

Jesus- Hypocrisy

If you have ever gone out knocking on doors for the sake of the gospel and the kingdom, you have most likely met someone, or more likely several people, some claiming to be Christian, others not, who use as their excuse for not becoming a Christian or not coming to church- “The church is full of Hypocrites.” Though my first thought to respond has often been, “Well why don’t you come join us. I’m sure you’ll fit right in.” Wisdom and discipline has caught me before I spoke and I just simply and humbly agreed. In actuality, the church is full of hypocrites.

The truth is: Every word and deed that does not reflect a perfect image of the glory of Christ in us is hypocrisy. We are all flawed. We are not like Jesus. We do often fail to present ourselves in the church and community in the pure likeness of Christ. Some people and some churches fail more miserably than others to perfectly display the likeness of Christ, but we are all hypocrites.

It is a shame that the church as a whole has given the world so many reasons to judge our hypocrisy. It is likely those very people who are the most judgmental of the church’s hypocrisy are the most empty, hungry and needy for something real and true, and we often fail to present ourselves in a way that they can see their emptiness and need to fill that emptiness with Jesus.

As far as my study has revealed, Jesus, in all His earthly ministry, only got seriously angry over two issues: (1) the corrupt **buying and selling in the temple** and (2) **hypocrisy**. What did Jesus have to say about hypocrisy? What can we learn? How can we better conduct ourselves in the church and

community that would cause even the skeptics to take notice of our Christ-likeness rather than condemn our hypocrisy? How can we reduce the perceptions and realities of hypocrisy that so many outside the church are so turned off by?

Today we will study the teaching of Jesus and dealing with the matter of hypocrisy. Just to make sure we're all on the same page a hypocrite is: *One who puts on a mask and feigns himself to be what he is not;* -Easton's Illustrated Dictionary

Hypocrisy issues:

1. Serving/sacrificing to be seen

1 "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of people, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. **2** So whenever you give to the poor, don't sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. I assure you: They've got their reward! **3** But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. **Matt 6:1-4 (HCSB)**

5 "Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. I assure you: They've got their reward! **6** But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. **7** When you pray,

don't babble like the idolaters, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words. ⁸ Don't be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask Him. **Matt 6:5-8 (HCSB)**

16 "Whenever you fast, don't be sad-faced like the hypocrites. For they make their faces unattractive so their fasting is obvious to people. I assure you: They've got their reward! ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head, and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that you don't show your fasting to people but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. **Matt 6:16-18 (HCSB)**

Sacrificial giving to the poor, prayer, and fasting are some of the most honorable, beneficial, righteous, godly, Christ-like things you could possibly do unless you do them to be seen, praised or applauded by people. This simple wrong motive can turn some of the most godly behavior into the most ungodly hypocrisy.

It is obvious that in Jesus' day there were many who did all the right things but for the wrong reasons. It was all for show. It gave many in that day justifiable cause to doubt and question the God of Israel because the supposed agents of the faith were such hypocritical performers. They were a mile wide with their pomp and show and an inch deep in their faith. Were they trying to increase their power and influence over the people or were they really insecure? We don't know, but I think it is pretty safe to assume, especially as we examine the severity of Jesus' harsh judgment of them, that it was a power and influence motivated hypocrisy.

The tough and tempting thing is that we all have this innate need to be recognized and encouraged by others. We all need to be pat on the back and be told “good job.” We all want to be admired and looked up to. We all struggle with feeling insignificant and underappreciated. This type of hypocrisy is an easy trap to fall into especially since we really should want to perform, teach, lead well for the sake of the body of Christ and His glory. Keep this in mind.....

The greatest among you will be your servant. Matt 23:11 (HCSB)

We must remember who the audience is. We must approach all that we do in church and for the kingdom, especially those things that tend to draw public attention, with the heart of a servant who gives all the glory to his Master. Then let Him encourage and reward you.

2. Judging

¹ “Do not judge, so that you won’t be judged. ² For with the judgment you use, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye but don’t notice the log in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and look, there’s a log in your eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. ⁶ Don’t give what is holy to dogs or toss your pearls before pigs, or they will trample them with their feet, turn, and tear you to pieces.

Matt 7:1-6 (HCSB)

“Do not judge.” This is not a suggestion. It is a command! There are serious consequences to this hypocrisy but we do it anyway. How is judging hypocrisy? As Jesus’ very vivid picture portrays, our own eyes are full of logs (sin) while we’re trying to take specks of dust (sin) out of our brothers’ eyes. It is hypocrisy to the worst degree. When we judge we are putting on a mask and thinking we are capable of playing the role of the One and only qualified Judge, Creator God. No wonder the world is so turned off by so much of what the church stands for.

How is judging manifested in the day by day function of the church? Gossip, slander, backbiting, putting down, humiliating and in your face, or someone else’s, condemnation.

1 “Do not judge, so that you won’t be judged. **2** For with the judgment you use, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. **Matt 7:1-2 (HCSB)**

3. Tradition over Obedience

1 Then Pharisees and scribes came from Jerusalem to Jesus and asked, **2** “Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they don’t wash their hands when they eat!” **3** He answered them, **“And why do you break God’s commandment because of your tradition? **4** For God said: **Honor your father and your mother; and, The one who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death.** **5** But you say, ‘Whoever tells his father or mother, ‘Whatever benefit you might have received from me is a gift [committed to the temple]’— **6** he does not have to honor his father.’ In this way, you have revoked God’s word because of your tradition. **7** Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when**

he said: ⁸ **These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.** ⁹ **They worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commands of men."**

Matt 15:1-9 (HCSB)

Nowhere do I see that Jesus condemned traditions. What got Jesus all fired up about was when the Jewish leaders gave their traditions higher authority and importance than God's commands. And what made Jesus even more angry was when their traditions contradicted God's commands.

Example: What is more important, that songs and sermons be faithful to all of scripture and honor Christ, or that we like and are comfortable with the style and/or presentation? But what have people fought and churches split over? Style and presentation (tradition)! When we talk about the preacher's sermon, we don't talk about the content near as much as we talk about the presentation. And when it comes to the music we use to enhance our worship, this is where the fighting really begins. Old and new, traditional and contemporary, familiar and unfamiliar, piano, organ, piano, guitar, drums..... This has without a doubt been the number one subject of conflict in the church as a whole for at least the last 100 years and it is all about tradition. This is hypocrisy. If we're going to fight, if we must fight at all, we must take up the fight for truth and righteousness. But, in my 35 years of ministry, I've seen very few people ever make any kind of stand for a truth related issue. It is always about tradition.

Most traditions are fine, just be sure that they remain in their proper place subordinate to the Commandments of God. Jesus got very angry and condemning of those who put their traditions and practices over the fundamental principles of God

Commands. That was extremely dangerous and foolish. That was hypocrisy.....Let's read one more encounter Jesus had with the religious hypocrites of His day.....

¹³ "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You lock up the kingdom of heaven from people. For you don't go in, and you don't allow those entering to go in.

[¹⁴ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You devour widows' houses and make long prayers just for show.This is why you will receive a harsher punishment.]

¹⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to make one proselyte, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as fit for hell as you are!

¹⁶ "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever takes an oath by the sanctuary, it means nothing. But whoever takes an oath by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by his oath.' ¹⁷ Blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that sanctified the gold? ¹⁸ Also, 'Whoever takes an oath by the altar, it means nothing. But whoever takes an oath by the gift that is on it is bound by his oath.' ¹⁹ Blind people! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? ²⁰ Therefore the one who takes an oath by the altar takes an oath by it and by everything on it. ²¹ The one who takes an oath by the sanctuary takes an oath by it and by Him who dwells in it. ²² And the one who takes an oath by heaven takes an oath by God's throne and by Him who sits on it.

²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, yet you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. These things should have been done without neglecting the others. ²⁴ Blind guides! You strain out a gnat, yet gulp down a camel!

²⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence! ²⁶ Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so the outside of it may also become clean.

²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and every impurity. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you seem righteous to people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

²⁹ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ and you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we wouldn’t have taken part with them in shedding the prophets’ blood.’ ³¹ You therefore testify against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ sins! ³³ “Snakes! Brood of vipers! How can you escape being condemned to hell? Matt 23:1-36 (HCSB)

Lessons from the Master:

Hypocrisy makes Jesus angry- I prefer to do everything I can to avoid angering anyone. There are few that I would be honored if they were angry at me. But, it scares me to death to think anything I did or might do would make my Lord angry..... Avoid the three hypocrisies..

Serve humbly- Serve with a servants heart always giving the glory to Christ. Serve humbly and faithfully and He will encourage you.

Don't judge- You are not God. He alone is qualified to condemn, criticize or judge your brother. Every time you speak a negative word to or about your brother or sister, even if it's true, you are committing one of the grossest hypocrisies. The unsaved are turned off in droves by the vicious language we use against each other. **"By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

Obey God not traditions- Most traditions are OK but they cannot take precedent or priority over God's commands and greater purposes.

Conclusion: There is hypocrisy everywhere in and out of the church. You can gripe and complain about and use it as an excuse to not be faithful or serve God or even come at all, or you can join me in leading this church in a passionate effort to be different. We should and we

cannot just settle for that's the way things are. We must fight hypocrisy with truth, humility, fairness and grace.