

Luke 11:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

Analysis

Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness (τὸ ἔξωθεν τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τοῦ πίνακος καθαρίζετε, τὸ δὲ ἔσωθεν ὑμῶν γέμει ἀρπαγῆς καὶ πονηρίας)—Jesus's response escalates from defending his practice to attacking theirs. The contrast between *exōthen* (outside) and *esōthen* (inside) structures his critique: external versus internal, appearance versus reality. Their scrupulous vessel-cleaning ritual (*katharizō*) masks internal corruption.

Full of ravening and wickedness (γέμει ἀρπαγῆς καὶ πονηρίας)—the verb *gemō* (full, loaded) intensifies the accusation. *Harpagē* (ravening, greed, extortion) and *ponēria* (wickedness, malice) describe the Pharisees' actual character beneath religious veneer. They rob widows (20:47), oppress the poor, use religion for financial gain—while obsessing over ritual purity.

Historical Context

Pharisaic purity laws prescribed washing eating vessels to remove ritual contamination from Gentile contact or improper use. Jesus exploits this metaphor: they cleanse ceremonial impurity from cups while their hearts overflow with greed and malice. The accusation of 'extortion' may reference their financial exploitation of common people through Temple taxes and burdensome religious requirements.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What external religious activities might you be using to mask internal corruption?
2. How does Jesus's cup metaphor expose the futility of focusing on outward behavior while ignoring heart transformation?
3. In what areas might you be 'cleansing the outside' through religious performance while tolerating inner wickedness?

Interlinear Text

εἶπεν	δὲ	ὁ	κύριος	πρὸς	αὐτόν	Νῦν	ὕμεῖς	οἱ
said G2036	And G1161	G3588	the Lord G2962	unto G4314	him G846	Now G3568	ye G5210	G3588
Φαρισαῖοι	τὸ	ἔξωθεν	τοῦ	ποτηρίου	καὶ	τοῦ	πίνακος	
Pharisees G5330	G3588	the outside G1855	G3588	of the cup G4221	and G2532	G3588	the platter G4094	
καθαρίζετε	τὸ	δὲ	ἔσωθεν	ὑμῶν	γέμει	ἀρπαγῆς	καὶ	
do G2511	G3588	And G1161	inward part G2081	your G5216	is full G1073	of ravening G724	and G2532	
πονηρίας								
wickedness G4189								

Additional Cross-References

Acts 5:3 (Parallel theme): But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

Proverbs 30:12 (Parallel theme): There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

Matthew 15:19 (Evil): For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

Matthew 7:15 (Parallel theme): Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Genesis 6:5 (Evil): And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

James 4:8 (Parallel theme): Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Titus 1:15 (Parallel theme): Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

Psalms 22:13 (Parallel theme): They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

Proverbs 26:25 (Parallel theme): When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart.

Jeremiah 4:14 (Evil): O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?