

## **Beware of Hypocrisy**

Matthew 6:1

2228

Matthew Chapter 6, and folks we're again in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount and oh what a tremendous and thrilling time we're having. I get just excited about every message. In fact, I get so wound up, I can't finish these messages. I'm in the process of teaching the preaching class. And I'm trying to teach them how to develop a good sermon, having a good beginning and a great conclusion and major points and moving through with power and impact and I can't even finish my own sermon, so they all come out like a bunch of link sausage, just whacked off all over the place and hung together loosely.

But I get so exercised in my spirit on these subjects that I forget this structure and just wind up talking from my heart so much of the time, but especially in the Sermon on the Mount, I find myself with so much truth that can be expanded that you just don't know where to cut it off. Tremendous, tremendous material, tremendous truths from our Lord Jesus Christ. And the one major truth that I want you to see this morning is found just really in the first statement of the first verse of Chapter 6. We're really going to be considering verses 1-18 as a major unit over the next months. It's a tremendous portion of Scripture. But it is all introduced to us at the beginning of verse 1.

It says this, "Beware that you do not your righteousness before men to be seen by them." Stop right there. Simple statement opens up an incredible panorama of truth. "Beware that you do not your righteousness," or your righteous acts, "before men to be seen by them." Really the principle we want to deal with is the principle of hypocrisy. The story is told of an eastern mystic and esthetic a sort of a pious holy man who used to sit in a prominent place on a busy corner of the street of his city. And every day he would sit there covered with dust and ashes. A passing tourist asked him for permission to take his photograph, to which the holy man replied, "Just a moment please, let me rearrange my ashes."

Well, there's a lot of rearranging of ashes going on in religion. Fixing our piousness up so it'll look better for the photograph. And I suppose in all of our lives, there's a little of that rearranging of ashes going on. We want to make a good impression. That's a familiar religious game. We want to appear holy and we want to appear pious, especially if there are some true holy people around us. And so we play a game and the game is hypocrisy and we're phonies.

Obviously, if you read the Bible, you know the Lord seeks real, genuine, authentic devotion of the heart. He is not interested in rearranging your ashes. He is not interested on how you look on the outside and whether you look humble and holy and pious. The Pharisees of Jesus' time perhaps were the all time artists at rearranging their ashes. They made sure they put on a show. And that's the issue to which Jesus speaks in the verse 18 verses of Matthew 6.

But it opens up a wider concept for us because we have to understand what God thinks of this in

general. Generally speaking, hypocrisy is dealt with in Scripture from the start to the finish. There are hypocrites in Genesis. There are hypocrites in Revelation. There are hypocrites when the world begins and there are hypocrites when it ends. There are hypocrites in every form of religion and even Christianity, the true form. There were hypocrites among the 12. There are hypocrites in the leadership of the church. They're always around. It's just part of the sinfulness of man to play the game of religion.

God dealt with it in Israel through the prophet Amos. Amos wrote this in Chapter 5, verse 21. "I hate, I despise your feast days. I will not take delight in your solemn assemblies, though you offer me burnt offerings and your meal offerings I will not accept them, neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from me the noise of your songs. I will not hear the melody of your harps, but let justice run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

In other words, God is saying look, all of those items which I, myself, introduced, all of them which I invented, all of them which I commanded, I despise. Why? Because you've twisted, perverted, falsified their purpose. You have maintained the external, but the internal is vacant, empty. That's hypocrisy. An outward show without an inward reality. Religiosity, being a phony. By the way, the Greek word hypocrite which appears in verse 2, again in verse 5, and again in verse 16 is hupokritase. Basically, in classical Greek it is used to refer to an actor on a stage who masks his real identity and assumes a role. Who plays a part that isn't the truth about his life. Who assumes something other than what is genuine.

Notice verse 1 again, "Beware that you do not do your righteousness before men to be seen." The word seen is theatomi. The first three letters are the same first three letters, or four letters of an English word theater. Do not be an actor on a stage before an audience as if you were in a theater putting on an exhibition. Don't do your righteous deeds theatrically before a watching audience. Don't rearrange your ashes for the photographs of people. So the impression will be made that you're really holy. You're really pious. That's being a spiritual phony. And God had Amos, the prophet, deal with it in Israel, because that was the biggest flagrant violation of true religion the prophet could speak to. I really think that the major reason that Israel fell at the northern kingdom was taken into captivity was simply because the allowed phony religion to take over the genuine.

It was not only true in the northern kingdom, it was true in the southern kingdom to which Isaiah wrote. Listen to Isaiah 1, verse 11. Almost sounds like an identical message. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he goats. When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot bear. It is iniquity even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth. They are a trouble unto me. I am weary of bearing them. And when you spread forth your hands I'll hide mine eyes from you. Yeah, when you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek justice. Relieve the oppressed. Judge the fatherless. Plead for the widow. Come now and let us reason together saith the Lord, though your sin be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

You know, again, He says everything that I have introduced, everything that I have commanded,

everything that I have instituted in your religion, all of the feasts and the new moons and the sacrifices and the oblations and the incense, all of it I despise it all. Why? Because it is phony. And until your hearts are made as white and pure as snow and wool, I have nothing to do with you. Don't even come into my courts.

Our dear Lord confronted much sin in His time, but never did He rebuke any sinner like He rebuked the hypocrites in Matthew 23. He reserved the most blistering language for those spiritual phonies who had masked their vial, evil hearts with a facade of pioucity. God hates it. Isaiah spoke to the issue not only that time, but again several times. For example, in the 9th and the 17th verse, Isaiah 9:17, "therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men. Neither shall He have mercy on their fatherless and widows for every one is an hypocrite."

Isaiah 10 and verse 6, "I will send the Assyrians the rod of my anger, the staff in whose hand is my indignation against an hypocritical nation." You know how really hypocritical they were? They played the game to the hilt. And in the 65th Chapter and the 5th verse, listen to them. Here is what they say to others, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me for I am holier than thou." In other words, don't get near me, you might contaminate me. For I am holier than thou. And God says they are smoke in my nose. Did you ever get smoke in your nose? Very irritating. How irritated is God over hypocrites? Very irritated. Job 15:34 says, "For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate." Job 8:13 says, "The hypocrites' hope shall perish." Job 27:8 says, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite when God takes away his soul." And Job 36:13 says, "But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath." Hypocrites will receive a judgment.

Aesop had a fable. I don't know if you remember this one from your childhood. But Aesop had a fable about a wolf. And the wolf decided he wanted to have a nice fat sheep for his dinner and so the wolf figured out the best way to catch a sheep is to look like one and sneak in among the fold. And so at night when the sheep were taken to the fold, the wolf got on his sheep covering and he stole in among the sheep and he nestled in gently and quietly there at the edge of the sheep waiting until they were all asleep so he could pick the fattest one. And while he was there so hidden and so concealed and so secretive about his devices, the shepherd too became hungry and decided he'd make a meal of one of the sheep. And so he went and looked for the fattest one and the fattest of any sheep would be a wolf. And so he found that one and before checking as to what it was, he took it's life.

And God not as inadvertently as that shepherd, but rather purposefully will so take the life of the wolf in sheep's clothing. God judges hypocrisy. In Jesus' day the typical definition of the religion of the Jews at the time was in terms of its hypocrisy. In Mark 7:6, He answered and said unto them, Jesus speaking, "Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites." And so you see our Lord sees the statement of Isaiah relative to hypocrisy as a prophecy as well as a historical fact. And what is the prophecy? Isaiah said, "this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. They worship me in vain teaching or doctrines the commandments of men." In other words, they are hypocrites. They give honor with their lips, their heart is far removed. They have substituted the divine commandments with human traditions, and they have an inadequate system of hypocrisy.

So there were hypocrites in Israel and there were hypocrites in Judah. There were hypocrites in the time of Jesus. There were also hypocrites in the church. The church is born in Acts 2 and you meet the first hypocrites in Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira. They play a big phony game about giving all they possess to the Lord. All the while, they're holding back some of it and in their phoniness and

hypocrisy, God strikes them dead in front of the gaze of the whole church, Acts 5.

You say maybe that cured it. No, Paul says in 1 Timothy 4 that "In the latter times shall come seducing spirits teaching the doctrine of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy." There were hypocrites in the first times and there will be hypocrites in the last times. You know the list of hypocrites in the Bible is a series of ugly names. The first hypocrite in the Bible is Cain. Cain feigned to worship God, but was doing nothing but showing off and displaying his ability as a farmer and it cost him dearly.

We see the unmasking of the hypocrite and the anger that caused him to murder his own righteous brother. Absalom was a hypocrite. Absalom in 2 Samuel 15 embraces and kisses his father David while plotting his murder and overthrow. And then there was Joab. Joab who embraces Amasa throws his arms around him and while Amasa returns the embrace takes a dagger and jams it between his ribs and takes his life. And who could forget Judas, the hypocrite of all hypocrites, who repeatedly kisses Jesus on the cheek while even the foul deed which he has plotted is being done to bring Him to a cross of death. And Simon Magus in the 8th Chapter of Acts who feigned would have embraced Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, but the fact was all he wanted was the magic it could work to work himself into a better way to earn money. And Peter tore his mask off.

And so the Cains and the Joabs and the Absaloms and the Judas' and the Simons dot their way through the Bible and tell us the ugliness of hypocrisy. But just as ugly as any of those are the Pharisees and the Herodians and those Jews who can feign the worship of God in the same time they are seeking the blood of His own Son. What hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is never presented pleasantly in the Bible. It is seen as Leaven in Luke 12 that affects that whole loaf. It has a spreading infectious capacity.

It is seen in Matthew 23 as a whited sepulchre, a filthy grave stinking with death, but covered over with a whitewash. It is seen in Acts 23 in the words of Paul as a whited wall which in reality is nothing but dirt and mud packed together, but painted to look white when in truth it is ugly brown. It is seen in Luke 11:44 as an overgrown grave so covered with grass that you no longer know it's a grave and so you're defiled in stepping on it. It is seen as a broken pot covered over with silver so no one knows the fatal crack that's really there. It is seen in Matthew 13 as the tares that grow amidst the wheat. It is seen in Matthew 7:15 as that wolf in sheep's clothing. It is seen in 2 Peter 2:17 as a well without water. All of the promise is there, but when the bucket is lowered, it's clanging and banging and dry and empty.

It is seen by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:5 as a cloak to cover sin. It is seen in Matthew 9 like a mourner who mourns at a death because he's paid to mourn. Phony, fake tears. It was interesting to me in reading some background on this hypocrisy that one of the customs among the Jews at a mourning when somebody died was to rend your garments, to tear your clothes as a sign of your sorrow. The Bible speaks of rending garments. The historians say that the Jews became so good at the hypocrisy of sorrow that when they would tear their garments, they were always sure to tear them on a seam, so they could be easily sewn together for the next mourning.

Hypocrisy, the facade of caring when you don't care. Of being righteous on the outside when you're unrighteous on the inside and all you're doing is rearranging your ashes for the effect that it has on others. That is precisely the word of our Lord here in Matthew 6. Look at it again. "Beware," and I use the word beware, it's the best translation to force us to see the seriousness of this. "Beware that you are not doing your righteous acts." Now the King James says alms. That is not the best textual

rendering. The word in the Greek really is dikaiosune, the standard word for righteousness. The word alms comes in verse 2, eleemosune. But for verse 1 it should be translated "your righteous acts." Beware that you do not your righteous acts before men to put on a show, theatrics, exhibitionism for them.

That your religion be real and the point is beware if it is not. And beware is a flaming sword, people. Beware tells us that we are not looking at something that is a sentimental issue or something that is a soft matter. This is serious. Beware. Why? There are consequences. Now I want you to get the context a little so you'll understand what's going on here. We're in the Sermon on the Mount. You know that. And the Sermon on the Mount is designed to present to the Jewish people of that time and to every succeeding generation whoever reads the Bible, the true standard of righteousness.

Now you remember that the Lord began with the character of righteousness in the Beatitudes. And then He moved to the influence of righteousness, salt and light in the world. And then He moved in to the very elements of righteousness. The character of righteousness, its influence, and its standards. And the character of righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees. They didn't have that kind of character. They weren't mourning over their sin. They weren't meek. They weren't broken in spirit. They weren't hungering for righteousness. They weren't pure in heart. They weren't peacemakers. They weren't merciful. They weren't any of those things.

And so He says you don't meet the standard. And then He talks about the influence of righteousness. It's salt and light, it preserves and lightens the world. They didn't do that. They were part of the rot and part of the darkness. And then He says now I want to tell you the standards of righteousness and He started them in Chapter 5, verse 21 and they didn't live up to any of them. They never met it. Their character was unqualified for His kingdom. Their influence was unqualified for His kingdom, and so was their standard of righteousness.

And frankly, He's still talking about the same thing, the standards of righteousness here in Chapter 6. But there's a little different twist that I want you to see. Because in Chapter 5, verse 21-48, He was talking about the righteousness, now mark this word, taught, taught by the scribes and Pharisees. The righteousness taught by the scribes and Pharisees. Now in Chapter 6, He wants to see the righteousness practiced or lived by the scribes and Pharisees. One is their theology and the other is their living. In 5, He was saying this is what you teach, but this is what God teaches. Now in 6 He says, this is how you worship. This is how you live. This is your practice. But God's standard is up here.

So in one section He is dealing with their teaching and in another He's dealing with their practice. You might say that in one sense in Chapter 5 He's dealing with their morality, their theological content, their moral choices, their cognitive information. Their standard of morality and in the next one with their religion. In other words, how that morality works out in their lives. Their worship was phony because their theology was phony. And true religion has to have both. You have to have the cognitive. You have to have the facts. You have to have the moral standards. You have to have the proper teaching, and then it has to be lived out in the proper way. And so here He is saying when you're doing something whether in verse 2, giving alms, or in verse 5, praying, or in verse 16, fasting. In other words, when you put your religion to practice it is substandard. Your theology is inadequate and so is your practice of religion.

The morality of your system doesn't make it and neither does the operation of your system. It's a very

important thing to note this people. As believers we have to have both. There are always those people who think Christianity's only a matter of what you do. Just go to church, you know, and give a little in the offering and do a religious ritual and do your daily Bible reading or whatever and you're all right. Well, that's not all there is. There's that cognitive. That responsibility to have a moral standard that is right.

There are people today who just think all you need is the moral standard. They think all you've got to do...they call it religiousist Christianity. They don't want to identify with the church. They're anti-church, they're anti-structure, anti-organization, they just want to be pious in a vacuum. They want to be moral in a social way. But there's a balance. Jesus is saying yes, you have to proper teaching, but yes, there is a place for giving and praying and fasting within the community of those who believe and that is to be exercised properly. It is a question of what you know and what you believe and also how you act. And the two have to be together.

Now I want to show you another interesting thing. Jesus is setting a standard here that nobody else has ever set in the history of the world, except God, of course. No other human system ever came across this standard. It exceeds every system that has ever existed at the invention of man. I'll show you why. Go back into this section, Chapter 5, verse 20. Now we're back into the moral section, what you teach, what you believe, your theology. "I say unto you," verse 20, "that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven."

Now Jesus goes on then to present a moral standard that is in excess of the scribes and the Pharisees who were the teachers in Israel. All right, so it is superior to that system. There is a superior moral standard. Now go to Chapter 6, verse 5. And He says, "And when you pray you shall not be as the hypocrites." All right, verse 2, "When you do your alms, don't do it with the trumpet like the hypocrites." Verse 16, "When you fast, don't be like the hypocrites." They hypocrites are synonymous with the Pharisees and the scribes. And again He is saying when you practice your religion, when you live out your spiritual life, it's got to be superior to theirs too. So what Jesus is saying, now get this, is that what I'm saying to you in content is superior and in practice is superior to what's going on right now. This is an incredible indictment of the whole system. And there's even a third category. He goes from theology to righteousness that relates to morality to the righteousness that relates to practical religion and then a third one righteousness that relates to mundane things. And from verse 19 of Chapter 6 on, He talks about things, mundane things, like what you eat and what you drink or what you wear, clothing and all of those kinds of things.

He talks about money and how you treat it and how you think of it and how you regard it and so forth. So He goes all the way down the down the line, doesn't He? He goes, now watch this, He goes from your theological moral values to your religious practices, to your mundane every day living. And in the whole sequence He says your theology is inadequate, your religion is inadequate and your approach to life every day is inadequate. Your standards are totally too low.

And that's why He says there in verse 19, "You can't lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. You must not be anxious," verse 25, "for your life." Why? Because that is characteristic of them. They were hung on laying up treasure on earth. They were anxious for their life. So He says it's got to be a system beyond that of the scribes and the Pharisees. Now why am I emphasizing this? Because people look, both our theology, our religion, our worship, if you will, and our daily living must be superior to the finest system men could ever devise at their very best efforts. It's inadequate. Further,

there are some people who might say well, I just assume scratch all religion altogether and just be a pagan. Just get a philosophy and go with it. Listen, the Lord does the same thing with human philosophy and I'll show you.

Most interesting, Chapter 5, verse 47, He says this, "If you greet your brethren only what do ye more than others? Do not even the heathen? Be ye therefore perfect as your Father who's in heaven is perfect." In other words, you're not only to have a commitment that is better than the scribes and the Pharisees, but it should also obviously be better than who? The heathen, right? They're substandard. He says the same thing in the next section in Chapter 6 when He comes into the section of Chapter 6, look at verse 7. Here He's talking about the religious life. "But when ye pray, use not vain repetition as the heathen."

And in the third section, He does the same thing. When He gets to the mundane things in verse 32. "For all these things do the heathens seek." In other words, Christ is saying, I'm offering you a standard and the standard is superior in its content, in its worship and in its daily living to any religious or nonreligious system the world has ever seen. You see? Now when somebody comes along and says well, how come you Christians say you're the only ones that have the truth? You tell them. That's what Jesus said. Jesus, without question is the most narrow-minded human who ever lived. He said, "Everything I say to you is true and anything else is false." Only He back up the fact that He had a right to say it. Amen?

You see, this is what he's saying here. You don't make it people. You don't make it. You come miserably, woefully short of the standard for my kingdom. I'm a king. Matthew is saying that all the way through and I'm offering a kingdom, but you're not going to get in it on the terms that you are now offering. There's another way and that is to realize that you can't make it. Your theology is inadequate. Your religion is inadequate and your approach to life is inadequate. You need somebody to wash away your sin, purify you, give you a new nature fit for my kingdom and I'm that somebody is what Christ is saying.

Now, that gives you the general context. We're looking at that middle section between theology and the mundane. That section of religious worship or practice. And He says whatever you do, in verse 1, make sure that you do your righteous acts. This has to do with your worship, your religious activity. Be sure you do it not to be seen by men. And He gives three illustrations, three. The first one is giving in verses 2-4. The second is praying in verses 5-15, and the third is fasting in verses 16-18. The Lord just picks out three religious activities, three spiritual activities, three elements of worship. And they're very comprehensive. Giving has to do with our religion as it acts toward others. Praying has to do with our religion as it acts towards God. And fasting has to do with our religion as it relates to ourselves.

Fasting deals with our own flesh. The mortification of the flesh, self denial, discipline, bringing ourselves Christ in terms of total commitment, praying is then communing with God, giving is then touching the lives of people around us. And so it really...these three illustrations beautifully sum up all the elements of our spiritual life, of our life of worship. It's almost as if they ascend, because you really start with a right spirit in your own heart purging yourself, fasting being a part of self denial when you're right then your prayers are going to be right and out of fasting comes prayer and out of prayer comes giving and so he ascends from giving to praying to fasting.

And says to them in effect, you do all these, you give, you pray, you fast, but substandard and I offer

you something beyond that. By the way, it's interesting to notice, verse 2 says, "when thou doest thine alms," verse 5 says, "when thou prayest," and verse 16 says, "when ye fast." It doesn't say if, it says when. Why? Because it's an assumption that you'll do that. It's assumed as a part of religion, worship, spiritual service. Now, I want you to see three key points in these first four verses and we're just going to look at the first one and we've already really done that. I just want to highlight a couple of things. I want you to see the practice of righteousness, the peril of religion, and the promise of reward. And we'll cover the two and three point next time.

But the first one is the practice of religion or the practice of righteousness. Look at verse 1 again. "Beware that you do not your righteous acts before men to be seen by them." Now listen beloved, the Bible talks about doing righteous acts. God never designed for us to be monks. Monasticism, stuffing yourself into oblivion and doing all your righteousness locked up in cubicle is not biblical. And some have misinterpreted this verse. Well, beware that you don't do any of your righteous acts before men. So go in a corner and do all your righteous acts.

Now wait a minute, is that what the Bible means by what it says? Doesn't the Bible teach that we're to do righteous acts before men? Indeed it does. In Psalm 106, verse 3, I'll just read it to you, it says this; "Blessed are they that observe justice and he that doeth righteousness at all times." Blessed to do righteousness at all times. Isaiah 58:2, "You seek me daily and delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness." And 1 John 2:29 is another good word on this. It says, "If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him." In other words, we are to do righteousness and we are to do it where it can be seen so that people know we belong to God. We are to let our righteousness be manifest.

Now you say well, wait a minute. It says right here that you don't do your righteousness before men. But you have to see the last phrase. It really in the Greek has the construction of purpose or design. For the purpose of or to the design that we would be seen by men. In other words, you do your righteousness but not for the purpose of simply being seen by men so that you look good. Let me show you the contrast. I think it's beautifully made in the very same passage. Look back at Chapter 5, verse 16. What does it say?

"Let your light so shine before men." There it is. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works." Now wait a minute. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works." Chapter 6, verse 1, "Beware that you do not your righteous acts before men to be seen by them." You say those are mutually exclusive. Those are contradictory. No, no, because the motives are different. It says do your works that God may be glorified, that's the positive in verse 16 of Chapter 5. But don't do your works that men may glorify you. You see it's really two sides of the same thing. In fact, there is no real issue here. It's only an imagined one. It's only symmantecs. It's only words, not a real problem. We are to do what we do that men may glorify God, but not for the purpose of seeking approval from them.

And John Calvin says "this is a necessary admonition for in all virtues the entrance of hypocrisy is to be avoided and there is no work so laudable as not to be in many instances corrupted and polluted by hypocrisy." That's a fine line. I have that temptation in my own life. Our Lord had that temptation, I'm sure, because He was in all points tempted like as we are. But there are times when you are tempted to preach to be esteemed of men rather than to give God the glory. There are times when you give and you give and you make sure you tell certain people that you gave. Especially people who question your commitment. So they'll know how really spiritual you are. Or you pray long and

wordy prayers. Or you fast or look sort of tragic which is often confused with spirituality. Just look sick or painful and people will think you're humble.

Now we're good at that. But we all play that game. And we're all tempted in that area. Augustine said that the love of honor was the deadly of vain of true piety. It said other vices bring forth evil works, but this brings forth good works in an evil way. I'd like to put it this way, hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue. Hypocrisy, and our Lord is saying beware. It was a mark of the Pharisees that when they gave, they blew a horn about it and when they prayed they stood in a public place and prayed out loud so everybody knew how spiritual they were. They're almost a caricature so ridiculous it's hard to imagine. And when they fasted, they put cosmetics on their face so they'd look half dead hoping someone would say oh what a holy man he is.

Listen, we are to let our light shine. We are to let our works be seen that God may be glorified, but we are not to do it that we may receive honor. That's hypocritical. In fact, 5:16 and 6:1 could best be summed up by indicating that they are both dealing with different sins. That's why I say the discrepancy is only imaginary because the sins are different. In Chapter 5, He's dealing with salt and light. And He's dealing with the fact that we need to be an influence in the world. And He's dealing then with the sin of cowardess. Let your light so shine before men. In other words, don't be a coward. You are the salt and you are the light and let it happen. He's dealing with the sin of cowardess. But in Chapter 6, verse 1, He's dealing with the sin of hypocrisy.

I think A. B. Bruce brings the two together as simply as anyone I've read. He says, "we are to show when tempted to hide and we are to hide when tempted to show." The best way to be able to keep the tension is to play off your temptations in a righteous manner. The heart of the issue is the issue of the heart. What's your motive? Two people can give. Two people can pray. Two people can fast. Two people can do religious deeds. You and I would never know the difference to one...between one or the other and yet to God one is a source of joy, a sweet smelling savor and the other is smoke in his nose. And the difference is inside that person.

There's nothing wrong with displaying your Christianity. Let your light shine. Paul says, "they heard that I was converted," Galatians 1:23. And in verse 24, he says, "and they glorified God because of me." But he didn't keep the glory, he passed it on to the Lord. In Romans 10 it says, "you have to confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord." It says, "how shall people hear without a preacher." We are not rejecting public righteousness. We are not going to become monks and stash ourselves off in some kind of useless oblivion. Jesus said, "whoever shall confess me before," what, "men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father who's in heaven."

We must practice our righteousness. We must because we were created in the image of Christ unto good works. It's just that we have to be sure the motive is pure. Who is the best illustration of this? Jesus. Jesus preached His messages in the public hearing. Jesus lived His life day by day the flawless majestic sinlessness of His life in front of the gazing eyes of the whole watching world. Jesus performed miracles and wonders and signs so everyone could see and in the midst of it all in humility He said, "I have come not to seek mine own honor, but the honor of Him who sent me." It was motive. Do your righteous deeds beloved, if you're a believer. Do them that your light may shine to the glory of God, but beware when you do them to rearrange your ashes so somebody's picture of you will turn out to appear more holy than you really are. Let's pray together.

Father, we are all sensitive to what the Holy Spirit has said to us in this message, because this is where we all face temptation. We are tempted to say a word that puts on a spiritual front to do a deed even against the will, but because it appears righteous. Maybe some people even coming to church on Sunday morning is an act of hypocrisy done for the sake of affect. Lord, we all fall to this. We sometimes give to someone need not because we care about them, but we want them to think highly of us. And then we tell others so they'll know how generous we really were. Sometimes our prayers even before our families are not really the cry of our hearts, but are routine to give a wrong impression that we're really right with You.

While your heads are bowed just a closing moment. There are two audiences for the message this morning as there were that day. There were the Pharisees and there were the disciples. For the disciples it said something. They had already committed themselves to Christ. But just because you're committed to Christ doesn't mean you don't struggle with hypocrisy. The message to them was be real, be genuine, be truly spiritual and truly righteous in your giving, your relation to others, your praying, your relationship to God as if you could fool Him. And your fasting, your relationship to yourself. Be real. Don't be a phony. Don't ever fall prey to that.

To the non-Christian, the Pharisee, don't think your good works, your self-developed and devised system will suffice, because it won't. No matter how righteous you appear, unless you have been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and your sins forgiven, you'll have no entrance into God's kingdom and the severest eternal judgment will belong to the severest hypocrite. It's a fearful thing. So I trust you'll examine your heart.

Father, we do pray that the right folks will come Lord in response to your voice speaking in their heart. Help us all be what You want us to be knowing that the truth is so wonderful and the reality is so precious. May we never settle for a counterfeit, but always for that which is true that You in all things might receive the glory. We thank You for such a privilege of being able to be used to give You glory. In Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).