

PRACTICE JUSTICE AND THE LOVE OF GOD

Luke 11:29-54

Key Verse: 11:42

"Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone."

In the last passage, we studied that Jesus healed a mute and deaf man with the finger of God. Moreover, Jesus did his best to win the crooked religious leaders' hearts over to God. Jesus said, "If you believe that I drove out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (11:20). It meant that if you believe in God you will be the members of God's kingdom. In today's passage, Luke records Jesus' deep sorrow toward corrupt religious leaders.

First, Jesus rebukes miracle-seeking people (29-32).

We must remember Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem to become a ransom sacrifice for the sin of the world. But the crowd of people did not leave him alone. Look at verse 29. "As the crowds increased, Jesus said, 'This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.'" Throughout the Bible history, God had given so many miraculous signs to his people so that they might understand the heavenly things or the spiritual things. But people had no idea about the spiritual world. For example, just a few minutes before, Jesus healed a mute man and enabled him to speak. But they completely ignored such a miraculous sign through which one precious human being was able to be normal and could have a promising future. They did not appreciate God's deep compassion for one individual person who was once a mute man. They had no compassion on the man who had been healed. They had no thankful mind toward God who had cared for a mute man. Jesus also cared for them and taught them the way to come to the kingdom of God. But they didn't care about Jesus' healing and preaching. They were only interested in miraculous signs.

Jesus lamented over the religious leaders' sign-seeking mentality and rebuked them in verse 29b. It says, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah."

Why did Jesus say that he can give them only the sign of Jonah? It is because Jonah was a nationalistic prophet when he had to be a universal prophet. As a result, he disobeyed God's word. God wanted to send him to Nineveh, a Gentile nation, to proclaim the kingdom of God so that they might repent their sins and come to God. When God wanted to send him to Nineveh, the largest city of the time, Jonah attempted to escape to Tarshish by boat. On the way to Tarshish, the sea became turbulent and the sailors cast lots to find who was the cause of the turbulence. The lot fell on Jonah. So no sooner had the sailors thrown Jonah into the sea than a big whale swallowed him up before he landed in the water.

Jonah was in the stomach of the whale for three days. He prayed to God earnestly for his rescue. Then God let the whale vomit Jonah on the seashore of Nineveh. He really didn't want to come to proclaim the message of the kingdom of God to the people of Nineveh because he was afraid that the people of Nineveh might repent and not perish. But when Jonah unintentionally proclaimed the message of the kingdom of God, a most unlikely people received the message of the kingdom of God and all came and repented in sackcloth. They received the message of the kingdom of God.

Jesus told them Jonah's story in the hope that the religious leaders of the time might also repent and proclaim the message of the kingdom of God to people. Jesus also said to them that he would speak only the story of Jonah to the religious leaders of the time, for the religious leaders of the time were so wicked. They saw so many miraculous signs but they did not believe. Instead they demanded another miraculous sign again and again. In short, they did not repent. They only wanted to realize their fabulous idealism through Jesus' miracles. For example, once Jesus saw 5,000 hungry people and fed them with five loaves and two fish to their fill. The next day, they came to Jesus again. This time Jesus wanted to tell them about the spiritual bread, not the physical bread. But they didn't want to hear about the spiritual bread. When Jesus claimed that he was the bread of life, some argued that Jesus must be a cannibal (Jn 6:52,53), and all left one by one and two by two until no one was

left except the twelve disciples.

In his deep grief for the religious leaders, Jesus told them a story in the hope of drawing them to the word of God and proclaiming the message of the kingdom of God. At the time of King Solomon, the Queen of the South heard the wisdom of Solomon. She visited King Solomon with a many gifts and asked Solomon all the questions she had in her mind. Solomon answered her questions perfectly. Solomon, in his wisdom, expounded all the terrestrial secrets. He also explained the first cause, harmony, and the mysteries of nature. He also knew innumerable names of fish in the sea. After listening to Solomon, the Queen of the South repented and accepted a universal truth that God made the heavens and the earth and everything in it. Jesus urged them to listen to the message of the kingdom of God as had Jonah. Jesus urged them that they might escape the judgment of God. We thank God that Jesus is so kind, humble and lowly that he could rebuke the religious leaders to repent. Second, miraculous sign-seeking mentality.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:22, "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom...." These two trends of the world brought forth Hebraism and Hellenism. These two trends of world philosophy had been flowing in world history. Both trends brought forth many human ideas. These human ideas became the instruments of wicked men for doing evil. It is because these trends helped people not to obey the absolutes of God. Especially, sign-seeking people's mentality is very wicked. For example, before going into the promised land, God trained the people of Israel in the wilderness with daily bread training. This training was designed to discipline them to eat three meals a day regularly and depend on God only for their future security. The training could have finished in 15 minutes if they overcame their sinful nature and listened to the word of God. But they really liked daily bread from heaven free of charge. They didn't have to work. They had no future security problem. They didn't have to send out many resumes to look for jobs. This daily bread training was very necessary for their spiritual enlightenment and their spiritual leadership for the people living in the promised land. But this bread of heaven made them grow in slave mentality instead of opening their spiritual eyes.

When we look at President Lyndon Johnson, he was desperate for his re-

election. So he passed around 200 kinds of welfare programs in the hope of procuring poor people's votes. As a result, welfare spending rose 25 times, from \$10.6 billion to \$259 billion. Because of the welfare system, the definition of poverty changed in this country.

Nikita Khrushchev, Secretary General of the Soviet Union, really wanted to improve his nation's political climate. Before he rose to power, mass murder and hard labor and oppression had been too severe. When Khrushchev thought about the political climate of the Soviet Union, it was not Marxism, but it was Leninism. He really wanted to practice Marxism so that people might live in peace as well as in a socialist republic. But when he once had a weekend vacation to the Crimea in October 1964, the Presidium voted him out of office and their decision was confirmed by the Central Committee the next day. Nikita Khrushchev's idea to fulfill Marxism in the Soviet Union was good. But it was nothing but a sign-seeking mentality in the climate of the absolute totalitarian Leninist country. People with a sign-seeking mentality do not care about the law of God, they only care about how people see them. As a result, they abandon the law of God. They become lawless people. They are lawless because they do not keep the law of God. As we have experienced, lawlessness is the most fearsome thing to human beings in the world.

Third, Jesus encourages people to have spiritual insight (33-36).

Look at verse 33. "No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light." This verse tells us that we must use the light properly and live in the light, not in the darkness. Look at verse 34. "Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness." In this verse, the light is compared to the light of men. If one cannot see with his eyes, he is full of darkness and he cannot see anything. So Jesus warned in verse 35. It says, "See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness." This allegorical verse is very simple. If we have no spiritual insight to see man and the world, we are in the darkness. On the other hand, if we study the Bible and receive spiritual insight to see man and the world, we are full of light (36). And we can see what's going on in the world with our spiritual insight. We can see how we should help the flock of God in our generation.

Fourth, Jesus rebukes corrupt religious leaders (37-54).

The religious leaders of the time were of two kinds. The first was the Pharisees. The second was the Sadducees. The Pharisees were ritualistic in worshiping God, and political in helping people. The Sadducees did not care for people. They wanted money and fame and the position of the high priestly office down through the generations. In view of Bible history, they were chosen people. But in the time of Jesus they were so corrupt that they did not deserve Jesus' rebuking. If Jesus abandoned them like garbage, it would be very proper treatment for them. But Jesus cried sorrowfully and urged them to repent their sins and come back to God so as to take care of God's flock of sheep.

- Jesus rebukes them to practice justice and the love of God. They were experts of ritualism in worshiping God. But they ignored the holiness of God, that is, the justice of God. They also ignored the love of God. So Jesus rebukes them not to neglect justice and the love of God (42).
- The servant of God must be humble and lowly like Jesus. The servant of God must be a wonderful friend like Jesus. But the Pharisees only wanted important seats in the synagogue and people's admiration in the marketplace. So Jesus rebukes them, "Be humble and lowly" (43). Jesus rebukes them because they are whitewashed tombs (Mt 23:27b). Outside was beautiful. But inside was full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. Jesus rebukes them so that they would repent of their corruption due to greediness (44). In addition, they were as proud as they could be.
- Jesus also rebukes the experts in the law. While Jesus was rebuking the Pharisees, they felt that Jesus was insulting them, too. Then Jesus began to rebuke them, saying that they spoke well and interpreted the law of God very well. But they abused their authority and loaded people down with burdens. And they did not lift one finger to help them (45-46).
- Jesus rebukes the religious leaders that they had killed so many prophets. Historically, the wicked religious leaders killed the prophets. After killing them, they had beautiful funeral services and made for them very beautiful tombs.

Jesus rebukes them that they are responsible for the blood of all prophets from Abel to Zechariah. Good prophets taught the law of God and rebuked the leaders of nations and they especially rebuked the religious leaders of God's chosen people. It is surprising that Jesus did not rebuke politicians of the times, but the religious leaders. Jesus thinks that the corruption of the religious leaders is the cause of miseries of his people.

- Jesus rebukes experts in the law because they interpret the law of God pragmatically. They took away the righteousness of God and the love of God and the sacrificial lives of God's people. In this way, they led people not to keep the law of God. They did not have hope in the kingdom of God. They wanted to live in this world permanently. When they did not keep the law of God, they could not enter the kingdom of God. More, they took away the key of the kingdom of God from people. They were like Christian dispensationalists of these days.

We must live by the law of God. May God help us to do so.