This generation will be held responsible for the blood

Luke 11:37-54

Key Verse 11:50

“Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world.”

In today’s passage Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and teachers of the law severely. It shows Jesus as the righteous judge. The message he delivered to the Pharisees and teachers of the law is like the message he will deliver at his judgment seat when the Pharisees and teachers of the law will stand before him in the end. As the righteous judge his message shows Jesus was full of grace and truth. “Full of truth” because he showed all their problems. But ‘full of grace’ as well because he severely rebuked them so that they might hear his message in advance and repent and be saved instead of hearing his righteous sentence at his judgment seat in the end and be embarrassed and destroyed.

When I prepared this today I thought about our practical application. While I was thinking about our practical application I realized that Jesus delivered today’s message for each one of us and everything he said applies to us. Why? Jesus started his rebuke against the Pharisees, and then he extended his rebuke to the teachers of the law. And then he extended his rebuke to all the people of his generation. He said, “Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.”

Jesus mentioned people of his generation in the previous message. He said that the Queen of South would stand at the judgment and condemn the people of his generation. The men of Nineveh will stand at the judgment and condemn the people of his generation. It is because the people of Nineveh repented, but the people of Jesus’ generation did not repent. The people of Nineveh repented at the one sentence message, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.” But the people of Jesus’ generation did repent although they heard the message of judgment and repentance numerous times.

Today Jesus said to the people of his generation, “This generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world.” Why? It is because their inside was the same as that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law when Jesus looked at it. What about the people of our generation? When Jesus look at inside of you and me he will say exactly the same thing. “This generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world.” Why? Because our inside is the exactly the same as that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. So today we want to know what was inside of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. And how can we repent and overcome the same evil inside of us? And how can we have clean inside? That is what we want to think about today. Part I. Woe to you Pharisees (v.37-45). Part II. Woe to you teachers of the law (v.46-54)

**Part I. Woe to you Pharisees (v.37-45)**

Look at verses 37-41.

**“37When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. 38But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal. 39Then the Lord said to him, “Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? 41But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.”**

Today’s message started because a Pharisee invited Jesus to eat with him after Jesus had finished speaking. The Pharisee might have wanted to honor Jesus or at least he wanted to have fellowship with him although we may not know the reason of his invitation clearly. But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not wash first before the meal. It is obvious that it was their custom to wash first before the meal. That tradition probably came from the Moses’ law because many of Moses’ law taught Jewish people to be clean or even holy because God is holy, and he was living among them. So washing before the meal probably became a tradition although it was not one of Moses’ law. So the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not wash first before the meal. Why didn’t Jesus wash before the meal? We don’t know. But there is possibility that Jesus intentionally did not wash first because he must have known the custom of the Jews very well, and probably he must have practiced it. In addition he delivered his message right after the Pharisee was surprised. So there is a good possibility that he intentionally did not wash before the meal.

This is what Jesus said when the Pharisee was surprised. “**39Then the Lord said to him, “Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? 41But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.**

Here Jesus pointed out that they were fool when they tried to clean the outside of the cup and dish only because their inside should be cleansed too. He said, “You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?” Jesus taught that there is no difference between outside and inside to the Creator God. So to the Creator God to have clean outside does not have much meaning when the inside is dirty. It is true even in washing of our cup and dish. Can you imagine we clean outside of the cup and dish and inside is full of dirty food? Do we feel that it is clean? No. When we want to wash our cup and dish we clean inside first. Why? Because inside is what directly affect us, and that is the more important part for us because we put our food there inside. The same is true to the Creator God. To our Lord God, our inside is far more important than the outside because it is the place where he dwells. The Lord God does not dwell in our physical body but in our hearts and minds which is our inside. That is why the cleansing of our inside matters so much.

The Pharisees cleaned the outside of the cup and dish. But what was their inside? They were full of greed and wickedness. It is not just some greed or wickedness. Their inside was full of greed and wickedness. How can they clean their inside? By being generous to the poor. Jesus said, “**41But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.”** ‘To be generous to the poor’ was Jesus’ prescription to be clean inside. The poor does not necessary mean only financially poor people. They may refer to people who did not have what the Pharisees had. What did the Pharisees have? They had money, and they also had respect and honor in addition to many other things.

**Romans 13:7** reads, **“Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.”**

The Pharisees had money, respect, honor, and all other things. But they were not willing to give to others. They were willing to take more of money, respect and honor for themselves. Then their inside was full of greed and wickedness.

Greed easily takes place in our inside. I remember that I wanted to make a generous offering when my income increased. But I was surprised to see that my desire to become rich came into my mind although it did not exist when my income was low. I was very surprised because I did not expect it. Then I could understand why rich people would have more difficulty to be generous to the poor. In our society a quite of few people overcame their greed, and they are generous to the poor through their donations. They are noble men in our society because it is hard to overcome greed.

It is obvious that all other wickedness takes place inside of us when we do not want to share God’s blessings with others. When we want to enjoy God’s blessings only for us, greed and wickedness can come into our hearts and takes place.

So Jesus said, “**41But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.”** When we share God’s blessings with others by giving whatever we have, God will clean what is inside of us.

Now look at verse 42.

**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.**

According to the verse, what was outside of the Pharisees? It was ‘perfect obedience to the command of one tenth offering’. What was inside of them? It was ‘absence of justice and the love of God’. Outwardly they wanted to obey the command of God regarding one tenth offering so meticulously. So they even brought one tenth of their mint, rue, and all other kinds of garden herbs. Outwardly they appeared to be the people of complete obedience. But when Jesus looked at their inside there was no ‘justice’ and ‘love of God’.

Now look at verse 43.

**43“Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces.”**

Here, what was their outside was ‘most important seats and respectful greetings’. What was inside was ‘no love of God’ and ‘no faith in God’.

The Pharisees loved human recognition. By the way, who does not want the most important seats in the synagogues? Who does not want to be president among politicians? Everybody loves the first place, the most important seats, whether it is president’s position, director’s position, pastor’s position, overseers’ position, and even fellowship leaders’ position.

What about ‘respectful greetings’? Who does not want it in the marketplaces? Why “in market places”? Because it is the place where many people gather. So if a Pharisee received respectable greetings in the marketplaces he was highly honored among all others. He even had a bonus to be recognized by other people in the marketplaces. The desire to be recognized by others are so great that in our times some people even commit crime to draw others’ attention.

But what’s wrong about loving men’s recognition that Jesus rebuked them so much? It is because when they love to be recognized by men they cannot have the love of God, and they cannot believe God.

Jesus said in John 5:41-44. **John 5:41-44 41“I do not accept glory from human beings, 42but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. 43I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. 44How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?”**

It is okay to be recognized by others when others recognize us. But to love men’s recognition in our hearts makes us unclean. It takes away the love of God and faith in God from our hearts. Then our inside will become full of greed and wickedness. When they seek recognition of men they could have the recognition from God. When they loved men’s recognition they could not believe God.

Look at verse 44.

**44“Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it.”**

What was the outside of the Pharisees? Unmarked graves. What was their inside? Dead bodies and dry bones. Outwardly they were like unmarked graves. It means they were okay by appearance. They were like just a field or ground. But their inside was full of power of death, dead bodies and dry bones. In this way, they were very deceptive.

Look at verse 45.

**45One of the experts in the law answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.”**

Obviously there were experts in the law in the eating fellowship in addition to the other Pharisees. When one expert in the law heard Jesus’ rebuke of the Pharisees he interpreted it as insult against the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. It means he did not see the greed and wickedness which was inside of the Pharisees. He was not able to see what was inside of him too. He interpreted Jesus’ rebuke as ‘insult’ instead of using it to repent.

**Proverbs 17:10** says **“A rebuke impresses a discerning person more than a hundred lashes a fool”.** But the expert in the law was not a discerning person.

**Part II. Woe to you teachers of the law (v.46-54)**

Look at verse 46.

**46Jesus replied, “And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.”**

What was outside of the teachers of the law? It was legalistic demand, loading people down with burdens they can hardly carry. “The burdens” probably refer to “demand to obey various kinds of laws”. What was inside of the teachers of the law? Selfishness and blindness. “Selfishness” because they were not willing to lift one finger at all to help people whom they burdened. “Blindness” because they could not see that even themselves could not carry the burdens.

Look at verses 47-51.

**47“Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. 48So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. 49Because of this, God in his wisdom said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.’ 50Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, 51from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.”**

What was outside of the teachers of the law? Building tombs for the prophets. What was inside of them? Murderous desire to kill the prophets.

Outwardly what their ancestors did, which was killing the prophets, and what the teachers of the law were doing, which was building their tombs, were totally different. And by building the tombs they were trying to honor the prophets, and they were trying to say ‘what our ancestors did was wrong.’ But why did Jesus say, “**48So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs.”?** Jesus described them as accomplice of their ancestors. Why? It was because their inside was the same as that of their ancestors. Their outside activities was the opposite of their ancestors, but their inside was the same or even worse than that of their ancestors.

Since they did not repent according to the teachings of prophets, they would kill the prophets and persecute them when the opportune time came by. According to God’s wisdom, it was revealed that they will kill the prophets and persecute apostles. God in his wisdom knew that. So Jesus said in verse 49. **49Because of this, God in his wisdom said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.’**

God’s wisdom is to see that their inside was not changed at all compared to the inside of their ancestors although their outward activities was the opposite. What was worse was they were responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed until that time although they did not kill them. Why? It is because their inside was still full of rebellion against God despite that they heard the messages of all the prophets until that time. They got the benefits of listening to the message of all the prophets until that time, but they were not willing to repent. So they were guilty of the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world.

Jesus said in verses 50-51.

**50Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, 51from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.**

Zechariah probably refers to the priest appeared in 2 Chronicles 24:17-22. At that time king of Judah was Joash, and he became king at the age of 7. And he could serve the Lord wholeheartedly because of the good influence of **Zechariah’s father Jehoiada.** But he killed Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, when Zechariah asked people to repent and obey God wholeheartedly.

**2 Chronicles 24:17-22**

**17After the death of Jehoiada, the officials of Judah came and paid homage to the king, and he listened to them. 18They abandoned the temple of the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and worshiped Asherah poles and idols. Because of their guilt, God’s anger came on Judah and Jerusalem. 19Although the Lord sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen. 20Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and said, “This is what God says: ‘Why do you disobey the Lord’s commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you.’” 21But they plotted against him, and by order of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the Lord’s temple. 22King Joash did not remember the kindness Zechariah’s father Jehoiada had shown him but killed his son, who said as he lay dying, “May the Lord see this and call you to account.”**

Zechariah was so grievous that he could not, “Lord, forgive them.” Rather he said, “May the Lord see this and call you to account” as he lay dying.

Jesus’ final rebuke for the teachers of the law is in verse 52. Look at verse 52.

**52“Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.”**

What was the outside of the teachers of the law? The key to knowledge. But what was inside of them? Blindness and bad influence. “Blindness” because they did not enter the kingdom of God using the key. “Bad influence” because they have hindered those who were entering. Probably through their hypocritical life, wrong interpretations of the Scriptures, and teaching human traditions rather than the command of God they were hindering those who were entering the kingdom of heaven.

Look at verse 53.

**53When Jesus went outside, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, 54waiting to catch him in something he might say.**

What they tried to do against Jesus shows that Jesus’ rebuke against them was right. Instead of repenting of their greed, wickedness, they began to oppose Jesus fiercely and wanted to catch Jesus in his mistakes. Where did their response come from? Probably it comes from the blind faith that they knew the Scriptures more than others, and they obeyed Moses’ law more than others. The Pharisees were known to obey Moses’ law the most, and the teachers of the law were known to know the Scriptures the most. So they were convinced that they could not be wrong.

When they heard Jesus’ rebuke they could not see their sin, but they could see only Jesus’ sin. They were blind to their own sins even after Jesus pointed out their sins one by one.

It is true that we cannot get out of our blindness when we believe we are right. I personally experienced it too.

God blessed me to have a good relationship with msn Isaac Kim. But one day I had a trouble with him. He suggested that I was wrong, but to my understanding he was wrong.

I was so sure that I was right. I believed I could not be wrong at all. So I judged him, and our relationship became sour. Most of all, I had trouble not having inner peace because I judged him in my heart.

Then, God helped me in this way. One of my close relatives lived with his father and mother. He asked his parents to give him a sum of money out of their life long savings because both parents lived in his house. He did not ask rent but a lump sum money. It is Korean tradition that oldest son took care of their parents when they became old, and the man was the oldest among his siblings. But his parents did not give him money because the money was the only source of security they had. When the man realized that his parents would not give him money he threw them away, cutting off his relationship with them completely. He sent them away from his house together with all the gifts and toys his parents bought for their grandchildren.

When I saw it I was shocked. I was shocked the most because of his blindness. It was 100% clear that he was wrong, but he believed that he was completely right. He was so sure that he was right. When I saw what he did, I wondered how he could believe that he was 100% right when he was 100% wrong. At that time God spoke to me, ‘Do you see the man? When a man is so sure that he is right and indeed he is right, he gets 50% score out of 100. But if he is so convinced that he is right when he is wrong, there is no way for him to get out his pit.” That whisper of the Lord in my heart awoke me. For the first time, I thought, “Oh, I could be wrong. I might be wrong.” Then it led me eventually to find that I was wrong. So the relationship with missionary Isaac Kim was restored.

Now how can we clean our inside? Our agony is that we cannot clean our hearts which produces sinful desires without ceasing. Our trouble is that our conscience knows that we are sinning all the time, and we cannot shut up the voice of our conscience. Conscience is something God put inside of us. We want to be clean inside, but we know we cannot. Our desire to be clean becomes strong especially when we sin. We feel so dirty and we want to be clean. So we take shower and clean ourselves, but our agony is that we cannot clean our inside.

So how can we wash our hearts and minds so that they are clean before God’s eyes? It is through the blood of Jesus, and it is through the word of Jesus.

**Hebrews 9:11-14**

**“11But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. 12He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. 13The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”**

Jesus said in **John 15:3 “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.”**

Only the blood of Jesus and the word of Jesus can cleanse our inside. We cannot cleanse ourselves. “Through the blood of Jesus” means “through faith in Jesus’ blood Only when we believe that Jesus died for our sins, and his blood removes all of our sins and cleanse our conscience can we be truly free from guilty conscience, and our inside can be clean before God. “Through the word of Jesus” means “by believing the word of Jesus and obeying it.” Only when we believe the power of Jesus’ word in our lives and obey it we can experience his cleansing power of his word.

One pastor shared his desire to be cleans inside in this way. He imagined that all of his thoughts would be projected into the sky where everyone can see clearly like power point presentation. He wished that all of his thoughts arising in his heart would be so clean that there would be no shame even if they were shown in the sky. The Lord God blessed his desire, and eventually he achieved it.

In conclusion, Jesus revealed our inside is the exactly the same as that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law or even worse. So we are responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world. It is because we do not repent although we heard all the messages of repentance and judgment. How can we cleanse ourselves especially our inside? It is through the blood of Jesus and through the word of Jesus. It is through faith in his blood and obeying the word of Jesus.

One word: This generation will be held responsible for the blood.