

Luke 11:43

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

Analysis

Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets (ὅτι ἀγαπᾶτε τὴν πρωτοκαθεδρίαν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ τοὺς ἀσπασμοὺς ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς)—the second woe targets pride and status-seeking. Prōtokathedria (chief seats) refers to seats facing the congregation, reserved for honored teachers. Aspasmos (greetings) in the agora (marketplace) means public recognition. They loved (agapaō) honor more than God.

Jesus exposes religion as performance for human applause. The Pharisees' motivation was public honor, not God's glory. This contradicts Jesus's teaching to pray, give alms, and fast in secret (Matthew 6:1-18). Their religion was theater, not worship.

Historical Context

Synagogue seating reflected social status—prominent teachers sat facing the congregation on elevated platforms. Public greetings used elaborate titles ('Rabbi,' 'Father') that reinforced hierarchical religious culture. Jesus later forbade his disciples to seek such titles (Matthew 23:8-10).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What modern equivalents to 'chief seats' and 'marketplace greetings' tempt you—social media affirmation, ministry platform, professional recognition?
2. How can you cultivate hiddenness and obscurity as spiritual disciplines countering the desire for recognition?
3. What motivates your religious activity—God's glory or human applause, internal transformation or external reputation?

Interlinear Text

οὐαὶ	ὑμῖν	τοῖς	Φαρισαίοις	ὅτι	ἀγαπᾶτε	τὴν
Woe	unto you	G3588	Pharisees	! for	ye love	G3588
G3759	G5213		G5330	G3754	G25	
πρωτοκαθεδρίαν	ἐν	ταῖς	συναγωγαῖς	καὶ	τοὺς	
the uppermost seats	in	G3588	the synagogues	and	G3588	
G4410	G1722		G4864	G2532		
ἀσπασμοὺς	ἐν	ταῖς	ἀγοραῖς			
greetings	in	G3588	the markets			
G783	G1722		G58			

Additional Cross-References

Luke 20:46 (Love): Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;