

## Hypocrite

In the scripture passage that we'll study today, the Lord Jesus uses a word that is by its very nature, "offensive". And if that word is ever used in a context that involves us, we almost always immediately become defensive. The word is "hypocrite".

And as we study about this word today, we are being compelled to ask ourselves, "Are we, are you, am I sometimes, perhaps often, hypocritical"?

Here in this scripture passage, the Lord Jesus described the Jewish leaders, the Scribes and the Pharisees, as being "hypocrites". And as I studied about this word, I found why the use of this particular word to define the personalities and the behaviors of these religious leaders was so very appropriate. I found that the original Greek word for "Hypocrite" was one used to describe an actor, a person who in those days performed on a stage, with a mask to cover their face.

And the Websters Dictionary describes a hypocrite as being, "a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion. And also, a person who acts in contradiction to their stated beliefs or feelings."

And those definitions and those descriptions seem so very appropriate to the understanding that Jesus would want us to have about these men, that these men tried to hide their real personalities and their real intentions behind a mask, making them "hypocrites" that live a life filled with "hypocrisy".

And so then, the question that I ask a moment ago. . . Are you, am I ever "hypocritical"? Would those who know us best, think us, at least on occasion to be "hypocritical"?

Read along with me, beginning in verse 1 of Luke chapter 12.

<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

<sup>2</sup> Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. <sup>3</sup> Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops. (Luke 12:1-3)

And then also, these words of the Lord Jesus given in Matthew chapter 23, verse 13,

<sup>13</sup> ". . . woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. (Matthew 23:13)

In these several verses of scripture, and also in others like them, Jesus took special opportunity to explain and to communicate the insidious nature of the sin of "hypocrisy". And I would like for us to do that also.

And as we do, let me remind us that God does not give us these words of scripture just as information to know about other people, here, these Scribes and Pharisees. But rather, He gives these scriptures to you and to me to be as a mirror in which we are able to see our own selves and to see the behaviors of our own souls.

Let me begin by repeating some of the things we said in an earlier message. In those words, Jesus describes the sin of hypocrisy as working much in the same manner as does leaven, the yeast that we put into a lump of flour dough.

And that is such a fitting analogy. There is something almost mystical about the way that yeast is able to function within a lump of dough, because with only a very small amount of yeast being added to the mixture, the yeast is able to spread and to infuse itself into every other part of the mixture, affecting and changing the very nature of every part of that lump of dough.

Here, Jesus is describing the sin of hypocrisy as having that exact same kind of ability and effect. It takes only a very small amount of the sin of hypocrisy to be added to an otherwise virtuous and honorable person, to their noble intent, to their well-meaning plan or program. And then very subtly, and without fail, that sin of hypocrisy will begin to work its way into every part of it, causing complete and irreparable harm and destruction to those people and to their plans.

A folks, that is the nature of sin of any kind. Just as with yeast being added to flour, with only one small sin being added into the life of one person, our first mother, Eve, that sin quickly spread and infected not only herself, but also, beginning with the ones she loved most, her husband Adam, and then her son,

Cain, that sin then spread on out and infused itself into every other man, woman and child that has ever been born in all of time.

And now, as you and I sit here in this church today, that same desire that infused its way into and corrupted Eve's soul, the desire to be more than she was, the desire to be someone she was not, the desire to make decisions for herself, the desire to have control over other people, and on and on, is now fully within every person's heart and soul and is now as natural to us as breathing. And to think and to do anything differently is "unnatural" to our minds and hearts.

Does not the reality of the pervasive nature of sin bring fear to our hearts? It should! It really should! But unfortunately it most often does not.

Why not! It's because we simply do not see our sinful nature for what it really is. We look at the way in which we think and the way that we behave, we "hold court" about our self and our behavior, and we judge ourselves to be innocent of wrongdoing, and right in most all the things we do. And even if we occasionally determine that we weren't exactly right in some matter, we know that we intended to do it right. And with that, we forgive ourselves.

And folks, therein lies the insidious nature of "hypocrisy". That same casual relaxed attitude towards our own personal sin while still seeing and condemning the same sins in other people is foundational to the sin of "hypocrisy" that Jesus is teaching about here.

Hypocrisy is described here by Jesus as saying one thing, but doing another, preaching and teaching the requirements of righteousness to others, but not being willing to follow it ourselves, portraying ourselves as being one way, but then actually doing another thing."

These religious leaders that Jesus was speaking with and about occupied very trusted positions of God, daily giving forth the Holy Laws of God. But in their own personal daily habits, they were "saying one thing while doing another, quoting the law to others, but being unwilling to obey it themselves, despising the authority of the law over themselves, while insisting the authority of that Law upon others."

Again, let me ask, does not that kind of mindset and lifestyle seem vaguely familiar to you. It should! It does to me. Why? Because it is my own! And it

breaks my heart when I do it. And so, I understand why the Apostle Paul would cry out in anguish in Romans chapter 7,

<sup>24</sup>O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?(Romans 7:24)

Folks, this is you, and this is me! Yes, we do the very thing that Jesus rebuked these Scribes and Pharisees for. We are as guilty as they are. That is why Jesus chose for these words to be here in this bible, so that you and I can read these words, see ourselves as in a mirror, and be convicted by them.

The Voice of God is calling out to you and to me from these words. His Voice is saying “my dear child, stop what you are doing! Stop being hypocritical! Stop thinking and talking and acting like you are always right, always holy, always perfect, while all the while demanding perfection from everyone else.”

And we need to quit using the false humility of saying, “Oh, I know that I'm not perfect, and I don't really claim to be.” That is false humility.

We truly are just as the Apostle Paul proclaims about himself, we are “wretches”. And yes, we sometimes, perhaps often, are hypocrites.

And at the heart of our hypocrisy is the sin of having a “judgmental spirit”. We really do believe the very best about ourselves while thinking that most everyone else is falling short.

And yes, all those other people truly are falling short. We can see it taking place! But so are we! And God is telling us that we must first attend to our own souls.

Here also in these particular words of Jesus, we can find another, sometimes concealed meaning that we need to consider. And that is, “Why and how is it that we can see hypocrisy in all those other people?” Listen carefully to these words of Jesus!

“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. <sup>2</sup> Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops. (Luke 12:1-3)

These words answer the question that I just asked, "Why and how is it that we can see the hypocrisy within other people?"

While a person may think that their deeds are hidden and that no one else knows about their double life of hypocrisy, it's being seen and heard by most everyone. It is even being "screamed from the rooftops". Verse 2,

<sup>2</sup> Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. <sup>3</sup> Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops. (Luke 12:2-3)

Consider this for a moment folks. The question again is, "Why and how is it that we can see the hypocrisy in other people?"

This is the answer! Their sins are not as well hidden as they think. Why? Because God's Holy Spirit roams throughout the earth revealing sin to everyone, and their sins are being "screamed from the rooftops."

But wait for a moment! If that be true, and it is, then the same must also be taking place with you and me and our own personal sins. Think about this for a moment and ask yourself, "Can this be true for me? Are the sins that I think are so well hidden by me also being clearly seen by those around me? Are my sins also being screamed from the rooftops"?

Yes! Yes they are! These words of Jesus are truth. They are truth about our neighbor and they are truth about us, you and me.

And these words are also light, "shining into our dark world" telling us that we need to see our sin, confess our sin, repent of it, and turn from it.

Look again at verse 3,

<sup>3</sup> Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops. (Luke 12:3)

While these words can be taken to mean, words spoken in the literal dark, they can also mean, "words spoken in the darkness of sin", those hidden conversations, spoken quietly into the ear of even our closest friend cannot

remain hidden and quiet when the special “light” of God is shown upon them. The “Light of God” causes those same words to be heard by many.

Behavior that is hidden in the darkness of sin will suddenly have the “spotlight of God” focused upon it for everyone to see. The Light of God is just that way. Its very existence reveals whatever sin is present around it.

From that first moment of creation, God's voice has been going out into all the earth. And we are suddenly able to see and to know all the many things that are taking place in this world that we were never before able to see, the really good things, yes, but also all of the corruption that is taking place within the things people say and within the ways people behave.

But let me say again, you and I need to be aware that our own corruption is also being screamed out to others, corruption that is often hidden even from our own understanding, but is still there, nonetheless. Listen!

<sup>3</sup> . . . whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.(Luke 12:3)

It is a wretched existence for us to live within the constant sin of “hypocrisy”, earnestly believing that we are the one who is right and everyone else is wrong, earnestly believing that we are doing things the right way and others are falling short.

Again, yes, those other people truly are falling far short of God's plan for them, some of them very openly and obvious, they lie, they cheat, they drink too much, some do drugs, even prescription drugs, and on and on. And why do we know about it? It's because God is proclaiming it from the rooftops. But fellow Christians, we need to know that we also are falling short, and God is also proclaiming our sins from those same rooftops.

Now, with all that being said, what are we to do about this wretched deception that we constantly live within and that lives within us? The answer is as simple and as uncomplicated as we're told in verse 25 of Romans 7.

<sup>25</sup> I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 7:25)

This truly is our only answer, our only solution! It is through Jesus Christ our Lord! But though we know this to be true, how do we get from where we are to where

we need to be? I confess to you that for me, there is no easy path. I know that the only answer that works for me, and I believe also will work for you, is that of personal “surrender”, and not just once, but over and over again.

As temptation and sin comes calling on my soul, I know that I need to surrender my heart and my will all over again back to the Lord Jesus. And to do that over and over again each time He reveals my sin to me. He is my only hope! And I know that He is the only hope for you.

And the Lord has brought this matter of hypocrisy to us today for a real important reason. He knows each of our hearts and He knows that hypocrisy really is common to each of us.

And He knows that for our part, we need to be intentionally “humble”, which is not an easy task. Unfortunately, each of us seems to hold ourselves in really high esteem, thinking that we really do have a lot of the right answers to life. And though we may do pretty well in some things, for the most part, we’re really probably not as good or as righteous as we might think ourselves to be.

Let me say some of these truths again . Yes, yes, there are other people all around us that very obviously live a “low form of lifestyle”, doing things and saying things that they should not do or say. But folks, God has not delegated the responsibility of judging their character and their behavior to you or to me. And we really do need to leave that form of judging to the Lord.

And when we feel the urge to think highly of ourselves and less of those other people, and then to belittle them in our minds and in our conversations, we should instead “bite our tongue”. And we need to do that until it becomes a habit. A good habit!

And because it is as Jesus said here, that our sins are often being shouted from the rooftop, we probably need to remind ourselves that the other people around us might be able to see us better than we can see ourselves. And they probably know when we are thinking too highly of ourselves.

So then, may I say this to us one more time. It is as the Lord Jesus said in these words, our sins are being shouted from the rooftops. And we need to turn our gaze from the sins of others and concentrate on mending our own fences.

So then as we close, let me ask the question again . . . “Am I hypocrite? Are you a hypocrite? The simple truth is, yes, we sometimes are, and probably more often than we can know.

But thanks be to God, He loves us. And in these words, He is calling us to repentance, and calling us to turn from our hypocrisy. And He promises that if we will do that, He will be faithful to forgive us of those sins and to cleanse us from our unrighteousness.

I'll close with these words from 1 John 1,

<sup>8</sup>If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

Let's pray.