is clean for you"
 - i. The Father DOES NOT CARE if you ceremonially wash your hands before dinner, if your HEART continues to be filled with greed and wickedness
 - 1. It is when your heart is full of COMPASSION that you are then clean in His eyes
 - a. For He who made the outside, ALSO made the inside
 - i. And the INSIDE is what truly matters!
 - iii. Jesus certainly taught that this compassionate almsgiving should look like giving financially to the poor and needy
 - 1. But, as he so often does, Jesus then expands the definition of almsgiving to a MUCH GREATER application than just our money
 - a. And as he does so, he pronounces three "woes" upon the Pharisees
 - i. He'll then shift his attention to the Lawyers in Israel, as he pronounces three more woes upon them
 - 1. But we'll save those three for next Sunday
 - a. Today, we focus on his words to the Pharisee
 - i. May these words also speak to OUR hearts as well
 - iv. So, starting in verse 42 of chapter 11...
- 3. ⁴²"Woe to you Pharisees! 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."
 - a. Now, because we do not live in a primarily agrarian society, these things sometimes sound a little foreign to us
 - i. When we think of a tithe, we immediately think of money, right?
 - 1. We have a garden in our yard that has some mint and other herbs in it, but I have never thought in my head, "Oh, we need to grab a tenth of those herbs and bring them to church on Sunday for our tithe"
 - a. That just doesn't make a whole lot of sense in our culture today
 - ii. But, in a society where most of the people grew much of their own produce, and raised cattle and sheep and goats for meat, tithing from THESE things meant that you were giving from your own means of living
 - 1. The basis for this comes from Leviticus 27:30-32, where Moses writes
 - a. ³⁰Every tithe of the land, whether of THE SEED OF THE LAND [that would include mint and rue and other herbs] or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord. ³¹If a man wishes to redeem some of his tithe, he shall

add a fifth to it. ³²And every tithe of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the Lord.

- iii. So the Pharisees were not wrong in tithing their herbs
 - 1. But where they WERE wrong was in neglecting JUSTICE
 - 2. Where they WERE wrong was in neglecting THE LOVE OF GOD
 - a. So Jesus says to them, you ought to have been tithing your herbs AND giving the alms of justice and love, out of the COMPASSION that came from your heart
 - 3. This is a principle that is found all throughout the Scriptures, but especially in King David's humble and heartfelt words in Psalm 51, verses 16 and 17
 - a. *¹⁶For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. ¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*
- b. Go ahead and turn with me in your Bibles to chapter 5 of the book of Amos
 - i. I know Amos isn't a book that many of us spend much time in, so if you find the Psalms, you'll then flip to the right, going past the major prophets of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel
 - 1. And then go past the book of Daniel a few chapters, and there you will find Amos
 - a. I'll give everyone a moment to get there
 - ii. So, Amos chapter 5...
 - 1. In verses 1-7, Amos is reminding the people of Israel that the location of their worship isn't ultimately what's important
 - a. Don't seek after Bethel and Gilgal and Beersheba... "Seek ME and you will live," says the Father
 - 2. Verses 8 and 9 remind us that we are dealing with the God who created the entire universe, and when His destruction comes, it comes with GREAT power
 - a. But then we pick up Amos' words in verse 10...
 - i. *¹⁰They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth. ¹¹Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. ¹²For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins—you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate. ¹³Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time.*
 - b. So we begin to see here in Amos that Israel wasn't much different in those days than the Pharisees in Jesus' day...
 - i. The people's hearts were full of greed and wickedness
 - 1. The poor were being trampled on
 - a. Justice was being neglected
 - c. Amos goes on in verses 14 and 15...
 - i. *¹⁴Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said. ¹⁵Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*
 - 1. You can just hear the pleading in Amos' voice, can't you?
 - a. There is still time, friends
 - b. There is still time to repent

4. ⁴³"Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces."

- a. And your Father will indeed reward you for your compassion
- 2. Jesus will teach the same thing in Matthew 6:5-15 regarding prayer
- 3. And he will teach the same thing in verses 16-18 regarding fasting
 - a. The Pharisees loved for people to see when they were fasting
 - i. They walked around all sad and gloomy so everyone would be able to see how pious they truly were in their self-sacrifice
 - 1. Just like we saw in Amos, this really isn't anything new though
- ii. Turn now to the book of Isaiah, and we'll look at chapter 58 together
 - 1. In verses 1-5, we again get the picture that the Israelites believed in their minds that they were doing everything right
 - a. They claimed to be seeking the Lord daily
 - b. They claimed to be delighting in drawing near to God
 - c. They said before Him, "Have you not seen our FASTING? Have you not seen our great HUMILITY??"
- iii. But again, just as the Lord said through Amos, He cares not at all for our EXTERNAL acts... He wants our heart!
 - 1. So, starting in verse 6, the Lord says to His people,
 - a. *⁶Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? ⁸Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. ⁹Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, ¹⁰if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. ¹¹And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. ¹²And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.*
 - 2. Is that not a BEAUTIFUL promise?
 - a. How many of us would love to be the foundations of many generations to come?
 - i. How many of us long to be that great great great grandparent that everyone fondly remembers as the one who rebuilt the spiritual foundations of our family...
 - 1. Who repaired the breaches, and made our families into beautifully watered gardens, whose waters do not fail?
 - b. Friends, these things don't come when we boast of our own self-righteousness
 - i. These things don't come when we are chasing after recognition and accolades from others

1. They don't come when we are simply focused on an external righteousness that makes us look really good... compared to our neighbor down the road
3. These promises come when we set all those things aside, and we begin to pour ourselves out for others
 - a. Instead of neglecting justice, we seek to break the yokes of the oppressed
 - i. When we see the hungry, we feed them
 - ii. When we see the homeless, we bring them into our homes
 - iii. When we see the naked, we cover them
 - iv. When we stop shaking our finger at the world and speaking wickedness toward them
 - v. When we look upon the afflicted, and our hearts are filled with COMPASSION
 1. THEN the Lord will look upon us with great delight
 2. THEN He will embrace us and say to us, "Well done, my good and faithful servant!"
4. But woe to you, Pharisees, if what you really want is the best seat in the synagogues, and all the fame and recognition and followers out in the marketplace
 - a. And woe to us as well, if we also chase after these same things as WE also neglect justice and the love of God
- iv. Jesus then pronounces one final woe in verse 44...
5. *44"Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."*
 - a. The Pharisees had all the marks of being the model worshiper of God
 - i. They not only upheld all the laws given by God in the Old Testament (at least in their own minds)...
 1. But they also upheld all the traditions of the elders
 - a. They tithed regularly
 - b. They had the most eloquent prayers out in the streets
 - c. They kept all the different fasts throughout the week
 - d. They sat in the best seats in the synagogues
 - e. They got all the praise and recognition out in the marketplace
 2. They had all the outward signs that their religion was full of life and vitality
 - ii. But Jesus said to them,
 1. "Woe to you, for you are like an unmarked grave"
 - a. Woe to you, for you are truly dead on the inside
 - i. Where there should be a desire for justice in your hearts, there is instead greed
 - ii. Where there should be a love for God, there is instead wickedness
 1. And there is no life within you
 - iii. My friends, we must constantly remind ourselves and remind one another that our calling is NOT to be a good, moral person who checks off all the boxes of an external righteousness
 1. The only thing that leads to is to the graveyard of self-righteousness
 - iv. Our faith is to be a LIVING faith
 1. A faith that wells up from our hearts
 - a. A faith that overflows with compassion and mercy and grace
 - i. A faith that is rooted and grounded in the love of Christ that has been poured out upon us
 - b. We'll close today by looking at Romans chapter 12 together, so go ahead and turn there in your Bible

- i. In Romans 12, verses 1-2, Paul says to EVERYONE who desires to follow after Christ,
 - 1. *¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
 - a. There is a way to worship God that is NOT holy
 - b. There is a way to worship God that is NOT acceptable
 - i. And that is when we come to Him with a dead religion that does not come from the heart
- c. We are to present to God our entire body, our entire life, as a LIVING sacrifice to Him
 - i. It isn't just a one-time climbing upon the altar and making a decision to accept Jesus into our hearts
 - 1. It is a moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day, year by year, offering ourselves to him as LIVING sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God
 - a. So what does this look like, practically speaking?
 - i. Well, a good place to start is in verse 3, as Paul exhorts us to not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to
 - 1. Isn't this the very definition of a Pharisee
 - ii. We start by reminding ourselves that, whatever faith we do have, it has been given to us by God
 - 1. And the best place that faith is to be expressed is within the church, as we each use the gifts that He has given to us...
 - a. That the body of Christ might be strong and healthy and active
 - b. So let your love be genuine
 - c. Abhor what is evil, and hold fast to what is good
 - d. Love one another with brotherly affection
 - e. Outdo one another in showing honor
 - f. Don't be slothful in zeal, but be fervent in spirit, as you serve the Lord
 - g. Rejoice in hope
 - h. Be patient in tribulation
 - i. Be constant in prayer
 - j. Contribute to the needs of the saints
 - k. And seek to show hospitality
 - i. This is what it looks like to be a LIVING sacrifice WITHIN the church
 - ii. But then we see in verse 14 that this faith must then move OUTSIDE of these walls, for we do not live in the church building – we live in the world
 - 1. So when you walk out these doors in just a few minutes, remember that you are called to
 - a. Bless those who persecute you... bless and do not curse them
 - b. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep
 - c. Live in harmony with one another
 - d. Don't be haughty and prideful, but associate with the lowly
 - e. NEVER be wise in your own sight
 - f. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all
 - g. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all
 - h. Beloved, NEVER avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God

- i. Instead, if your enemy is hungry... feed him
 - j. If he is thirsty... give him something to drink
 - k. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good
- iii. Friends, this is what it looks like to offer your bodies as a LIVING sacrifice before the Lord
 - 1. If we call ourselves Christians, yet we WILLFULLY choose to neglect these commands, then we have become like unmarked graves that people walk over, without even knowing it
 - a. It's interesting that all of this comes to the light, when one Pharisee simply became shocked by the fact that Jesus didn't wash his hands before dinner
 - i. May that be a good reminder of how easily we as well can fall into the snares of legalism and self-righteousness
 - 1. When we choose to neglect justice, and when we choose to neglect the love of God