RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY
Matthew 23:1-39
12/18/11

The Big Idea: God judges religious hypocrisy, but blesses those who come repent and receive Him.

During the Christmas season we celebrate the birth of Christ.

The problem is that many have a misimpression of who Jesus is and what He taught.

They see Jesus as a meek and mild person who went around doing good and would never judge anyone.

Yet in reality Jesus frequently confronted sin and spoke about hell more than all the other figures in the Bible combined.

Our passage this morning is one clear example.

In it Jesus shows that He was not impressed with the religious externalism of the people in His day.

It is a safe bet that He is not impressed with it in the lives of those who call themselves Christians in our day.

Luke 12:1 . . . Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy means to wear a mask.

To pretend to be something you are not.

To playact

Religious phonies

Mark 7:6 And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

1. **Why did God judge the Jews of Jesus day? 23:1-36**
   a. **God judged them because of their religious *hypocrisy*.**
      - **They *did not do* what they told others to do. vv. 1-4**

The Pharisees didn't practice what they preached.

It is not so much that they tried to do right but sometimes failed.

They didn't even try.

This is hypocrisy, plain and simple.

The Bible teaches that the religious leaders are responsible to teach and interpret the scriptures for the people. (Deut. 17:9)

But the Pharisees had imposed a heavy burden of their rules and regulations that went far beyond the Bible

The people were to obey whatever the Pharisees taught from the scriptures,

But they didn't have to follow the Pharisees man-made rules.

Another example of their hypocrisy is seen in verses 5-12

- **They did all their deeds to be *noticed* by *men*. vv. 5-12**

5-7 They were ultimately seeking human approval and positions of status

They sought to attract attention to themselves rather than to glorify God.

8-10 ***Jesus condemns pretentious religious titles***

Rabbi- literally means "my great one"

Father- This does not mean that you aren't to call you biological dad, father.

◊ Jesus is saying that we are not to place other human beings in a special spiritual status.

◊ We are not to call them "holy father", or "your holiness."

◊ We are not to bow down when they pass or kiss their ring.

Jesus is not forbidding titles per se.

The Bible speaks of apostles, elders, pastors, and deacons.

Paul repeatedly speaks of "teachers" in the church, and even refers to himself as the spiritual "father" of the Corinthians. (1 Cor. 4:15).

◊ He had lead them to Christ and started the church at Corinth

◊ He is not using the term in the sense that he is extra spiritual.

What Jesus is forbidding is using titles that put human beings in the place of God.

1 Corinthians 1:12 . . . each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

1 Corinthians 3:21-22 So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, [22] whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas . . .

All human being are fallible.

No human being is the ultimate source or interpreter of truth.

No human being speaks ex cathedra.

- **They led others *astray*. vv. 13-22**

They drew the people away from the kingdom of heaven instead of toward it.

16-22 The Pharisees made arbitrary distinctions which gave them a sanctimonious justification for lying

Matthew 5:37 "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes ' *or* 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.

James 5:12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

- **They majored on minors. vv. 23-26**

The Pharisees lived their lives as if external appearance was more important than internal reality.

That was the very essence of hypocrisy,

They were obsessed with minute details, but neglected the law's overarching intent.

They meticulously observed external rules but were oblivious to the corrupt condition of their hearts.

- **They rejected God's true *messengers*. vv. 27-36**

  They dissociated themselves from their fathers who killed the prophets,

  But, in scheming to have Jesus executed, they are following in the footsteps of their ancestors, who had persecuted and murdered God's prophets.

  33 The loving Jesus spoke of hell more than any other figure in the Bible.

b. They sought human recognition and approval rather than the *approval* of *God*. vv. 5-7, 28

They were inwardly full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

2. What is Jesus' attitude toward them? 23:37-39

a. He *loves* them. v. 37 cf Luke 19:41-44

b. But He will discipline them until they *repent* and *believe* in Him. vv. 38-39

This ends Christ's public teaching ministry.

From this point on Jesus withdraws from the crowds to give final instruction to His disciples.

He withdraws from the nation of Israel until the time in the future when they will recognize Him as their Messiah

Romans 11:25-26 . . . a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; [26] and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."

3. How does this relate to us?

a. You can't *fool* God.

1 Samuel 16:7 . . . God *sees* not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

1 Chronicles 28:9 ". . . for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.

Proverbs 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the LORD weighs the motives.

b. It doesn't pay to *pretend* to be what you are *not*.

Proverbs 28:13 He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes *them* will find compassion.

c. Don 't let what others think keep you from *coming* to *Christ*.

John 5:44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and* only God?

John 12:42 Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; [43] for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God

d. *Repent* and *believe*.

Mark 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Acts 20:21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ