

Revealing The Hypocrite

- *Matthew 23:1-7, 13*

- **On Wednesday night, we began a study that will hopefully lead us to a clearer understanding of what it means to be an Authentic Christian.**
 - Now I think that this is a very important topic at this particular time in our world & you may be here this morning & you say, “Pastor, why are you so persistent & emphatic about us living Authentic?”
 - My simple answer is this, “Because we have too much of the opposite!” Let me share with you some of my concern & where I see our world today.
 - We have people who want religion today without any change in their life!
 - We have people who are searching for forgiveness, but want nothing to do with repentance.
 - They want to hear about the blessings of God without ever hearing about the warnings of God.
 - And what you end up with when you create this type of setting is a state of hypocrisy or representing one thing while living a very different life.
 - We have people today who are in a church setting, they will bring their Bibles to church (though they may not read it), they will sit under the teaching or preaching or some leader, & they will never hear about sin, they will never hear about repentance, they will never hear about hell, they don’t want to be convicted, and they will be convinced that following Christ requires absolutely no change.
 - Because we have resorted to preaching religion instead of Christ & Him dying for the payment of our sins, we now have a society that is confused over what Christianity is really all about & they see very few authentic & real Christ followers.
- **Authentic is a term that describes something genuine or real.**
 - When many of you go shopping for clothes, you go shopping for particular, authentic brands. You can find something cheaper, but it’s not Authentic.
 - I am convinced that there are many in the world today who are playing the part in their families, their jobs, their relationships, and even church and they are not being authentic with those closest to them ... they are putting on a show.
 - They are allowing people to see who they want them to see; but deep down, when they are alone & by themselves, they are a very different person.
 - Whether this is you or someone you know, rest assured what is hidden in secret will eventually be revealed.
 - John 7:4 – “For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret,”
- **Hypocrite: One who pretends to be what he is not;**
 - Matthew 15:8 – “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”
- **Hypocrisy, this act of pretending to be something we are not, is an easy act to fall into. That is why Jesus takes the time to address it here in Matthew 23.**
 - It was Tuesday of Jesus’ last week on earth. On Sunday, just 2 days before, He had rode into Jerusalem & been praised by the thousands proclaiming Him to be the Messiah.
 - On Monday, we find Jesus casting out the money changers in the temple for abusing & not reverencing the temple.

- These events compounded with the fear that the religious leaders already had about losing their authority & position over the people set up a series of events that would eventually lead to them crucifying our Lord in just a few short days.
- The tragedy in part was this ... these were the religious leaders! These were suppose to be the faithful, followers of Christ. Yet they were so far removed from God that they failed to recognize God's own Son.

➤ **READ SCRIPTURE**

➤ **Let me share with you the charges that Jesus brought against the Jewish leaders here in this chapter.**

1. They Make Salvation Complicated.

- Matthew 23:13
- Here Jesus is criticizing the Pharisees for making things more complicated than they needed to be in terms of salvation.
 - The Pharisees had rejected the Messiah as the way to God & mislead the people about what it took to please a Holy God.
 - Instead of accepting the free gift of salvation, they had chosen to make barriers to the Kingdom by requiring obedience to the religious laws.
- And as old-fashioned as that sounds, here we are today in 2015 trying to modify God's standard for salvation & making our own rules as to the qualifications for salvation.
- Salvation is simple, but there's nothing easy or cheap about the cost that was paid for it.
 - Salvation came b/c Jesus Christ left Heaven's throne & gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.
 - Salvation is not about:
 - church attendance, tithing, singing in the choir, Sunday school, good deeds, sacraments, or obeying the Ten Commandments.
 - Salvation is about:
 - The cross. Its about my sins and your sins that Jesus took to the cross. Its about Jesus being born once so that we could be born again. Its about the blood of a spotless Lamb that was shed to redeem a lost & wretched sinner like me. Its about placing my faith & my hope in Christ & Christ alone to purchase my redemption. Its about Him, its about Him, its about Him!

2. They Mistreat Others

- Matthew 23:14-15
- This was a group of men that were determined to get what they wanted, regardless of who they hurt in the process.
 - Surely that's not us this morning. Surely, that's not the church.
- People aren't tools, neither should they be treated like tools.
- To be indifferent to the impact our conduct has makes us a hypocrite.
- These religious men that we read about, they saw someone in poverty & instead of reaching out to help them, they devoured what little they had by requiring more offerings & more sacrifice.
 - As Christians, our desire should be to love Him & love others through our lives.
 - If there's a persistent pattern of hypocrisy in our lives that continues to hurt others & distract from the worship of Christ ... something is wrong with our faith.

3. They Misuse Oaths

- Matthew 23:16-17, 19-22

- The Pharisees were notorious for making promises & failing to follow through on them.
 - “You swore by the temple that you would do something & you didn’t do it.” They would reply, “But I didn’t swear by the gold in the temple.”
 - This is the kind of men they were. Always looking for loop holes to get around fulfilling their promises. Basically, when it wasn’t convenient to keep their promise, they would look for a way out.
- These were men who would be sincere in taking oaths, but they never had any intention to keep their promises.
- If you give your word, keep it. If you make a promise, keep it.

4. They Mistake Obligation

- a. Making a big deal of little things and ignoring things of critical importance.
- Matthew 23:23-24
- As Jesus confronts these men, they are boasting about counting every penny when it came to their tithe, yet they ignored some significant issues like justice, mercy, and faithfulness.
 - Justice: doing what’s right.
 - Let me tell you something. Helping the old lady across the road or showing up for Sunday School, and even tithing is important; but it means nothing if you don’t live in a manner where we do what is right.
 - If you tithe your 10% each week & yet you use people & treat them unfairly & never show the love of Christ to them, have you pleased God?
 - Mercy: not giving what they deserve.
 - Instead of walking around shoving judgment down people’s throats & always looking for others mistakes, why don’t you give a little room for the Lord to convict their hearts about some matters.
 - James 2:13 – “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”
 - In other words, do you know what’s more important than judgment? Mercy. We ought to be thankful that a loving God showed us mercy when we certainly deserved judgment.
 - Faithfulness: keep going
 - Christian, don’t give up. You may be here tonight & you are on the ropes spiritually. Don’t throw in the towel, keep going.
 - When I stand before God, one of the things I want God to remember about me is my faithfulness.
 - Matthew 25:23 – “His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”

5. They Mislead Others

- Matthew 23:25-28
- Here was a group of men that from the outside, looked pretty good.
 - They were doing the right things.
 - Looking the right way.
 - Saying the right things.
 - And from the outside, you would think they had it all together.
- But Jesus knows the inside, He knows the heart.

- I Samuel 16:7 – “But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”
- We are who we are when no one can see us. That is the true you.
 - Do you make an effort to act differently when you know others are watching? Why?
- If you stand at the Mount of Olives, you would see a cemetery where graves are as far as the eye can see. Every year before Passover, people used to clean the graves & whitewash everything so that it would look good for the festival.
- Though things looked clean & beautiful on the outside, they still contained dead, rotten, corps on the inside.
- Hypocrites desire the appeal from others & are looking to build their reputations even though they are rotting from the inside b/c of unrepented sin.
 - How many times do we come to church in our best Sunday outfits but we don't have a shred of spiritual readiness inside? We are not prepared to worship God, we are still carrying around sin from the past week, month, or year.
 - Did God speak to you last week at church? “Not really.” Did you pray & ask for Him to speak? Were you listening & prepared?
- If a spot on our outfit upsets us more than a sin-stained & unrepented heart, something is wrong with our faith.

6. Pretending to be better than others, no matter what the evidence.

- Matthew 23:29-31
- The people during this time greatly respected the ancient prophets from the Old Testament. However, oddly enough, the ancient people of Israel are the ones who murdered many of them.
- Now these religious leaders were standing up & proclaiming, “If we have been alive during that time, we would have never killed the prophets!”
 - Are you kidding me? Do you understand what is about to take place in just a short time as they falsely prosecute Jesus & demand his crucifixion be carried out.
- Matthew 23:32-36
- Jesus was saying their future actions would prove that they were just as evil as their forefathers. They were no better.
- A lifetime of unrepented hypocrisy reveals that a person has never truly been born again.
- **Hold on though. Before we go away thinking that Jesus was just there to reign down judgment on them & walk away, take a look at v.37.**
 - Jesus remembered what God had done for these people in the past. He had blessed them in more ways than they could count & now He was prepared to save them, but they had turned their backs on His Only Son.
 - Now with tears streaming down His face, Jesus cries out, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee,”
 - Was Jesus weeping over just Jerusalem? No, He was weeping over a lost world. He was weeping over those that chose to live in sin.
 - But let me remind you this morning, He did more than just weep for men. He died for them. He gave of His own life so that they might be set free. There is nothing more He can do, the choice is now yours.
- **Here is the lesson in this entire story. Make sure that your religion is not just external, not just a show for others. It must penetrate to the heart & make a change in our lives.**
 - It must be a matter of having Christ in your heart & in mine.