

Date: May 1, 2022

Series: *Building Inspection - Things that Tear Down the Body*

Title: *Hypocrisy*

Text: Matthew 23: 1-7, 13-15, 23-33

Preacher: Mark Adams

Report of the Presbytery – Patrick Germain

Deacon Testimony – Ruth Figueroa

My name is Ruth Figueroa. It is my privilege to serve as a deacon here at Redland Baptist Church and I humbly accept to serve God and this church with all my heart. My husband's name is Luis and our children are Gaby and Eddy, they are both in college now. I was born and raised in my beautiful Guatemala - I have 4 brothers. My parents served God all their lives. My dad still with us. Even though my mom passed away in 2013 - Both of their teachings and examples remain with me and challenge me every day. It is my desire to follow their example and legacy of love and serving God. I made my decision to follow God at the age of eight years old and I got baptized. We as a family were involved in church since I was little girl. We went to church a few days a week, we were part of Sunday school, memorizing the scripture and learning of the children's Bible stories. We enjoy summer schools every year. I started working at my church at the age of 18 and was part of their ministry for a few years. As a young adult I wanted to go into missions. I served in Sunday school and women's ministry. I served in my church in Florida back in the 90's and I was ordained as a deacon then as well. My prayer is that "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15" Thank you

Charge to the Candidates---and the Church

Thank YOU Ruth. We are very thankful that God has called you to serve and that you have answered His call. I know God is going to use you to help our church be built up!

As I said last week, my day off is Thursday and with three grandkids only 45 minutes away, Sue and I spend most of those Thursdays driving to see one or all three. We often use our time on the beltway to listen to podcasts and my favorite by far was put out by *Christianity Today* entitled, "*The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill.*" Has anyone else listened to it? Lots of people have, so far it has racked up over 2.5 million downloads. It's #1 ranking on Apple's religion podcasts, and in the top three of all their podcasts. And I can understand why---it is very well done.

There are nine hour-long episodes, and each is sadder than the last because it tells the story of a church---an entire ministry---that did not remain BUILT-UP. It all came tumbling down because of their once famous---now infamous---pastor: Mark Driscoll. The church was called Mars Hill Church and it was headquartered in Seattle, Washington. At one time it was more of a denomination because it had started churches all over the U.S.

I won't share the entire story, but I will say that the main reason Mars Hill became defunct is because of the hypocrisy on the part of its pastor.

For example:

- Driscoll claimed to love his staff---and welcome their input---but he fired his personal assistant because she lovingly mentioned he might benefit from some mentoring by older pastors. Driscoll justified her termination by telling everyone she was a heretic.
- When the church staff travelled to help start a new church---Driscoll stayed in a five-star hotel---but put the rest of the staff in a cheap motel.
- Driscoll wrote a book and then used church funds to purchase a million copies---in a successful plot to get that book on the New York Times bestsellers list.

One of the final episodes included testimonies of former staff members who said that Mark was a hypocrite in so many ways---that over the years they realized that this man they once admired---was just a fake.

One thing our time listening to this podcast underscored is the destructive power of hypocrisy. I mean, in addition to their main campus in Seattle, dozens of churches basically dissolved in October of 2014. Mars Hill Church is further proof of the importance of a “building inspection” to make sure this sinful attitude isn’t present.

And again, this is not a time to inspect others---but ourselves. The purpose of this sermon series is to pray as King David did---a time for each of us to ask God to **“search us---to know our hearts---to see if there are any wicked ways”** in us. (Psalm 139) This is a time for us to repent of any of these church-destroying sins and allow God to lead us in the **“everlasting way”** --- the CHURCH-BUILDING UP way.

And I think it’s a God-thing that this topic happened to fall on the day when we are ordaining a new deacon---because of course we expect---we charge---our deacons to be real---authentic Christ-followers. But, as I said, today’s charge is not just for Ruth or our deacons or even our pastoral staff---it’s for all of us.

Okay, let’s begin with a definition.

WHAT EXACTLY IS HYPOCRISY?

Well, like many of our English words, this word originated in the Greek language as a theatrical term. You see, in Greek theater an actor often played multiple rolls in the same play by disguising himself with a series of masks. For example, he might come in from one side of the stage wearing a smiling mask, as he delivered one-liners to make the people laugh. Then later he would enter from the other side wearing a frowning mask as he delivered solemn, sad lines.

Well, this actor was called a *“hypocrite”*---someone with two or more *“faces.”* Over the years this Greek word took on negative connotations and eventually it evolved to mean *“two-faced,”* describing someone who said one thing and did another---someone who pretended to be something his or her actions did not back up.

Jesus encountered two-faced people several times during His earthly ministry, especially in the lives of the religious leaders of that day and whenever He did, He always condemned it severely. In fact, in one message He did so no fewer than SEVEN times, denouncing the religious establishment by repeating the same strong rebuke over and over again: ***“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”***

Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew 23. Stand with me and count out loud how many times Jesus uses this phrase. I’ll be reading verses 1-7, 13-15, and 23-33.

Matthew 23:1-7, 13-15, 23-33

1 – Then Jesus said to the crowds and to His disciples:

2 – *“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.*

3 – *So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.*

4 – *They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.*

5 – *Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;*

6 – *they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues;*

7 – *they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’*

13 – *WOE TO YOU, TEACHERS OF THE LAW AND PHARISEES, YOU HYPOCRITES! You shut the Kingdom of Heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.*

14 – *WOE TO YOU, TEACHERS OF THE LAW AND PHARISEES, YOU HYPOCRITES! You devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore, you will be punished more severely.*

15 – *WOE TO YOU, TEACHERS OF THE LAW AND PHARISEES, YOU HYPOCRITES! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.*

- 23 – WOE TO YOU, TEACHERS OF THE LAW AND PHARISEES, YOU HYPOCRITES! You give a tenth of your spices-mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.**
- 24 – You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.**
- 25 – WOE TO YOU, TEACHERS OF THE LAW AND PHARISEES, YOU 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 and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.**
- 27 – WOE TO YOU, TEACHERS OF THE LAW AND PHARISEES, YOU HYPOCRITES! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean.**
- 28 – In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.**
- 29 – WOE TO YOU, TEACHERS OF THE LAW AND PHARISEES, YOU HYPOCRITES! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous.**
- 30 – And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’**
- 31 – So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets.**
- 32 – Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!**
- 33 – You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to Hell?**

After reading this text, does any have any doubt as to HOW Jesus feels about hypocrisy?!

Our Lord was obviously upset with these guys because He knew the damage that their poisonous hypocritical attitudes and actions had caused. Think of it.

- These Pharisees pretended to be spiritually strong but were carnal and impotent.
- They sounded righteous but were void of spiritual substance.

And with all their two-faced legalism these spiritual leaders had pushed people away from God---rather than toward Him. Unfortunately, Driscoll is just one in a long line of high-profile Christian leaders who have said one thing in the pulpit and did another thing when out of it---people like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day who, **“...did not practice what they preach and in so doing shut the Kingdom of Heaven in men’s faces.”**

But, we mustn’t fall into the trap of thinking that pastors and other spiritual leaders are the only ones who allow themselves to become ensnared with hypocritical attitudes and actions. The truth is we are all guilty of hypocrisy in one form or another.

Philip Yancey tells about a special Bible study he led years ago on the person of Christ---a study that led to the writing of his wonderful book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*. He says that at one session, the group began to discuss the hypocritical legalism of some Christians and as they swapped “war stories,” Yancey topped them all by sharing his own feelings about Moody Bible Institute back in the ’70’s. Apparently at that time the school had a rule banning all beards, mustaches, and hair below the ears of male students, even though each day students filed past a large oil painting of Dwight L. Moody, a painting that revealed he was the facial-haired breaker of all three rules. Everyone laughed at Yancey’s story---except a class member named Greg who fidgeted in his seat obviously offended. Finally, Greg raised his hand and rage and indignation spilled out as he said,

“I feel like walking out of this place. You criticize others for being Pharisees. I’ll tell you who the real Pharisees are. They’re YOU (pointing at Yancey) and the rest of you people in this class. You think you’re so high and mighty and mature. Listen---I became a Christian because of Moody Church. You find a group to look down upon to feel more spiritual than, and you talk about them behind their backs. That’s what a Pharisee does. You’re all Pharisees!!!”

Yancey writes, *“All eyes in the class turned to me for a reply, but I had none to offer. Greg was right. He had caught us all red-handed for, in a twist of spiritual arrogance, we were now looking down on other people for being Pharisees.”*

Eventually each of the class members, Yancey included, offered their apologies and the class ended on a good note---but it shows how easy we can all arrogantly slip into self-righteous hypocrisy.

Think about it.

- We tear someone down with our gossip so we can feel superior, but we justify our comments by saying we are doing this so that others may *“pray more intelligently.”*
- We are quick to criticize others and so often our true motive is not to correct and make things right---as much as it is to be seen and admired for our superior intelligence.
- We sing *“Jesus is Lord of All”* when more often than not, it is our own hands on the steering wheel of our lives.

All this reminds me of a line from Tennessee Williams’ play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, where Big Daddy says, *“Mendacity, everyone is filled with mendacity. Nobody is really what he or she seems to be.”* Well, perhaps if we take a few minutes to review some of the types of DAMAGE the poison of hypocrisy can cause, it will motivate us to begin practicing what we preach so let’s do so.

1. **First, hypocrisy tears down our relationship with GOD.**

You see, hypocrisy is a form of deceit and God hates all forms of falsehood. As Proverbs 12:22 says, ***“The Lord detests lying lips, but He delights in men who are truthful.”***

In our text for last week from Proverbs 6 there is a well-known list of actions that put a wedge between us and God and three of them have to do with deceit. Listen to what it says, ***“There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to Him: haughty eyes, a LYING tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a FALSE WITNESS who pours out LIES and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.”***

So, the Bible is very clear when it comes to telling us how God feels about any form of deceit---which would of course include hypocrisy.

Why does God hate hypocrisy so? Well, one reason is because God is TRUTH.

- John 17:3 says that He is, ***“the only TRUE God.”***
- Jesus said, ***“I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life.”*** (John 14:6).
- And, in John 16:13, the Holy Spirit is called the ***“Spirit of Truth.”***

So, just as God defines what it means to be good, holy, and pure; He also defines what it means to be true. And because He does, He cannot tolerate falsehood.

But there’s more to it than that.

God hates hypocrisy because He loves us. He wants to have an authentic relationship with us. He wants us to know Him and be honest and open with Him. God grieves when we act like the people in Romans 1---the people who ***“exchange the truth of God for a lie.”***

God WANTS us to be real with Him!

Do you remember what Jesus said on Palm Sunday as He looked out over the crowds?

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.” (Luke 13:34)

Do you know when I feel closest to God? It’s when I am absolutely honest with Him. It’s those times when I pour my heart out to Him and say things like:

“God, I am having some real anxiety about all this---gather me under Your wings and help me feel the peace of your closeness.”

Or

“God, I don’t know what to do here---help me---gather me under Your wings---draw me close and tell me what to do.”

Or

“God, I messed up. I sinned AGAIN! I am desperate for Your forgiveness---gather me under Your wings and help me feel Your love once more.”

You can’t have a close relationship with God---if you’re not REAL.

2. And then, hypocrisy also tears US down.

I mean, the more we pretend to be what we’re not---the easier it is for us to do so. And the more we do this---the more we pretend---the more we begin to lose our real self. Over the years hypocrites become less real---less genuine. It’s just as the old country preacher warned, *“Be who you is, ’cause if you ain’t who you is, you is who you ain’t.”* This is good advice for us to heed for when we live hypocritical lives the real “us” begins to DIE inside.

A farmer once cut down a huge tree that was on his land. It looked good from the outside, but he discovered that the heart of the tree was rotten. He looked closely at it and found a huge old nail. Apparently, years ago someone had driven it in the tree, and it had caused the heart of the tree to rot.

This is how it is with the life of the hypocritical person. His life becomes a hollow shell as his spiritual life withers and dies.

3. Hypocrisy tears down our FELLOWSHIP with other Christians.

I mean we all know what it feels like to have a friend we trusted and admired BETRAY our trust with hypocritical actions. We feel deceived when we learn they were pretending to walk with God, but in reality were embracing sinful actions. Hypocrisy destroys our fellowship because for fellowship to be sweet there must be honesty. As Paul says in Romans 12:9 ***“Love must be sincere.”***

To enjoy each other’s company---to build up this church---we have to be able to trust one another. As I said last week, we ARE social beings. We need relationships to be happy. We want to get along with one another and live in harmony. But this is not possible if we cannot trust one another, and hypocrisy destroys trust. It knocks the foundation out from under any relationship---even our relationships with other Christians. If we are to be ONE body---if we are to experience deep, authentic, BODY-BUILDING fellowship, then as Paul told the Ephesians, we must, ***“...put off falsehood and speak [and also live] truthfully, with our neighbors.”*** (Ephesians 4:25)

Perhaps it was the Apostle Peter’s hypocrisy that prompted Paul to write these words. Do you remember the stinging rebuke Paul gave the big fisherman when Peter stopped eating with the Gentile believers when the Jews from Jerusalem showed up? Listen to this paraphrase of Paul’s words in Galatians 2:11-14.

“Peter, I smell ham on your breath. You forgot your TIC TACS. There was a time when you wouldn’t eat ham as part of your hope of salvation. Then after you trusted Christ, it didn’t matter. But now when the no-ham eaters have come from Jerusalem you’ve gone back to your kosher ways. Hypocrite!”

Peter’s hypocrisy poisoned his fellowship with Paul---and that’s the way it always is. It is no wonder John Stott wrote, ***“What cancer is to the body, hypocrisy is to the church. It is a killing agent.”***

But you know, there is a less malevolent form of hypocrisy in the church and it can also poison true fellowship. I’m referring to PRETENDING---acting like something we’re not. And we pretend for two reasons.

Sometimes people pretend to get away with sin---or to hurt others---which is basically what we've been talking about up until this point---but others pretend to PROTECT themselves. They HIDE their true selves behind masks because they're afraid not to. Research psychologists tell us there are three main situations when we do this---times when we do not act like ourselves.

- Surveys show that first, most people put on airs when they are in the lobby of a fancy hotel.
- Second, we do this when dealing with a salesman in the showroom of a car dealer.
- And the third place their research says most of us pretend is when we enter God's house!

Even here---perhaps especially here---most people are afraid to be fully known.

Well, this second kind of hypocrisy is another reason our fellowship as believers is not stronger.

Paul Tournier writes about this and says, *"Each of us does his best to hide behind a shield. For one it is a mysterious silence which constitutes an impenetrable retreat. For another it is silver-tongued chit-chat. One hides behind his timidity so that we cannot find anything to say to him.*

Another hides behind a brazen self-assurance which renders him invulnerable."

And he is right. We do hide from each other don't we!

- Some hide behind the mask of intelligence.
- Others use ignorance.
- Others use humor.
- Some mask themselves with busy-ness.

In the church many mask themselves with spirituality. They quote Bible verses or speak of *"having deep peace"* or of *"God being in control"* when the truth is inside they are terrified because they feel like their lives are out of control! As someone put it, *"Their words are moats of protection, not bridges of relationship. It may be a stained-glass mask but it's a mask just the same."*

Well, think about it. Do you ever wear a mask in church? If so, what is it? What is it that makes you pretend---what is it that keeps you from the deep fellowship with other believers that we all crave? Listen---mask-wearing---hiding our true selves---keeps us from making friends because as someone put it, *"We can't be fully loved until we are fully known."*

I love my grandkids---I love being with them. It is worth a 45-minute drive around the beltway---or a FOUR-HOUR drive down I-95 to see them. I mean, they are so refreshing---because children don't wear masks! They are real---honest. And you know what I mean.

- If they are hungry---they tell you.
- If they are mad---they tell you.
- If their diaper needs changing---they tell you.

If they hear the ice cream truck coming or if they are told they have to eat their Brussel sprouts or if they think there's a monster under the bed, their faces tell you exactly what's in their hearts.

It's only when we get older that we learn to wear masks: to look confident when our hearts are scared, to look pious when our hearts are full of temptation or guilt. We may admire adults who learn to wear masks like these, but we're not drawn to them. No, we're drawn to people who, like our children, don't wear masks. We're drawn to REAL people. And for us to have REAL fellowship we need to be REAL---we need to put down our masks and be like the church in Jerusalem, where the members, *"met with glad and SINCERE hearts."*

So, hypocrisy tears down our relationship with God; it tears us down; it tears down our fellowship with other Christians.

4. ...but it also tears down our WITNESS.

As the late Brennan Manning put it, *“The single most cause of atheism in the world today is Christians---who acknowledge Jesus with their lips but walk out of the church doors and deny Him with their lifestyle. This is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.”*

That old monk was right. When non-Christians find us living non-Christian lifestyles, they decide Jesus isn't for them. I mean, they are looking for something to make a difference in their lives, something to help them fill that empty place in their hearts that only God can fill---and inside they wonder if we might know what or Who that is. But when they see us---God's children---living ungodly lives they assume our relationship with God is worthless. They tell themselves this Jesus thing doesn't work, and they look elsewhere. As Edgar Guest said in his poem, *“It is all in vain to preach the truth, to the eager ears of trusting youth---if whenever the lad is standing by, he sees you cheat and he hears you lie.”* One skeptic, who'd apparently seen hypocritical Christian behavior wrote, *“A Christian is a man who feels repentance on a Sunday for what he did on Saturday and is going to do on Monday.”*

Non-Christians have their eyes trained on us and if your life indicates that your faith is fake---that you just wear a “faith mask”---they won't listen to what you have to say. Your evangelistic endeavors will fall flat. We must all be REAL---we must be AUTHENTIC.

This is one thing that made Mr. Rogers so successful. Amy Hollingsworth has written a book about this TV legend and she says, *“When he needed to wear contact lenses and heavier make up during the last years of taping he began to grow weary. It smacked of in-authenticity to him to exchange his glasses for contacts and cover his wrinkles with make-up. When he couldn't offer himself just as he was, he knew it was time to wave his final good-bye.”*

This authenticity is what made so many of us love and admire Mr. Rogers and to beat hypocrisy we need the same mind set.

Let's stop now and pray---asking God to forgive us and cleanse us from the poison of hypocrisy that we invite into our lives. Let's all bow our heads and take a few moments to examine our lives and to confess to God our failings when it comes to this particular sin. Then I'll close our prayer.

Father God, Take the scales off our eyes so we can see all the ways we embrace the deceit of hypocrisy---all the ways we pretend. Help us to see the damage this causes-so we will turn to You for forgiveness and healing. Give us the confidence in You that we need to be the individuals You made us to be. Help us to live such that people recognize us as Your children and are drawn to put their faith in Your Son. I ask all this in JESUS' name. AMEN

Ruth, one reason we asked you to serve as a deacon is because we admire your authenticity---your example is one we can all look to.

Responsive Reading – All

Declaration of Induction – Mark Adams

Ruth, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the authority committed to me as Pastor of this congregation, I now declare you to be set apart and commissioned for the work of a Deacon, and duly called and installed to that ministry in this church. You may be seated.

Ordination Prayer – Jim Arnie

Closing – Mark Adams

We sing now to give you an opportunity to respond to God's leading in your life---to join this church or come to the altar and pray---or to publicly confess your faith in Jesus. And as we do, I would remind you that one of the biggest masks people wear, is the mask of self-righteousness a mask that basically says, *“I don't need God's forgiveness. I don't need Him in my life.”* If you wear that mask this morning then listen to the words of 1st John 1:8 & 10 where it says, ***“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us-if we claim we have not sinned we make***

God a liar and His Word has no place in our lives.” If you’ve never taken this mask off and admitted your sin to Jesus--- asking for His forgiveness, I invite you to do so this morning. Give Him your heart and life.

Won’t you all come now as God leads?