

Jesus and the Hypocrite

Luke 11:37–54 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION:

Several years ago, a major Christian organization studied the most common objections people had to the Gospel. Thousands of people were surveyed about why they would not become Christians, and the most common response was, ***“The church is full of hypocrites.”***

I’ve heard that, and I’m sure you have - when we press further, they typically say something like, ***“Well, I know one guy who goes to church every Sunday, but I know that he drinks too much on weekends and says things he shouldn’t say.”***

Well, that’s not good, but ***that is not hypocrisy; that’s called being a sinner.***

The church is not full of hypocrites, but it is full of sinners. In fact, we are the only organization on the planet where being a sinner is a prerequisite for membership.

Craig Groshael said it this way -

- Hypocrisy is not the gap between what we do and what we wish we did. EX: *I wish I didn’t think that, but I did. I wish I didn’t say that, but I did. That’s a sin but not hypocrisy.*
- Hypocrisy is the gap between what we advertise ourselves to be and what we actually are.

Hypocrisy is when a person intentionally lives in such a way that makes one think he or she is something they are not.

It can be very, very damaging - in fact, true hypocrisy was one of the things Jesus hated the most, and he waged war against it. The harshest words Jesus ever spoke were reserved for the Hypocrite.

GREEK - The Greek word Jesus used is hupo - crates - The word means an actor. The Greek actors would wear masks that portrayed whatever emotion the part required.

- **SAD** - So if the Actor was playing a sad role, he would wear a mask with a frown and tear drops rolling down the cheeks.
- **ANGRY** - If the Actor was playing the part of an angry character, the mask would be an angry mask.

A Hypocrite does the same thing— *he or she portrays something externally that is incongruent with internal reality.*

The Pharisees of Jesus' day had cornered the market on Hypocrisy.

CONTEXT: It wasn't easy to become a Pharisee. An elaborate season of testing was associated with becoming a Pharisee, then a season of observation. Two things they watched primarily - your purity and your tithing.

- **Tithing** had to be exact, and for that reason, it was very public. If you remember the story of the *widow's mite*, giving was done in a public setting in the temple courts. The giving receptacles were large vases overlaid with metal. When someone contributed, a loud noise indicated the size of the gift, whether large or small. Remember the story of the widow's mite? People heard the light ringing of the mite when she tossed it in the vase.
- **Purity** - not just in the sexual sense, but in the ceremonial sense. They were to be ceremonially pure or clean. This involved a detailed ritual cleansing and washing the hands to ensure one had not been defiled in the slightest way.

When God gave the Law to Moses, it was written down exactly as God intended. But over time, an oral tradition developed called the "Mishnah". It was not inspired of God,

As the Mishnah says, "Tradition is a fence around the Law" (Aboth 3.14).

So you have what God actually said, then people would do it - layer after layer. The problem with doing that is - over time, the secondary layers become more important than the original.

ILLUSTRATION: If you've ever been to the Grand Canyon, in some parts you will see the official federal fences set up to protect the onlooker, but you will also see 4 or 5 additional fences of all sorts that have been put up over the years.

It starts out as well intended, but over time, it becomes very problematic - it's like the mom who doesn't want her child to drown, so she doesn't allow him to take swimming lessons.

When this happens spiritually - we find the essence of legalism - elevating man-made rules over God's word. It happens slowly and subtly, and you get caught up in it without realizing it. **Legalism is the kindling of Hypocrisy.**

It's dangerous for your soul, but it's *doubly dangerous for your kids* and those you influence. You see, kids are raised believing the Bible teaches certain things that it does not. Then, when they see that they cannot live up to the standard, they are exasperated and give up, assuming they can never be pleasing to God.

Maybe some of you are here today and are in that situation. Maybe you have almost thrown in the towel on Christianity - or maybe... it's not Jesus who has frustrated you at all, but modern-day Pharisees.

TEXT: Luke 11:37–54 (ESV)

³⁷ While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. ³⁸ The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner.

The Pharisee is not concerned about hygiene but rather adherence to an unbiblical rule. Jesus didn't obey the tradition.

What follows is *how Jesus ministered to the Hypocrite*. Let me warn you it is not what you typically expect from Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION: Wednesday night, we talked about this some. We tend to think of Jesus' words as always being **kind and helpful**. That is very true—but it's not that simple. You see, you must first **DEFINE** kind and helpful, and you must do so by biblical standards.

For instance - If I said a particular group is like a ***“wad of baby rattlesnakes,”*** ***does that sound like a Christlike thing to say?*** It should - because Christ said it.

So remember, the words and the tone Jesus uses in this text were reserved for a particular stronghold - that of hypocrisy.

FOUR WAYS TO RECOGNIZE HYPOCRISY:**1. Hypocrites Misappropriate Repentance**

³⁹ And the Lord said to him, ***“Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.*** ⁴⁰ ***You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?*** ⁴¹ ***But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.***

ILLUSTRATION: Suppose your children were doing the dishes and you discovered they were simply wiping down the outside of bowls and not actually washing the bowl. Jesus said, that is what the Hypocrite is doing.

Notice that the problem was not that they didn't repent at all; the problem was that they only repented in public areas of life.

They made changes outwardly—they changed how they dressed and how they spoke, and they adopted a number of religious rituals. People who knew them might say, *“Wow, he really got religion.”* But the change was only skin deep.

This is a unique danger to our culture. **We value authenticity but often don't know it when we see it.**

- We spend big dollars to get jeans that look like they have been worn to the work site day after day. We pay extra if they have a few holes ripped in them. Why? We want them to LOOK legit.
- We buy furniture that LOOKS distressed? Why? Because that's authentic.
- We buy T-shirts from bands we've never seen in concert.
- Back when I trained in Martial Arts, I had a fellow student who would tie his black belt to the hitch of his truck so that it looked well-worn. Didn't make him kick any better.

My favorite is the rush to get tattoos because some Christian celebrity got one. Because it shows you have street cred. :)

Well, none of those things matter except when they cross over into our real spiritual lives.

- See, you can't get a **soul** that looks like it prays a lot.
- You can't get a **heart** that appears to be generous.
- You can't get a **mind** that seems to be fixed on things above.

BUT you can fake it outwardly. Look at how the Pharisees did it -

[42. "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."](#)

These men tithed their spices. They went to meticulous detail to ensure they got tithing right - why? Because in that day people saw it. But they didn't go into meticulous detail to ensure they actually loved God.

Jesus didn't say - stop tithing. He said, "These you ought to have done... but do the other as well!"

Hypocrites Misappropriate Repentance....

2. Hypocrites Misrepresent Reality

[43. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.](#) [44. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."](#)

The Hypocrite puts a premium on PUBLIC acknowledgment. They want their works seen and acknowledged by others. But they ignored PRIVATE righteousness.

Jesus compared them to unmarked graves - Remember, the law commanded them to avoid contact with the dead. So, graves had to be whitewashed so people could walk around them. But Jesus said, "You are like unmarked graves". People would encounter death unknowingly just by being around you.

They were dead spiritually. That was the reality - but they tried to look like they actually had spiritual life.

ILLUSTRATION: Billy Graham once said, “The great danger of our society is that people can become inoculated from the truth.” If you get a flu shot, the idea is that they take some of the inert flu cells and put them in you—hoping your body will develop antibodies to combat the real flu. The same can happen spiritually; you can so surround yourself with the accouterments of Christianity that you become convinced that you have it inside you. Those are the most difficult people to reach with the Gospel.

Graham also said, “Our greatest mission field is not the foreign mission field or the home mission field but the mission field of our churches.”

That was my story for years - I was in church whenever doors were open. But when someone asked me about my understanding of salvation - Jesus had nothing to do with it. I had Christian things around me, but no Christ within me.

Hypocrites Misappropriate Repentance....

Hypocrites Misrepresent Reality....

3. Hypocrites Mislead People

⁴⁵ One of the lawyers answered him, “Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also.”

⁴⁶ And he said, “Woe to you lawyers also!”

In other words, “Oh yes, thanks for the reminder...”

Lawyers in this context are basically ecclesiastical lawyers - or those who study and enforce rabbinical law. They were the theologians of the day.

Three ways Hypocrites Mislead People -

a. By Championing Legalism

⁴⁶ And he said, “Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.”

Hypocrites love legalism. Legalism is elevating man-made rules above the Word of God. Let me show you the difference between proper spiritual disciplines and legalism.

- **Spending time with God is a Biblical Discipline** - Demanding that people spend a certain amount of time in a particular place or a specific form of prayer - is legalism.
- **Worship is a Biblical Discipline** - Demanding a particular form of worship is legalism.

- **Bible Reading is a Spiritual Discipline** - Demanding people only read KJV is legalism. Some of the meanest people I have ever met are King James Only.

Legalism is funny - you don't know you are guilty of it until someone pushes back. That is why it is vitally important that your STANDARD be the Word of God. If you don't have biblical grounds for something, stop defending it.

I've found that some preachers who harp on the same sin again and again, it typically in bondage to that sin. People preach their passions and their prisons.

b. By Preaching Red Herrings

⁴⁷Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. ⁴⁸So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' ⁵⁰so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation. ⁵¹from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.

These guys would build large, ornate, elaborate tombs for the prophets but didn't actually do what the prophets said. Jesus said you are no better than your fathers who killed those same prophets.

A Red Herring - is a piece of information that is meant to distract. For the Pharisees, it was the massive tombs of the prophets. It distracted from the fact that they didn't actually listen to the prophets.

You may be thinking - oh, this is one we NEVER do - we are guilt-free here. Hmm... well what about this?

ILLUSTRATION:

- Have you ever spent more time editing your Instagram post showing the world you had your quiet time than you actually spent in your quiet time? I have to get the aesthetic right.. oh and coffee; I have to show the coffee. In that case, social media is hypocritical - you show the world, look how spiritual I am, but the truth is you didn't spend 5 minutes actually talking to God.
- Here's one, slapping a church sticker on your car then driving like a bat of out hades. That's why we don't push those things!

c. By Failing to Glory in the Gospel

⁵²Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."

These are people who SHOULD have been able to point the nation to Christ, but instead, look at verse 53...

⁵³ As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, ⁵⁴ lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: This is Palm Sunday - the interesting thing about Palm Sunday is that it reminds us how fickle the heart can be. You see, the same crowd that shouted Hossanah this week will be calling for the death of Jesus by Friday.

The truth is there is a little Pharisee in every single one of us. It is far more dangerous that we realize.