

Luke 11: 45-53; II Chronicles 24:20-22; Woe and Warning #2; I. 1st Woe- to the Load Makers II. 2nd Woe- to the Truth Killers III. 3rd Woe- to the Way Blockers

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we saw last week- the woes of Jesus are like a siren or warning light.

Like the warning of our day- the warnings of Jesus do not go off once but repeatedly! The dire situation of the religious leaders of that day receive a repeated confrontation. Now the Pharisees were the moral code enforcers of that day- and they were rebuked last week. This week Jesus rebukes the Lawyers- also called the Scribes. The Lawyers were the legal code writers- putting down on paper what the human, religious traditions would be. The word Lawyer is built on the word for Law- Namos. They were skilled in the law- but that law was the law of men as an extension and application of the Law of God. So the Scribes and the Pharisees were in agreement- one writing and the other enforcing the human traditions of that day. To be clear, Jesus was not rejecting the Law of God. As he said in v. 42- that you ought to have done. He was not rejecting the Law of the tithe- the neglecting of God's moral Law is not His point. Rather, He is rebuking the externalizing of that Law and the addition of the traditions of man to that Law. It is this proud, self- righteous attitude of the Lawyers that Jesus exposes today as well. So today we see that Jesus rebukes those who stand in the way of the truth.

I. 1st Woe- to the Load Makers

After the 3-fold woe and rebuke of the Pharisees as we saw last week, the Lawyers begin to get uncomfortable. Since the Scribes and the Pharisees embraced and enforced the same human tradition, the Scribes were also feeling the pinch and the sting. You are insulting us as well- they say in v. 45. So Jesus makes it abundantly clear- woe to you lawyers also! Let there be no confusion- you are included this as well! Woe to you, for you load people with burdens. Jesus is speaking about the extra- biblical laws of man- these human traditions that were included in the Mishnah. There were some 6000 laws added to the Law of God- which dictated everything from washing, eating, cleaning, working and wearing. You had to wash a certain way- which we find out about back in v. 38. Getting the wrists wet first and then letting the water run down to your elbows. You could only carry something as heavy as a dried fig on the Sabbath- or else you were carrying a burden and thus breaking the law. These burdens were like the heavy freight placed on a ship- making their lives difficult. They were grievous

burden- heavy and making their lives hard. Trying to keep all these laws in mind- to avoid the judging glances and rebukes of the Pharisees. Like Pharaoh in Egypt- seeing the Israelites struggle and groan under their burdens- only to make their loads heavier. Instead of trying to make things better- they would not even touch the burdens they placed on others- v. 46. They would do nothing to help- giving no rest. Literally refusing to touch the burdens with their fingers. They offered no grace or mercy- they had no good news- only more laws! It would be like seeing a man trapped under a heavy log- only to throw another log on top and walk away! Or like seeing a man beaten and lying on the side of the road- only to ignore and pass by on the other side of the road. But that was never the purpose of God's law- and Jesus had come to set them straight! As He says Mt. 11:30 – my yoke is easy and my burden is light! Come to me if you are weary and heavy laden- and I will give you rest! Jesus came to rescue His people from the heavy burden of human laws and the traditions of man. Liberating us from the constant failure of never measuring us- freeing us from the burden and setting us free from the chains of a man centered works righteousness! Not only did He perfectly keep God's law for us- in our place. He also stripped away all these human laws and perfectly applied God's law to His people on the Sermon on the Mount.

II. 2nd Woe- to the Truth Killers

But Jesus has more to say- in v. 47 He says- woe to you who kill the those who tell the truth and persecute the prophet of the LORD. In this woe, Jesus draws a connection between the Lawyers and the actions of their forefathers. Throughout the OT history, there is theme illustrated in Mt. 21. The parable of the wicked Tenants- where God sends prophets to the vineyard but the managers despised, mistreat and even kill the prophets. It history bears this out – as summarized in v. 51- from Abel to Zechariah. As you remember, Abel was the first martyr. Killed in Genesis 4 for being righteous and true. And we read earlier about Zechariah- killed in II Chronicles 24. Remember that the Hebrew Bible concludes or actually begins with the book of II Chronicles- thus we have a prophet killed in the beginning and at the end of the OT Scriptures. This is called an inclusio- two killings that form the bookends. Thus the OT is summarized as a history of Israel rejecting and killing God's prophets. Now these Lawyers were doing the same thing. How? By building monuments in v. 47- building tombs for those whom their fathers had killed. By building monuments, they were testifying to the fact that they are

their father's children- being a witness to the death of the prophets. They also were giving their consent- agreeing with the actions of their fathers because they continued to reject the words which the prophets had spoken! They could even be seen as celebrating the death of the prophets because they build elaborate tombs to commemorate the death of those who spoke the truth! Just as Saul would give his approval to the killing of Stephan in Acts 7- these men gave their assent to the death of the prophets while still rejecting the warning given by the prophets! They were making a good appearance- we are celebrating the Prophets the people would say- but inside they still hated the words that these holy men spoke. And even to that day- they were still rejecting the Word of God! They had no place for John the Baptist- refusing his words. And now the perfect Prophet Jesus was standing before them. Even now they were conniving- look how they would respond to Jesus in v. 53-54. Trying to catch Jesus- they would provoke and lay in wait to trip Him up. They were as v. 49 says- rejecting the Wisdom of God! This wisdom- the truth of God- was heard from the mouth of the prophets. But now Jesus who is- as I Cor. 1:24 says- the wisdom and power of God was standing before them. But they had no place for the truth in their hearts- choosing their own laws and ways while rejecting the gospel of grace! In many ways, their actions were similar to those of the Roman church during the Middle Ages. Building monuments and cathedrals for the Apostles- while rejecting the message of the gospel spoken by those Apostles. Added to this, Rome forbid the gospel to be proclaimed in the common tongue- they were also standing in the way of the truth.

III. 3rd Woe- to the Way Blockers

The third woe of Jesus directed towards the Lawyers is found in v. 52- Woe to you who stand in the way so that others cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Not only would these men refuse to believe- they were persecuting those who tried to follow Jesus! Their teaching not only making it hard to live- but in reality they were opposing the gospel all together! They had taken away the key of knowledge. Now this key of knowledge is the power to discern the truth- knowledge here is "gnosis"- and the key to rightly know and receive this wisdom- to know what is right and true. The word Key is also used in Mt. 16 where Jesus speaks of the Keys of the Kingdom- these keys are given to the apostles and are handed down to the church today. But what key were the lawyers missing? Well, children, do you know what a map key or legend is? The Key helps you understand. Keys

also grant entrance- they open and shut doors. The Lawyers were missing the key- or had taken this key of knowledge from the people. By distorting the truth- they had confused the way unto salvation. By turning the Law into a burden and adding their human traditions they had blocked the way of salvation. The key to heaven is the gospel which they rejected. The key to understanding the OT is Jesus- whom they denied! As John 5:39 says, you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; but it is these scriptures that bear witness to me! If you reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, you can never rightly understand nor apply the Bible! He is the key- by His works all the riches of God are unlocked for us! By His wisdom and Spirit the teaching of the Bible becomes clear! As Eph. 2 says, by grace we are saved through faith- not of ourselves so that no one can boast! Or Rom. 3:21 which says- the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law- although the law and the Prophets bear witness to it- the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. It was this vital truth- this cornerstone that the Lawyers failed to grasp and battled against! They made impossible the way in which Jesus has now already accomplished- the way of salvation! And they hindered others from coming into the Kingdom by their false application of the law. Instead of leading them to Christ, they were driving others away! But as Jesus said- Let the little children come to me and hinder them not! For to such as these belongs the Kingdom of God!

To conclude, both the Pharisees and the Lawyers were guilty of a proud, self-righteous rebellion. Instead of embracing the truth they rallied against Him! So Jesus rebukes those who stand in the way of the truth- because it would be better to be drowned in the sea than to cause one of these little ones to stumble and stray! The repeated warning emphasises that destruction is at hand- unless you repent and believe you will not be saved! May we all be clear in what the key of the Bible is- who the Wisdom of God is! Studying the Bible does not make you wise unless you have Jesus in your heart! The Christian life is not one of heavy burdens and confusing laws- but of liberty, joy and thankful obedience! As Gal. 6:2 says- bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ! Love God above all and your neighbor as yourself- because you have been made alive together with Christ Jesus!