

May 9

Scriptures: Read Luke 12

Key Verse: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”(Luke 12:1b)

Overview

Nobody likes a hypocrite. There’s something instinctive about this distaste—rather like our dislike for foul odors, snakes, and dishonest salesmen. We prefer people to be who they say they are. Regardless of the masks we ourselves may wear, we want the other guy to be transparent. We like an honest face. Indeed, one of the highest compliments we can pay a person is to recite the old adage of him, “what you see is what you get.”

It’s no secret Jesus gave the Pharisees a hard time; just like He would do to you and me. The Pharisees weren’t any more enamored of hypocrites than we are. And they’d be the last to admit any personal hypocrisy. Like us, they were concerned about God’s word, about pleasing Him, attending weekly (in some cases, daily) services of worship and raising their children in the faith—in most areas of their lives they were just like present day North American conservative evangelical Christians—Orthodox in faith, moderate in practice. They were good guys.

That’s why it stung when Jesus accused them of being inwardly filthy when they were so outwardly pure (11:30); or of neglecting justice and the love of God (11:42); or of being spiritually proud and self-serving (11:43).

But there was one accusation Jesus made which speaks volumes to me: “You load people down with burdens they can hardly carry” (11:46 NIV). This hits me because I’m a preacher, as well as a broadcaster and author. I have often moralized in my preaching, punctuating my sermons with idealisms, shoulds, coulds, and black/white value judgments. I have laid guilt on people, crushing them with the burden of my view of righteousness. Little wonder there’s been a significant fall-out rate over the years: being a human has a way of winning over being an angel.

It’s taken me a few years, but now I try to point people to Jesus rather than standards. Not that standards are all bad, but when Jesus is magnified and glorified, moral standards seem to follow naturally.

I suppose it boils down to religion versus relationship.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, in our reading today You promised that if we would confess You, You would confess us before the angels. Enable us to so live that our lifestyle as well as our words will be a pure confession of You.