**The Proud Pharisees**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. When Jesus was here on the earth, the Jews were divided up into different religious sects or parties. The one most prominently mentioned in the New Testament is the Pharisees. Before we get to the bad part…
2. There were some good Pharisees:
   1. Paul (Acts 23:6; 26:5; Philippians 3:5).
   2. There were other Pharisees who became Christians (Acts 15:5).
   3. Nicodemus (John 3:1; defended Jesus in John 7:50-51; helped prepare Jesus’ body for burial in John 19:39-40).
3. Generally speaking, though, the Pharisees were very proud people. When Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” He wasn’t talking about the spirit they generally possessed. Many passages could be given as evidence, but consider these:
   1. Read Matthew 23:1-2, 6-7.
   2. The Pharisee depicted in this parable was all too typical. Read Luke 18:9-14.
4. When you have this kind of pride, it is bound to cause a whole bunch of other problems, and it certainly did with the Pharisees. Let’s notice some evil fruits of their pride:

**BODY:**

1. They did their works to be seen of men. That was the motive behind their religious works. Being well-pleasing to men was more important than being well-pleasing to God.
   1. Read Matthew 23:5—“do all their works to be seen by men.”
      1. They gave alms to be seen of men. They prayed to be seen of men. They fasted to be seen of men. They wanted men to be impressed with how religious they were.
   2. Jesus warns about this in Matthew 6:1-2, 5, 16.
      1. Jesus definitely has the Pharisees in sight. See Matthew 5:20.
   3. This desire for man’s honor was even one of the obstacles that kept them from believing on Jesus.
      1. Read John 5:44.
      2. When you’re proud, it’s too easy to do what’s popular, instead of what’s right.
   4. In terms of application to us...
      1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, 14-15.
2. This desire to be seen by men led them to practice what we might call an “outward only righteousness”, or a “surface righteousness.
   1. Read Matthew 23:23-28; Luke 11:42.
      1. Some people think Jesus criticized the Pharisees for following the law of Moses too strictly. No, He criticized them for not following it strictly enough. They had “passed by” certain things, especially matters relating to the heart.
      2. If we become full of pride, we will wind up doing the same as they did.
      3. We want to look good before other people, so we only work on that which is seen by others.
   2. In terms of application to us…
      1. Read James 4:8.
3. They failed to see themselves as God saw them (easy to do when you’re full of yourself).
   1. They certainly didn’t see themselves as “full of extortion and self-indulgence...hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matthew 23:25, 28).
   2. Read Luke 7:36-50.
      1. Can you see the difference between the woman and the Pharisee? This woman knew she had a great debt of sin, and she knew she had nothing with which to repay this debt. She showed great love for Jesus, because He was the one who could forgive this great debt of sin.
      2. The Pharisee, on the other hand, didn’t see himself in debt. And He certainly didn’t see the need for Jesus like the woman did.
   3. The Pharisees often spoke of others as sinners, but what they didn’t understand was that they were too.
   4. How do we avoid this?
      1. We need to very humbly look into God’s word as a mirror, examining ourselves inside and out. We need to as best we can see ourselves the way God sees us.
      2. The Pharisees did not excel at self-examination, but we must.
4. They couldn’t see their own sins, but they could sure see the sins of others. Their pride even caused them to look down on others.
   1. Read Mark 2:15-17 where Jesus was criticized for eating with tax collectors and sinners, a criticism he received all the time.
   2. Remember Luke 18:9-14.
   3. Read John 7:32, 45-49.
   4. There is certainly nothing wrong with pointing out the sins of others, but notice the warning given in Galatians 6:1-5.
   5. We may have left sin behind to follow after righteousness, but we must still have a humble attitude toward those who are lost.
      1. Read Titus 3: 1-3.
5. They closed their ears to the truth. When you’re proud, it’s easy to become entrenched in your own views, and there’s just not much anyone else can tell you.
   1. If you want a good example of people refusing to see, read John 9:13-34.
   2. When they were proven wrong, instead of admitting it, they got mad with the one who showed them they were wrong.
      1. Read Matthew 12:9-14.
   3. They often would resort to ridiculous arguments.
      1. Read Matt. 9:32-34; 12:22-26; 8:32-33.
   4. What is our responsibility? Read James 1:19-21; Isa. 66:1-2.
6. They loved money—this would of course be a status symbol for them.
   1. Read Luke 16:13-15.
   2. Jesus said they were full of both greed (Luke 11:39) and extortion (Matthew 23:25).
   3. For application to us, read 1 Timothy 6:10-11.
7. Their traditions became more important to them than God’s word.
   1. Read Mark 7: 1-13.
   2. Not surprising, because these traditions were theirs. Breaking these traditions was an affront to them.
   3. Folks can still get more riled up over their traditions than they do the word of God.