

When The World Gets In The Way - Part 1

Worldly Religion & Godly Priorities

Luke 14:1-6

Well if you happen to be into high end art you may be familiar with the Los Angeles Art Association, near its headquarters on North La Cienega up there in LA there are a lot of very arty places up there. In the shadow of it, I mean you'd think it would be a place where you'd have a lot of art lovers opening up galleries, there is a place just south of the Los Angeles Art Association headquarters called the Chateau Allegre, it's so West Hollywood. And it's filled with all kinds of art. Now you can walk into that place for years and talk with the owner, she was a gal whose been in the business for forty years, she knows all about art, she can appraise art, you could talk art all day long with this gal. But informed people don't do that anymore since they read about her in the LA Times, which said that she sold what she claimed was a 5 million dollar Picasso to a gal in LA for 2 million dollars. Must have ran like a coupon in the PennySaver, she should have known this was quite a deal. It was a deal except it wasn't a deal because it was a fraud. She had hired an art student, paid him a thousand dollars to replicate this famous Picasso painting and passed it off as a 5 million dollar work and sold it for 2 million dollars and then that's when the FBI eventually got involved and she was exposed. (02:01)

I mean you'd think you could walk into this swanky La Cienega West Hollywood gallery, it looks like, it sounds like, it smells like a legitimate art gallery with legitimate art purveyors in it but you wouldn't think you'd get bamboozled and hoodwinked by this person but that's exactly what happens. She can say she loves art all day long but really you can tell by her actions she loves herself a whole lot more, and loves her pocketbook. I mean that is what she ended up proving she's all about. (02:32)

Which by the way that's a good principal not just when you're dealing with fine art but when you're dealing with religion. When you're dealing with people that say they're purveyors of the truth of God, when you're trying to make some sort of spiritual transaction in places where frankly God has designed it for us to need the kind of council, help, teaching and instruction that you have from people that claim to know God, claim to know God's truth, I mean you've got to make sure that these people that claim to love God, really don't love themselves more because our world is filled with spiritual deception and religious counterfeits. And I know we'd like to think, you know, if you wear the Jesus jersey you're on my team, but in reality you'd better have discernment in our world and it's always been that way. It's not a 21st century problem although it is a great problem, it's was a 1st century problem and if you were a fisherman or a tax collector or a physician and you were looking to try and do some kind of transaction with God and you wanted information about God the go to guys in the 1st century were a group of guys called the Pharisees, now I know you know them, and I know you know sneer because by the time you're in 2nd grade you saw the flannel-graph Sunday School stories, your teachers threw them under the bus, these are the bad guys, but before you get so simplistic in your thinking about the Pharisees that, oh, the bad guys have entered the scene. Just know that these were the guys in the 1st century who knew the word of God. (03:53)

They've been educated, they could quote it, they could teach it, they could explain it, they were fully familiar with it and they sat as Jesus said in the seat of Moses in these synagogues and they taught it and Jesus didn't say, "Oh, go to another place and get taught." No, he said when they sit in the seat of Moses and they teach you, listen and do what they say. I mean these guys were the respected theological pastoral leaders of the day. Now why is it that we teach in our flannel-graph 2nd grade classroom stories that the Pharisees were bad guys, why do we do that? Well because we know we've read the New Testament. Jesus comes on the scene and shines light on them like an x-ray machine and exposes them for who they are. And what is that? They're frauds, they don't love God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind. They love themselves and that was his constant exposure. And he says you know what? You've got to listen to what they saying because they are teaching you the word but you better not follow their example because if they make a convert of their lives the converts are twice as much a son of hell as they are. (04:56)

These guys are going to lead you to hell. They guys will lead you astray. Now we learn that from the teaching of Christ and we see it in passages like one we've come to and what we need to learn from a passage like the one we've come to in Luke chapter 14 verses 1 through 6 is that what's going on in this passage we should leave this

text with a heightened discernment as uncomfortable and kind of as unpopular as it is for us as Christians to be discerning Christians looking at people that may name the name of Christ and saying wait a minute not everybody who claims the name of Christ is teaching me the right way about God. We need to come away with a discernment not only to know that group, shouldn't be a part of that and that may become council for you with friends, neighbors and family members because you may say I'm here, I'm at Compass Bible Church, I'm about this church and this doctrine and that's great but as I said in the 1st century Jesus didn't tell these guys to go to a different synagogue he said you've got to listen here. But here's the problem, don't let the problems of the Pharisees creep into your own heart and I've got to say this you can stay in good Bible teaching churches your whole life and still have the problem that we're about to expose in Luke chapter 14. (06:01)

So, it's not just you being equipped by a passage like this to know that you should say to someone, "Well these symptoms are in place in that group, don't go join that group." It's about you sitting in a good church and saying I want to make sure those things don't creep into my heart. So, let's look at this passage and see the clear contrast between the Pharisees and Christ, which I know you expect, you learn that in the second grade but let's at least try and say, what can we learn that can help us discern, not only for the good of our counsel but for the good of our own heart so that we act more like Jesus and less like the Pharisees. (06:37)

Verse number 1, we'll look at six verses, Luke chapter 14, follow along as I read it for you. One Sabbath, the scripture says, when he – that is Christ – went to dine at the house of a – now this is a good word to underline, highlight, bracket – a ruler of the Pharisees, now that's an important distinction. This isn't just a rank and file Pharisee, these are the top dogs, the leaders, matters of fact this word a lot of people think well clearly it's the kind of word you would use for someone on the supreme court of the religious Jews, the Sanhedrin, maybe this is one of the council sitting Pharisees, we don't know, we don't even know where this is but we know this was a big time, high ranking, lots of stripes on his arm kind of spiritual leader. And then look at this, strangely enough, they were watching him carefully. Translation of a phrase that gives you this sense that they were kind of surveying him. This isn't just, "Hey, you know, did he have an extra scoop of falafel?" You know, it was like they're watching. Now we have in other passages clearly, we know with more explanation they were watching him so as to catch him in some wrong doing and clearly the passage makes that this is the case. So, we assume there's a trap being set for him and sure enough the language starts to expose that, that clearly is the preponderance of what we should come away with in this passage. That they set up this dinner after church if you will and they're sitting around having dinner and they're watching him and behold, here's an interesting verbiage, like here, wow and then BAM, here comes a man before him who had dropsy. (08:05)

Now I'll bet 100 bucks you didn't use the word dropsy in any normal conversations this week, am I right? What is dropsy? He keeps dropping things? A dropping disease? What is that? Well, I'm glad you asked. Edema if you go to the doctor and you hear that word, that may be a word that's a little more common to our lexical use and our day. I mean you look it up and you find, well it's not a disease at all, it's really a symptom. So, he's describing a man with a symptom and the symptom is if you want to explain edema. Edema is something when you sprain your ankle, your ankle gets big. I mean at least that's a small example of edema. You have a buildup of fluids in your body but it's not real classic edema. The real kind of examples of severe edema that gives you the sense that there's a severe problem because it's a symptom of a problem not the problem itself, is the kind of buildup of fluids in your body and it can be in a lot of places. If you take up our free WiFi and look up on Google right now and try to find some kind of image search on edema, you'll find in some cases it comes distorting grotesque as parts of your body distend and swell. You can put your finger on people skin and pull it away and there's a dent there for a while as the fluids kind of seep back, it's gross. And you can see if it's in the legs or extremities and our passage doesn't tell us where it was. You can see someone with a normal leg and then the other leg has edema and it's like elephantiasis, remember that phrase? Have you ever looked that one up? I mean, not before lunch, but just gross, huge, sometimes it's in the thoracic cavity, in your body, it can be in various parts of your body, it's really a symptom, it can be a massive liver disease, it can be caused by, every time there's congestive heart failure there's expressions of this in various parts of the body. Now it might be a severe infection of some kind that's causing this reaction in the body. It could be a blood clot in an extremity that might start to cause this. Whatever it is, it's not just a little swelling in his elbow. This was something, that even the word, behold, he walks in and here's a somewhat disfigured person. And you know how they dressed, right? You've seen those from the flannel graph, I mean, they've got these robes on. This was something so bad you could see it, everyone could see it and he was disfigured and it was one if you see him you go, "Oh, poor guy, ahh." And there he is, with dropsy. (10:25)

Here's another thing that shows that this is a show down, verse 3, and Jesus, what's the next word? Responded. They didn't ask anything, they didn't say anything. No, no, but they threw him in a situation, put this ill man in front of him, he's disfigured and so he's going to respond to that. And he response with a question to the lawyers, the teachers of the law, and the Pharisees, and here's what he said. He asks the question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" Now he knew that's what they're setting him up for. Right, is he going to heal on the Sabbath? They did this two or three times already in the Gospel of Luke, and we know he's making religious leaders mad. Pharisees, Scribes have been involved, watching and they're angry that he's breaking the Sabbath. Which of course he's not, we've talked about that in the past, he's not breaking the Sabbath, and he's certainly isn't breaking a sweat, that's for sure, when he's touching people and healing them or speaking a word and healing them. I mean clearly this isn't work, not to mention, how do we even fit this into a category of whether it's allowed or not. How can the Rabbis even weigh in on this? You don't have people walking around speaking words and healing people. It's not like, oh yes, Bob did that and we got him in trouble for it too because he was working. This is not the time of Elijah and Elisha, right it's been hundreds of years since we've seen stuff like this happening in Israel. (11:40)

So, he says, "Listen, let's just think about this." Healing that doesn't normally happen, I mean it hasn't happened in anybody's lifetime in the room as he sits there and talks about these people. Is it wrong for me to heal this guy? Now if you think about it long enough, I wish we had time to think about every nuance of this passage, you can start thinking what if they answered yes, what if they answered no, whatever that's a great question to ask him, but they decided to decline on answering. They remained silent, verse 4. Then he, Christ, took him, the man with edema, and he healed him and sent him away. It's like he was the guinea pig, set up there like a pawn, what's he going to do? He touches him, takes hold of him, heals him and then says, "Okay, you're done, go. Now I'm going to talk to these guys." And by the way for those of us who are so use to watching the charlatans on TV "heal" people and they have a tumor that you can't see or a headache or something. This is not like that at all. I told you if you're in a robe, this is such a disfiguring kind of symptom of some kind of problem that's not even identified by Doctor Luke but it is something so severe that you've got parts of your body distended and swollen and Jesus grabs this guy and BAM, where's all that stuff go? Now think on a cellular level. This is not like all of a sudden he starts on a path to healing. This is not, if you know my terminology, a GT2, it's not a God thing 2, it's not a second-class category providential miracle that works within the laws of nature. It is a GT1, it is a God thing 1. It is a miracle of the first order when God breaks natural law because here are fluids that don't belong outside of their proper abode, shouldn't be there in their limbs – let's just say it's in a leg – and it should be that way. And instantly he touches it and then it goes whoop, it's like a cartoon. Bam, I mean that's an amazing act of divine power where God, just like he did at creation, speaks a word and things that didn't exist because He's the creator of all things, can speak and change cellular realities at an atomic level with the word of his power. (13:51)

Jesus shows his credentials. Now again, if you've been through Luke with me, we've looked at passages like this, we've dealt with Sabbath issues. I've regulated that to the reading list on the back or sermons in the past. We've dealt with credential issues of his Messiahship, let's deal with this, which I think in its context is really the lesson we're supposed to take away from this and that is exposing the Pharisees for the frauds that they were. (14:16)

Keep reading the rest. And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox, that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, you're all uptight about your traditions on the Sabbath day, well not immediately pull him out?" I bet you would, you'd do that for your kid, you'd even do it for your animal, you'd do that. Now that question clearly condemned these guys, for taking a man who had such extreme symptoms of something that related to some kind of serious problem that threatened his life. Who knows how much longer this guy would have lived in the state that he was in and you now are going to condemn me for helping this guy on the wrong day of the week, when you would reach out and save your own ox out of a pit or a ditch or a well. You guys are hypocrites. You guys are on the other side of the tracks when it comes to what we're doing. What I'm doing, what you're doing, two different things. I know both people are looked at, the ruling Pharisee and Jesus, if we wanted a go to guy to learn about God and how to get right with God both of those guys would be on the menu. But it may look like we're both going to lead people to God but we are radically different orbits here, two different worlds. (15:29)

I want to make sure I know this sounds like second grade Sunday school but I want to make sure I'm living on the side of Christ here and I'm not reflecting anything the Pharisees were reflecting when he said that they couldn't reply. He shut them up. Nothing they could say. Lunch ended early. Right? That was it. (15:48)

What do we learn from this? Quick historical narrative, let's step back and learn something about the difference



between the Pharisees and Christ. Let's start with the Pharisees and let's see what their problem was. I'm going to give you a label here, if you're taking notes and I wish that you would, number 1 on your outline. Let us beware of worldly religion. (16:08)

1. Beware of Worldly Religion

Let's write that down. Let's beware of worldly religion. Jot that down for me and then let's think about what I'm saying. I am now accusing the Pharisees of having worldly religion. And before you say, "Oh, cool Mike, peace out, we're not into religion man, we're into Jesus, we're into relationship." Stop, okay, that worked in the sixth grade but you're all adults here, right? Religion is not a bad word. Oh, no, it's not a bad word. It's used 6 times in the New Testament translating into our language religion. It's not a bad word at all. Matter of fact, religion reflects my commitment if you go back to the way it translates from Greek into English, into the bond that I have in expressing my devotion and my worship to the transcendent God. I mean it's a good word. Just because some rapper on YouTube told you that it's not religion it's relationship. And you think that works, it doesn't work. It doesn't work. (17:04)

Now, I mean I don't want to scold you for that but I do want to say listen let's just know that the scripture the adjectives that relate to the word religion are the problem. I mean let me give you two passages that if you're a copious note taker let's start with this one James chapter 2. Here is the problem is that people don't know when God puts the word religion on the pages of scripture sometimes he says it's good, our devotion and commitment to the God of the universe is good. And here's how he describes it as pure and undefiled. There's a religion he wants us to have and not be afraid to say. If someone says, "Are you religious" on an airplane, you're traveling this week, you could say, "Yes I am. I'm all about the pure and undefiled religion of the Bible." There's nothing wrong with that sentence even though the hip-hoppers won't think that's a cool thing if they're a Christian Artist or whatever. They think it's bad. It's not bad, it's a good thing. Not that I can salvage this word in one sermon but I just want to at least be a good teacher to you this morning and say, "Nothing wrong with that word." (17:57)

The problem is the kind that's described, jot this one down now if you would, in Colossians chapter 2 verse 23. It says it's another kind of "religion" it seems like a bond and a worship and a devotion to the transcendent God where humans are connected to this God. That is, here's what it's called, here's how it translates, a self-made religion. He says in that context it has an appearance of wisdom but it really is a self-made religion. Now I'm going to take the word self-made and for the sake of our series I'm going to say what we're talking about here to use a biblical category, we're talking about something that is worldly, worldly religion. When it comes to, and I should say this because some say, "Well, it seems like religious people are on the right track and it's the atheists and agnostics and the non-religious that are on the wrong track." If you're really tracking the sociological trends and America is becoming increasingly non-religious. You'll say, "Those are the bad guys but the religious people those are the good guys." Just know this, even in our day when we're trying to be so scientific and so modern and so post-modern that we're not religious any more, everyone is religious. We are religious because even the atheist because I was reading on some websites this week, and the naturalists, the purists, people that try to explain everything in human terms are always trying to reach to the transcendent and their own well-being after death. I've quoted these stats to you before, and I've had the statistical studies and the footnotes and all the rest but when you really pull the Agnostic and the Atheists more than half of them are praying. They're praying to what, to who? They ask for help from some transcendent something. They believe in the afterlife, they hope in heaven. There was a whole series of articles this week that were noted by some social commentators about how these naturalists continue to say, "Well, we don't believe in the God of the Bible and we don't believe in hell, but we certainly believe there is an after-life and there's hope in something more to me than just the cells in my body." And that's a religious kind of reaching beyond to the transcendent that everyone is. (19:58)

And even though I think that stats in America are probably a relatively high if not supremely high mark right now when it comes to Atheism, real Atheism, which is nothing more than living a contradictory state of mind and worldview. It isn't going to do much better than it is right now. You can say you're an Atheist all day long but it's never gotten out of double digits in our country. Why? Because we're innately religious. We want there to be more than this life because why? According to the Bible He's designed us to reflect who he is, to put it in the terms of Ecclesiastes, He has set eternity in our hearts. And people are going to cry out to the thing that we're made for and that is for God. We just don't want the God of the Bible. So, what we like is self-made religion. That's why there's so many religious options. That's why I'm saying, "Hey, when it comes down to it, there's counterfeits." And you

know what? The Pharisees were counterfeit frauds and a lot of what they taught, not what they read from the scripture in the seat of Moses, but what they taught was fraudulent and it would lead people to hell. Now we've got a world like that too, and I know you'd like to say, "Hey, if you're pro-Jesus, I'm on your team." Right, you meet a guy at the airport, he says, "Oh yeah, I love God." "Oh, great, man, high-five, we're brothers." Super careful, got to be super careful. I don't want to be that persnickety, you know, discerning judgmental person. Listen, if you're not going to be discerning about this, you're going to start to affirm groups of people just because they have the Jesus jersey on, that will then take people in your surrounding life that might say, "Well than, that's okay for me." And I've seen people as recently as last night tell me because of their approval of things they were not discerning about now family members are involved and they recognize this is leading them to hell. And you got to be super careful about what you approve. I'm not trying to turn you into some kind of persnickety kind of judgmental person to use the world's language but I do want you to recognize that just because they're wearing the Jesus jersey and they say they love God doesn't mean it's right. (21:52)

Jesus said about these Pharisees when they make a convert they make them twice as much a son of hell as themselves. Now I don't think you want to risk that for your friends loved ones and family members. So, we need to be careful. We need to realize what's going on when it comes to worldly religion. Now I wish I had time for all that I want to tell you but let me at least jump you into one passage that I think is important. 1 John chapter 5 and 1 John chapter 2. If I'm going to try to build a case which I do think will be a theme that we deal with throughout this series and that is the concept of worldliness from a biblical definition, we need to look at passages that will help us define it. What does the Bible mean when it says worldly? Because if you say, "Are you of the world? Well of course we're of the world, I made with material stuff, I was born of the world, I live in the world, I eat stuff in the world, I relate in the world, but I'm not if you're going to use the biblical category, so let's define the biblical category by going to the last paragraph of the book of 1 John. (22:41)

Call that passage up, turn to that passage, let's look at it beginning in verse 19. Here's a passage that will help us understand that when it comes to people, I don't care what you're labels, I don't care what your religious label is, I don't care if you call yourselves secular, agnostic, devoted, religious, Christ-like you fall into one of two categories and the Bible just bifurcates all of the whole world into two groups. Here it comes, verse 19, we know – here's the first group – that we, people that he's talking to, the Christians, are here's the first phrase, from God. Now I know it's kind of theoretical, philosophical, clearly theological. But when it comes to one group of people, they are from God. That is kind of the philosophical way to talk about it, these are people of God. They are related to God, they're from God, they're as it's put in other places, poetically, they were born of above. They're heavenly as 1 Corinthians says. They of another dimension, they are as Paul says in Philippians, citizens of heaven. They're of God, they're from God. (23:40)

And the – here's the rest of the world now – the whole world, now that's the other category, if you're not from God you're part of the world. The whole world, everyone else, doesn't matter what your religious label is, it lies in the power of the evil one. So, you've got people from God, clearly reigned and ruled by God, and you've got everyone else. That includes secular, that includes religious, that includes devoted, that includes monks, that includes all kinds of people if they're not from God they're in the other category which the Bible calls, the world. (24:07)

Verse 20, and we know that the Son of God has come and given us, here's the first thing now to describe these people from God, understanding. They have an understanding that people of the world do not have. There's something here that is made right and understanding granted by God and what that understanding does, it allows this – purpose clause – so that we may, next two words that describe it, know him. So, people of God, they're from God, they're of God, they belong to God, they've been granted understanding and that understanding opens up relationship. So, if you really like that word there it is, to know Him, a relationship with God. Who is, this is important, true. So, the true God, he's granted to us through him, Christ, the Son, and it goes on to say that we're so connected to him that it is described as Paul liked to say, next phrase, we are in him. So, look at the descriptions. We're from God, understanding. We know him, it's the true God, and we're in Christ, who is true, the Son, Jesus Christ, he is the true God and eternal life. Which means if you want to talk about worldly religions, any religion that extracts that one key, I don't even have to spend any kind of time, you need no discernment, you can be a doorknob and figure this one out. If Christ is not in the equation, it's worldly religion. It's under the power of the evil one. It's not from God. Because the Bible is clear, Jesus said it, our world doesn't like it, the intellectual elite doesn't care for it, but the Bible says it so clear. Jesus comes on the scene, no one is going to come to the Father, Jesus said, except through me. This fall we're going to study the world religions and cult groups. Now half of them are cult groups so



they claim Christ in some way, half of them are world religions and they don't claim Christ. It doesn't take any kind of brain power to say, "If Christ is not in the equation, then you fall into the second category, which is the world." It may be religious but it's worldly religion. (26:04)

The Pharisees who were leaders of this particular group, although they quoted the Bible they themselves were worldly religionists. Keep going, verse 21, little children, keep yourselves from idols. Well that's a strange and harsh contrast. I was feeling pretty good about this doctrinal distinction between me and the rest of the world and then you had to throw this in. Hey guys, insiders, huddle up, little children, oh keep yourselves from idols. What are you talking about? Well see when you think about those that claim God, they're outside of Christ, they don't have understanding, they're not in Him, they don't know the true God, they know some other version of God. Well, they're like Pagans, they're like bowing down to idols. Now, hey, little children, insiders, don't you start messing with that. That's why I say, this sermon, I want it to be equipping, in other words it builds you up so you can counsel people well to say that group shouldn't be a part of it. But then I want to put it right in your lap and say, you know what? Here's the problem, you can sit in a good church and have worldly religion creep into your own head, your own heart. (27:11)

Why would that warning be there if it wasn't a possibility for his insider group who is from Him, who has understanding, who knows the true God, who's in Christ Jesus the Son, to start dabbling with that. You can sit in a good church, with a perfect doctrinal statement, with godly leadership for the rest of your life and still start to dabble in worldly religion. Beware of worldly religion. Now I said I'd take you to chapter 2 because we need more than that. That's all labels and definitions but it doesn't tell us the symptomatic part of this. How do I know that I'm involved in that? Great, glad you asked. Chapter 2, 1 John chapter 2 let's start in verse 15, which I hope are familiar verses to you. When you talk about the whole world lying in the power of the evil one, he's already defined what the world means. We're not talking about the rocks and the trees, we're not talking about sharing the material physical part of the world that everybody shares in. No, we're talking about a category that we're going to deal with for the next six weeks in chapter 14 of Luke. (28:05)

1 John 2:15. Do not love the world or the things in the world. If you didn't have any context to that or you didn't read anymore, that would be a weird thing. Like I'm supposed to somehow not like hamburgers and Cheez-Its and my wife and my car. You know what? No. That's not what we're talking about. We're not talking about inanimate objects, we're not even talking about people, necessarily, we're talking about something he's about to define. But before he defines it in verse 16 he's got more to say to make it very clear that these are antithetical realities. You cannot say you love God and love the world as well. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Now again that's the warning just like it is in the last verse of the book that you can dabble in it, your heart can be pulled toward it, it can infiltrate you, but you've got to fight this. Don't let your life be characterized by anything that's worldly. (28:56)

Well, what does that mean? Glad you asked. Verse 16, for all that is in the world, at least the thing he's talking about. Now he's going to put it between the dashes in verse 16, three things. Desires of the flesh, that's how he's first going to describe it. The desire of the eyes and the pride of life. Let's think about those. The desires of the flesh. Flesh in other words, I guess we've got to define biblically, that concept of my desires that are not in line with the will of God. God desires things of us, like don't eat of the tree of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Don't eat of that. There's the command of God, there's the will of God. Now if in my flesh, I say, "No, I want to eat that." You're going to have those problems, particularly as a fallen daughter of Eve or son of Adam. I understand that, but that's a desire of the flesh. It desires something that's out of bounds. Out of bounds because God has commanded you shouldn't do it. That's the desires of the flesh, we all every single person, every eyeball I'm looking into has had those desires this week. Something out of bounds you desire. It's not allowed by God's will. (29:52)

The world is all about that. Do what you want. If it feels good, do it. All those concepts of just do it, be fulfilled, God wouldn't give you this desires he wouldn't want you to meet. He doesn't want you to be unsatisfied, he wants you fulfilled. He wants you realized. He wants... desires of the flesh. Next one, desires of the eyes. That the avenue through which much of this comes that we see and we want. Just like in the garden once she had that desire here comes Satan to tempt and say, "Look at it, it's good for food. Look how beautiful it is. Take it." The eyes then feed it and at least in this picture here there's that avenue through which I'm gazing at what is not allowed and I want it, it looks good and I want to have it. And why? Well, let's go back to the garden again. What does Satan say? Well you know what? God is keeping something from you. You'd have something you wouldn't otherwise have. This



will advance you, this will be good, you'll know more, you're going to have knowledge that God's trying to keep you, it'll be great, it'll be good for you, now it'll be good for God if you obeyed him but it'll be good for you if you did this. That's called pride. That means you first, you're the priority, you're the center, you're the benchmark. It's about you, you're the star of the show. Do what you want. Whatever you feel like you want to do, whatever you see that you want if it's going to advance you, do it. Now all of that he says is not from the Father. That is from the world. (31:16)

Now I hope you know that. You see that, you've lived in the world this week? Unless you've been on the moon, you lived in the world. In the world, it's just fueling those things. You're important, you're worth it, you can't even sell cosmetics, right? Or hair color girls, you're worth it baby. It's about you, you deserve it, if you have that desire it should be fulfilled. Have it, get it, don't you want it? Whatever you desire, this is good. All of those things. Now all of that this worldly, it is not from the Father, it's from the world. And the world passing away, not going to be here for long. Along with all of its desires is going to be gone. But whoever does the will of God, which means self-denial. Don't get all that I want, can't have all that I see. Can't promote myself because it isn't about me, I'm not the star of the show. Right? That's the person that abides forever. (32:08)

Now you can say that's worldly. Here's my question now. Can that worldly mentality ever be presented in a guise of religion? [Blows raspberry] Matter of fact I challenge you to come to Thursday nights, we're going to look at twelve different organizations, twelve different religious expressions, either world religions or cult groups. Every single one of them, you're going to see the worldliness of them and it's something in its structure and what's presented or what has been left out from real pure undefiled religion has been something that has been crafted and legislated by the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes or the boastful pride of life. Worldliness is what false religion is all about. It is self-made religion. It may have the appearance of wisdom but it is worldly religion. (32:58)

Now we have no time for these two passages but if you're a copious notetaker jot them down, please. Matthew 23, Matthew 15. Matthew chapter 23 and Matthew chapter 15. Both of those passages will show you as we go back to our scene that the Pharisees were walking examples of that. Let me give you some examples of familiar quotations that I'm sure you know. Matthew 23, he keeps talking this way about them. These guys sure do show you that they are really important but in reality, while they talk to you about living for God, they're really all about themselves. They're full of greed. He says they're like whitewashed tombs but they're full of self-service. They pray and they pray publicly but only so that you can see them and you can admire them and you can call them Rabbi and put them at the head of the table, they're in it for themselves. That's religion that's about serving, me. (33:56)

Fifteen, religions that serve me will often try and compensate for what I'm leaving out of true and undefiled religion by giving you things that give me a sense of religiosity and acceptance before God that aren't in the rule book but I'm going to add those and I'm going to in the words of Jesus, I'm going to take my traditions of men and I'm going to add those and teach them as though they're the commandments of God. Manmade religion, worldly religion is ultimately all about making me feel good, feel right, even though it can have self-deprivation, even as it says in Colossians, it talks about the fact there can be asceticism, there can be withdrawing from what is comfortable, but still it all ultimately is about serving me, making me feel like I'm doing what I ought to so that I can feel like this is the right thing. And all of that is self-made religion, it's worldly religion. (34:46)

Now here's the thing, can you ever see that not just in the banner of "we love God" but we love Jesus Christ the Christ of the Bible? I see it all the time. Go to the best-selling Christian book list and look at the top 20 best-selling books and tell me if you can't see the self-service embedded in many of those books. We're really presenting a Christ to you that's more of a life coach or a butler that's going to help you be self-realized and fulfilled so that you can have the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and you can promote yourself. Now it's not going to be put in those terms but really, it's about you being satisfied, let's not talk about self-denial, let's not talk about discipline, let's not talk about putting my agenda in the backseat, let's make Christ your co-pilot but you still get to run the ship. All of that is not pure and undefiled religion, it's worldly religion. That's exactly what the Pharisees were about, that's why by the way the Sabbath requirement to not work and to give that day to the Lord certainly did not, it did not make it a prohibited act to walk into a room, speak the word or touch a man and heal him of a disease. That's certainly not the case. Did Jesus break the Sabbath, I know that you've read the book in some kind of cursory way perhaps and you think that Jesus broke the Sabbath. When they were out there picking heads of grain, they broke the Sabbath. I taught on those passages to you in the gospel of Luke, he did not break, do you think Jesus Christ is going to look at the rules of his Father and say, "Yeah, I know you said that but you know what? Man, I

ain't going to do that because I'm libertine and it ain't about the law. I'm going to do my own thing here Father." Nope, no possible way. Jesus keeps the Sabbath until the ceremonial law was fulfilled by the death of Christ when the veil was torn in the temple and all of it was made obsolete. Jesus kept the rules. He did it. He fulfilled the law. He was not breaking the Sabbath here. But they thought he was breaking the Sabbath. Why? Because they're man-made rules. Jesus says in Matthew 23, you guys strain out the gnat, you swallow the camel. He said, you sit there and you tithe a tenth of your dill and your mint and your cumin. You go to the spice rack and make sure you've given a tenth of everything but then you're not into justice and mercy. You're not even willing to treat people the way you ought to. He said you should have done the former without neglecting the latter. God expects you to keep his rules. And really you can't pick and choose, it's not cafeteria style religion and that's where religion always is, I like this I'll take that, I don't take that, don't take this, I'll substitute it with that. That's what false religion is all about. And the Bible says it leads people to hell. (37:10)

Beware of worldly religion. That's what these Pharisees were all about. 2 Corinthians chapter 11 says it shouldn't surprise you that there are false apostles, false workers that there are people that set themselves up as great teachers of Christ and representatives of Christ but they're not because even Satan himself masquerades around as an angle of light. Therefore, it should be no surprise that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. You see the problem? If you want to be this kind of 21st century Christian that's out there going, "Hey you love Jesus, yeah I do too. We're all on the same team." There's a few follow up questions we need to ask. And it comes down to the way Jesus demonstrates in this passage what he is all about and you and I need to be all about it. (37:52)

Let's quickly deal with the second half of this passage, verses 5 and 6. You can read this passage and if you're not a Old Testament Rabbi you may miss what's being said here because there's a lot of implication, even a lot of reference Bibles that miss this but you need to make sure you get it down this morning. Verse 5, and he, Christ, said to them, now he's dismissed the guy who was swollen and just healed. But the Pharisees, the lawyers, the teachers of the law are sitting there and he asks them a question, a rhetorical question, which of course the answer is obvious. "Which of you having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?" Now Mike we've heard you read that twice and every time you read it you've read it funny. Why are you doing that? Because I'm trying to get you to see that there's something very unique about this particular example and talking about an ox falling into a well. They're all seminary grads, the ruler of the Pharisees was sitting there. Now think about this, they were being taught a lesson from the scripture themselves through a rhetorical question from Christ that every single seminary grad in the room would go, "Ding, I know that. I know what he's quoting." It may not be in your reference Bible but put in your notes Deuteronomy chapter 22, that's what he's quoting, Deuteronomy 22 verse 4. Let me read it for you. It's even more subtle and a lower bar than what Jesus is doing in this passage. It says this, if you shall see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen down, you cannot ignore it. You shall help him to lift them up again. Now this is the precise example. But it's not precise, Mike, no. It's even a smaller example because here it is, it's not your ox, certainly not your son, it's your neighbor's ox. Now think about this, no reference to dates, clearly the command of God. He's quoting scripture for them. Here is Jesus demonstrating number 2 on your outline, Godly priorities. And it's what we should pursue. Pursue Godly priorities. (39:51)

2. Pursue Godly Priorities

And the first priority as he demonstrates by an allusion to scripture is that we keep the rules of scripture. Now why do we keep the rules of scripture? Jesus' answered this multiple times, you keep the rules of scripture because you love God. If you love me, he says to his own disciples, you're going to keep my commandments. And you know what? That's the basic most fundamental religious principle of all. You want pure and undefiled religion? It starts with this when Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He said, love the Lord your God, with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. So, at the fundamental core of biblical religion is this, I'm going to love God with the whole being of my life. How is that measured? The Bible says this, let me give you a couple verses, I mean they're all over the Bible. I just quoted John 13, let me quote this, 1 John chapter 5. 1 John chapter 5 verse 3, this is the love of God. What is it? That we keep his commandments, it's that simple. Here is a guy who is about to get castigated and rejected and they're going to build a case to crucify him because he kept the law of God. What's the law of God say? You see an ox fall in a pit, you pick it up. Hey, how about if it's your ox? Hey, how about if it's your son? Hey, how about if it's a guy who's about to die of some congestive heart failure or lung disease or liver disease or some blood clot and I reach out and help him. It doesn't matter what day it is, that's the right biblical thing to do. That's what Jesus does. He's not working, taking care of his business building a house or cobbling

shoes, he's helping someone exactly as the scripture said you should. He's keeping the rules of God. Letter A, that's the expression of loving God. Let's put it down that way, you are to love God and keep his commandments. (41:26)

A. Love God to Keep His Commandments

Which is the problem with the Pharisees and world religions. Worldly religion does not really at the core, they're not driven by a love of God. They're driven by a love of themselves. Therefore, they selectively obey the rules of God. Now think about this. I'm supposed to this week say, "I want to live like Christ, not like the Pharisees." That means I'm going to look at my heart and say, "If I love God, I'm going to do what he said." Let's make it a little more personal, let's just think about Christ. Christ's statement in John, if you love me you'll keep my commandments. If I say, "Look I'm back from my break and I got a great surprise for you, I know you didn't expect this, but I've got a guest, I'm going to bring him out. I gave you four guests while I was gone. Here's a guest, it's Jesus himself. Give him a big round of applause. Jesus. Yeah. Jesus walks out. And you hear like, I don't know, he's got a name tag, but more than that you somehow intuitively, that is Jesus. He's here physically visiting Compass Bible Church. He's come back from heaven for just the weekend and he's here at our church, amazing. And I'm sure you'd be like, whoa, so mind blowing, here's Christ, he's dressed normally you know, in our modern, you know, attire, golf shirt. And he comes up, BAM, Christ, got a name tag, "Jesus", it's him. (42:28)

And I said he is here and I give the mic to Jesus, do whatever you're going to do. And instead of teaching he comes and jumps off the stage goes up the aisle, walks slowly around the room. Looks at everybody in the eye. Settles in to the seat next to you. He says, "Excuse me, excuse me." As he goes down the aisle. Sits down, looks you in, we'd all be like [facial expression]. Jesus sitting next to you. He's still got his beard, leans over, says, "I want you to do something for me." We'd all be gaping mouth like, "What, what, what?" And he's talking right to you. You're looking right into his brown eyes. He points, takes his arm over the chair, points out the backdoor as his golf shirt comes up, you see the scare that Jesus died in this providence in his resurrection body, leave on his side to remind us of the crucifixion. He points, you see that, we all gasp, what's he going to say? He says, "Could you get up and get me a bottle of water from the patio?" (43:43)

What would you do? Ahh, I'd scurry down the aisle, run outside get him a bottle of water. If I couldn't find a cold one, I'd find someone to get him a Kirkland bottle and bring it right in. Here Jesus. Would you do that? I don't know, if you're a Christian I assume. You're reminded of his death, his nail pierced hands reach out to grab, I'll bet, even though you're really comfortable right now, I'll bet you'd go do that. And he says, "Thanks for the bottle. It's cold, man, you're awesome, thank you." He says, "I've got one more thing for you." We're all still just [ahh] really centering in on this person, right now it's you. Talking to you. He says, "Did you hear Pastor Mike earlier during announcements?" Uhh, most of it. "Yeah, umm, you know he talked about AWANA, I want you to sign up for AWANA and lead." What would you do? Well, you know I've got a softball league on Thursday nights and I don't think. I'll be whatever excuse you had, you'd be like I'm on it, I'm on it. I'd bet you'd probably say, you want me to sign up now, I'll go do it now. You go and sign up. He says, "Yeah, why don't you go do that, sign up now." You go sign up and come back. You're hoping he's going to move on to someone else at this point. We're all just watching and he says, "I've got one more thing." Your job I know you like it there, stable, pays well, it's not right for you, I want you to go home this afternoon and pen a resignation letter, I want you to turn that in tomorrow. I'm going to move you somewhere else." (45:41)

Okay, now getting a bottle of water, no big deal, signing up for AWANA that's a lot of Thursdays you're giving up. But now he says I want you to quit your job, I'm going to move you somewhere else. I mean seriously Christians if you're remembering the death of Christ on a cross, is there going to be, are you going to sit there and say, "I've got to talk to my wife about that." Right? No. you'd go home and announce to your wife Jesus told me to quit my job. I'm quitting my job. Did he tell you what you're going to do? No, he told me to trust him. I mean I think you'd do that. You know why? Because if you really love him, you would echo like the words of hymns you grew up singing. Like this one. When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the prince of glory died, my richest gain – and it might be a free Thursday nights, or my favorite job here – I count but loss. And I pour contempt on all my pride. I really like that job and my position there, you'll make me start over somewhere, it wouldn't matter. You know the last verse of that song? Were the whole realm of nature mine – even though you're the richest person, I owned everything in the world – that would be a present far too small. Why? Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul and my life and my all. (47:04)



Now I quoted 1 John 5 but I didn't quote it all. This is the love of God that you keep his commandments, here's the next part, and his commandments are not burdensome. Guarantee if you don't love God, you may be a dutiful Christian but they are a burden to you. And all I'm telling you is, God says love me, and if you love me, you'll keep my commandments. And I'm just telling you God has commanded you to some things. Now you're thinking I'm glad he hasn't come here in the middle of this service and told me to quit my job, he has come to the service, and he's got a long list of things in his book called the Bible, that you're holding or looking at through the screen of your device. Here is his instruction book and you're going to read things in that instruction book and see opportunities in the world and you're going to feel that pang of conviction, I think this is an application of that passage and I probably should do it. You're going to have a choice to make, do I love God? Love God and keep his commandments. He has walked into the room, he has spoken, it's the book in your hand. The Pharisees were very selective about their obedience of that book. They knew the verse, someone needs help, you help them. You're not advancing your business, you're not worried about advancing your own cause, you're helping someone and you can do it in this case, Jesus could do it with a word, with a touch. He's obeying scripture. (48:30)

When I ask Jesus what's the greatest commandment, he said, "Love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind." He didn't say I can't answer this in a singular way, the second is like it, it's just as important. And that is you love your neighbor as yourself. These are the greatest commandments and on these hang all the law and the prophets. You want to distill all of godly undefiled pure religion into two commands? There is love God, love people. Now what's the measure of loving God? Keep his commandments, and clearly, he's alluding to the commandments of God and he's going to keep them what's also interesting is that this passage really demonstrates the second most important command of all and that is, love your neighbor as yourself because this wasn't something he was doing for the good of himself, he was doing it for the benefit of a man who was about to die of a really serious disease, whatever that was, the unnamed disease. That was an act of benevolence, it was what the Bible calls, "good works". Letter B, let's jot this down, you want to emulate Christ in this passage, you should, you don't want to be a Pharisee, you had better love people – and what's the natural expression of that – and do good works. (49:36)

B. Love People and Do Good Works

You want to love God, keep his commandments. Stay in the boundaries of the text of scripture. You want to love people then you're going to do something good for them. And you know what? Just like loving God you're going to have opportunity arise in your life this week, here's how it's put in Galatians chapter 6 verse 10, as you have opportunity – and you will – let us do good to everyone. Good works, that's what you're called to do. And especially the household of faith. God says set your passion that you are radically involved in that. You are extremist in that. And I say that because of Titus which says this, he's called out his own people to be his own possession. Those are the people that are from him that have understanding that know him that are in him, those are his people. And he says, "I've brought them out, a people for my own possession. That they may be – here's the word – zealous for good works." I'll bet you haven't used the word zealous in a non-biblical context and have been describing someone you think is a little nuts. That guy sure is zealous. I mean you're saying he's beyond the bounds of normalcy. I mean that's really kind of weird just how much he's into that. That Bible says you were created as God's workmanship, in Christ Jesus, for good works. You ought to be characterized by that. You're supposed to be zealous for that. And to be very specific even though that is a Bible word, good works, that means you're doing things for the good and benefit of other people. Jesus walks in and they knew he was going to do that because that's what he was all about. He was expressing the two great priorities and commandments of God. He's loving God, means he's never outside the bounds of God's commands and he's loving people. And that means if there's a good work to do as far as it's within the power for him to do it, he's going to do it so often their going to think, he's always doing that stuff. And that's what should be said of you. What have you done for the good of people this week? (51:27)

There's a lot of counterfeits out there and I guarantee you this, they're very selective about the commandments of God, they'll be very selective about the convenience of good works. When it's convenient and helpful and self-serving and satisfying, I'll do the good work. If it convenient and it doesn't grate too much on my own fulfillment maybe, I'll keep the commands of God. Biblical, pure and undefiled religion doesn't care about, it's the real thing and the world is chasing a lot of counterfeits. (51:51)

I was reading the new about, one of my news pages about our sister church's neighborhood, Huntington Beach, their

having the wiener dog races last week. I've never been to the wiener dog races, but when I read that, thinking I wonder if any of our people in Huntington Beach went to the wiener dog races, it made me think of my childhood when there was a lot more discussion about it, I guess it's a dying thing these days, the dog races. Remember the dog races, the dog tracks they use to have? I guess that's out of vogue now, the animal is big and you ride on it and whip it that's cool I guess, but you can't let them run. Okay, dog races. Doesn't bother me but if you're a dog lover and you think that's bad, okay whatever. But, dog races, do you remember that? There was a lot more tracks around, I mean, I don't know if there are any around here, but I remember seeing it even on TV as a kid. What fascinated me about the dog races, the great majestic Greyhound dogs that would run like lightning out of those gates, is that they were chasing that little mechanical rabbit. Remember that? I know, amazing, I remember the kid going that's so weird, what is that? And I remember catching a glimpse of that it's like, it was like a steel arm or some kind of arm that came out from the center of the track and it just zipped around the track and at the end of it, it looked like it was a stainless-steel ball that had like a Davy Crockett hat on it, some fuzzy thing. And the dogs were like it's a rabbit, it's a rabbit. And as soon as that thing whipped by the gate, they open the gate and out go those Greyhounds and they chase after that thing and [brrr] I remember thinking as a kid, that's bizarre, that's weird, that's amazing and crazy. (53:14)

Well, I remember this from way back, matters of fact I posted it on my Facebook page, you should go watch this. Facebook.com/pastormike It was one of these dog races in Victoria, Australia on a dog track. When they went through all of it, they're coming around the final turn and as they're chasing the artificial phony little want-to-be rabbit, a real rabbit hops onto the track. Can you image being that rabbit? You just hop out there and like what's going on? Here's like ten huge Greyhound dogs chasing a fake rabbit. Well, the rabbit got the idea right away. This ain't where I should be. And I watched this like ten times when I came across it recently and the rabbit takes off. And he's smart enough not to follow the phony rabbit, he takes a, you know right turn and heads off the track. Now this is amazing, you've got to go to my web page and just watch this a few times. Almost every Greyhound in that race, going a million miles an hour after a fake rabbit, see the real rabbit and their heads jerk. And some of them jerk a couple of times, uhh there's a rabbit. [laughter] And their heads snap back and they keep chasing the fake rabbit. Except for one dog in the back didn't look like she was going to win anyway. She didn't look twice and I realize she was an outsider. I looked this up, twenty to one odds on this dog winning. She sees the real rabbit, Jenny Lou was her name, and she doesn't think twice, her little dog brain said, "I'm going after that." And she jetted out from the pack and again this is like years ago so the screen like one camera on and all the dogs jerk and look at this rabbit and they keep going and Jenny Lou goes, "Ehh, nope." And she darts after that rabbit. (55:24)

I always thought it was kind of sad watching these dog races, you know not that I really care, but you know they never catch the rabbit. And even if they did, they dig their teeth into some fake little fur ball and it's a steel ball underneath or whatever it is. I mean I just thought how terrible. Now everyone said Jenny Lou lost the race. But I'm kind of thinking she's the winner. Isn't she? And I kind of hoping she caught the rabbit, I know for you city folk it's all kind of sad. Mutual of Omaha, you know, wild kingdom or whatever, yeah, dogs eat rabbits, sorry. You're pulling for them all, you can't pull for them all, right? They eat each other. But I think to myself I hope Jenny Lou caught that rabbit before it made it to the parking lot. And then in my book, she's the winner. You know there's a lot of people because we are inherently religious, they're chasing after some version of god it ain't the true God. And it really takes a lot for us in the real world to see the real God and to break with the pack and say, "I'm not going to chase the counterfeit. I'm going to go after the real thing." And as blasphemous as it sounds, I thought of this verse when I watched that video on YouTube. I thought of this verse, Jeremiah 29 where it says, listen if you seek for me, if you seek after me with all of your heart, I will let myself be found by you. (56:51)

That's good news. God is showing up I hope and he has in your life if not he's showing up right now and he's presenting himself the real and true living God. And he's saying, I want you to love me with all your soul, strength and mind. I want you to love people as you love yourself. I don't want you to be compromised, I want you to buy it, all of it, it's not tailored, it's not legislated by man, it does not come from man. This is me, here it is, get it, chase it. And if you chase that, God says, "I'll let myself be found by you." But it'll be hard to break from the pack because the rest of the world they like self-made religion, they like worldly religion. They like things that are tailored to fit the culture in which it's in. Our religion doesn't fit the culture, have you noticed that? Getting hard for us, but hang in there, if you seek him, you'll find him, if you seek for him with all your heart. Don't fall for the worldly religion, lets live like Christ. Love God, love people, keep his commandments and do good works like you never had before. Let's pray. (57:45)



God help us, dismiss us with a sense of encouragement and enthusiasm to go after you this week in a way that demonstrates our loyalty and devotion to you. Through a real concern about what you are all about, that we love you and because we love you we're not going to violate your word, because you taught us to love people because what do you give a God that has everything. There's nothing we can do for you but you call us to do things for people, especially the people in the household of faith. So, make us rich in good works, make us zealous for good works. Let us be extreme in doing good works, benefiting others this week. In Jesus name I pray. Amen. (58:23)