

Unmasking the Hypocrisy of the Pharisees - How to find Authentic Faith #getreal #authentic

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[0:00] We're going to go to Matthew 23. Matthew 23. And talking about really the subject of hypocrisy. But I'd like to couch it more on the positive side.

! How to not be. How to not be a hypocrite. Alright? How to be real. How to be real. How to be authentic. Authentic with our faith.

And we're going to pick it up part way through Matthew 23. Of course you could read the whole chapter to get the context here. Of our Lord addressing the Pharisees.

The ones studied in the law. These scholars who knew the book. They knew every fine detail of it. The teaching of it. Yet they missed the point of it.

And looking at how can we be real. With what God wants for us as his people. So we're going to pick it up from Matthew 23.

[0:57] Matthew 23 verse 24. Matthew 23 verse 24. And our Lord says this. You blind guides which strain at a gnat.

And swallow a camel. Woe unto you. Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites. For you may clean the outside of the cup. And of the platter.

But within. They are full of extortion. And excess. Thou blind Pharisee.

Cleanse first that which is within the cup. And platter. That the outside of them may be clean also.

Woe unto you. Scribes and Pharisees.

Hypocrites. For ye are like unto whited sepulchres. Which indeed appear beautiful outward. But are within full of dead men's bones.

[1:55] And of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men. But within. Ye are full of hypocrisy.

And iniquity. Woe unto you. Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites. Because ye build the tombs of the prophets. And garnish the sepulchres.

Of the righteous. And say. If we had been in the days of our fathers. We would not have been partakers with them. In the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves.

That ye are the children of them. Which killed the prophets. What a rebuke. A scathing rebuke. Our Lord gave.

To these ones. Who should have known better really. And missed the point. That he was wanting them. To see. To know. Hypocrisy is a dreadful.

[2:53] Dreadful reality. What is a hypocrite? It's someone who pretends to be something. That they are not. And we could think of it as. The Greek word for hypocrisy.

It meant actor. A play actor. A mask wearer. And here's some pictures of some Greek. Masks that they would wear. As they would put on this face. Literally.

Put on a face. Put on this mask. And that's the same word. The same meaning here. Of hypocrite. It means a play actor. So someone who would wear this mask.

That might have an expression. Of one kind or another. And hypocrisy is this kind of disconnect. Between the beliefs that they claim.

And their behaviour. And the Lord called hypocrisy. A serious sin. And he called the Pharisees blind guides. They couldn't lead others. Why? Because they were blind themselves.

[3:47] They had a spiritual blindness. And I know some of us have been in cultic situations. Cults. Or I was at a time. In a bit of a cultic kind of church. And there's this blindness there.

They couldn't see their own faults. And failings. And their false doctrine. Really. In some ways. And Pharisees get this sense. Where they can appear righteous.

But they're spiritually dead. On the inside. Putting on this front. There was all this talk. A lot of talk. And earlier in the chapter.

We see. Our Lord says that. They're saying. But they're not doing. It's all lip service. They're saying this. But truly. They're not living it. They were fakes.

And people look at churches. These days. Don't they? They look at churches. They look at preachers. They look at church leaders. They look really at any one of us. Every one of us. Who claim to be followers of our Lord.

[4:46] People look at us. And examine us. And they could wonder. As we could wonder at times. Are they true? Are they real? What is reality?

There was a time. There was a preacher. He remembered. Back in high school. How a doctor came one day. And gave this talk about. The dangers of smoking. And he showed all these grim pictures. And it was very graphic. Of the damage to smokers lungs. And this tales of death from lung cancer. And the doctor finished his talk. By saying. Remember.

Fire on one end. And fool on the other. And they were really impressed with his talk. The youngsters. And the boys were out there at lunch time. And they would sneak around the back. And light up. In a place where no one could see them. But a couple of the young people. They saw the doctor himself. Puffing away. And he lost all of his credibility.

[5:45] His credibility was shot. And he was the talk of the campus. It would have been better. Had that doctor not come. And given a lecture about stopping smoking.

When he himself was smoking. Saying one thing. And doing another. That's hypocrisy. Isn't it? And how sad. To be such a fake. Are you for real?

You know. It can put people off Christianity. Can't it? When they hear talk of some preacher. And then they hear what he gets up to. And they hear what the going's on. And the shenanigans. And it's such a dreadful thing.

Isn't it? When we hear somebody claims to be. Following the Lord. And then they do something. Really terrible. And it's a shameful thing. Now a popular thing these days.

Is reality TV. They call it reality TV. But the reality is. That it's a sham. It's scripted and staged. And it's fake. They're just performers.

[6:41] It's a performance. And the hypocrites. That our Lord is speaking to. Right here. They were like that too. They were performers. Actors. Just acting.

Not real. They weren't really living it. And hypocrisy. Does much damage. Doesn't it? And look. We can all be. Subject to it. If we're not careful.

We can be two faced. We can put on a face. And it's likened to leaven. Isn't it? Hypocrisy is likened to a leaven. In other words. It's like this sin. As the leaven spreads.

As the yeast affects the dough. So too. A little leaven. It's like this sin. It's like this sin. It's like this sin. That influences. That spreads.

This corruption. That spreads. Subtly. But pervasively. And hypocrisy. It can start small. But it can corrupt the whole character of a person.

[7:36] Can't it? And we've all got to be mindful. How can I be real with God? How can I live the real life? How can I be an authentic Christian? Such that there's no dirt they're going to dig up.

Because there is none for them to find. God helping me. I'm going to live right. And not be two faced. So I put to you today. Here's some three ways. I recommend.

Three ways not to be a hypocrite. In other words. Three ways to be authentic. To be real. And here's some ways to be real with your faith. Number one.

Look for what counts. Look for what counts. You see the Pharisees. They would focus on some minor detail. And it talks in the context just earlier.

Than what we started with. How it talks about how they were measuring things. So they could tie. They could measure these grains. Just counting little grains.

[8:34] So they could give just the right amount. And it tells us how they were straining out a gnat. So they would focus on these minor things.

These minor details.

Represented by a gnat. So a gnat is just really a tiny little insect. Isn't it? On the tip of your finger there. A gnat. A tiny insect. But they're ignoring these more significant issues. Now of course in those times. This tiny insect. The gnat. Was considered unclean. So it was really something they ought not to partake of. But then while you're eating your food. Suddenly a gnat flies into your mouth. Whoop whoop gulp. And you swallowed it before you know it. That little gnat. That tiny insect. But for them. It was considered an unclean creature. And so they ought not to partake of it. But at the same time. They're literally gulping down a camel. Gulping down a camel. So our Lord's explaining it as in.

[9:34] They were focusing on the insignificant. Trivial matters. But swallowing. What was the important things that they ought to have been mindful of.

The weightier matters it talks about. In the context of the law. Of judgment. Of mercy. Of faith. And the camel. And the camel was one of the largest unclean animals.

So they're both unclean. But they're making much of the little. And missing the much. They were just going ahead and missing the much. They were meticulous about these small and trivial matters. Using some filtering process.

To strain out this tiny little gnat. But they were meantime just. Overlooking the significant issues. Gulping down camels. Literally.

Now it can't be good for you to eat camels. I've got to tell you. Especially if you eat them whole. It'd be quite an unpleasant thing to eat. So the picture is.

[10:34] Of looking for what counts. Look out for what counts. Are we straining gnats and swallowing camels? What matters to you? Camels or gnats?

It's an easy mistake to make. Where we can look at the things. The small things. And make much of them. But overlook the more significant matters. That God wants us to be mindful of.

What matters most. What should matter most. Are the things that matter the most. That matter. It's easy to miss out on what really matters. And our Lord really strongly rebukes these men.

You could literally put it. He called these men godless morons. And spiritually blind. He was calling them fools.

And the word is moron. So it was quite strong language. Or stupid. They were spiritually stupid. They were fools. So it's very strong language. It's a very strong rebuke. How could they be so stupid?

[11:37] Now I've got to tell you. I've got some horror stories to tell about camels. I know at one time. We were. As a youngster.

We were in the back of a. Like a van. As a family. And we were going through a wildlife park. And suddenly a camel started to.

Take a dislike to the car. And I was in the back of the van. And the window was open. And this camel started chasing after the van.

My dad was driving it. And this camel came really close to us. And he was frothing at the mouth. He was really frothing at the mouth. Like he was raging mad. And he was trying to bite the van.

So I've got to tell you. I know all about camels. I don't want to. I don't want much to do with them. But I'm just trying to make the point. Well you can't miss a camel. But these ones.

[12:33] They were missing the camel. And they were straining at the gnat. They were missing what was really important. The big things. That we need to sort out. The things that we ought not to miss. So the things we ought not to miss.

The things that we ought to make a big deal about. In the context. It's about justice. It's about mercy. It's about love. It's about compassion. They were missing all of that.

That they ought to have been concentrating their energy on. Looking for what counts. And they're making a fuss about the trivial things. And friends. We can all make the same mistake.

As the Pharisees. To dwell on the minor points. And pointing these out. Nitpicking. Natpicking. Yet at the same time. They are living completely contrary to.

The whole spirit of God's word. And what God counts as major. Is vital. And it's like a person. Cleaning the outside of a fruit. But ignoring the fact.

[13:31] That it's rotten inside. You actually don't want to. Miss the obvious. To make that mistake. Are we looking for what counts. And doing that. Or are we nitpicking.

The point of. Just. Making a fuss about little. Trivialities. In the scheme of things. While missing the plain. Clear teachings of the word of God.

And missing that. Of what we should be doing. What we should be paying attention to. What the word of God emphasises. And majors on. As it's been said. Make the main thing.

The main thing. Which is salvation. Make the main thing. The main thing. And. Pay attention to that. And to really. The living out of the life. To. To actually make.

Your life count. To be. Living your. Walk with God. To. To live out your faith. And for the Pharisees. They. Were missing it.

[14:25] On so many ways. We think. For example. One of the stories. Our Lord tells. Is of the story. Of the good Samaritan. It was an account. Of this Samaritan. The certain Samaritan.

He was a real person. And of course. We know the story. As it tells us. How. The. The ones. Who ought to have done something. The religious. They just walked.

On the other side. And couldn't care less. Just. Deliberately avoided. Contact. Whereas the certain Samaritan. A bit of an outcast. They actually.

Stepped down. And. Put the bandages on. And poured in the oil. And the wine. And put them on their own beast. And took them to the end. Took care of them. So we ought to put the emphasis there.

On that which is. That which we ought to count. Love. And mercy. And compassion. Look for what counts. Another way to avoid being a hypocrite. Is to look within.

[15:21] Look within. And. Our Lord tells us how these ones. They would clean their cups on the outside. So it was this gleaming cup. You can imagine like a silver cup. Looks so beautiful.

On the outside. For example. This beautifully polished silver cup. But look into it. And it's full. Of dirty water. No matter how clean it looks on the outside.

It's what's inside that matters. And you wouldn't want to drink from that. What about our heart? It's a heart such that. Others think. Everything's okay. But. God looks at the heart.

He looks at the inside. And. We ought to get that clean. Let the Lord clean that. Our heart. And then the outside will naturally.

Follow. And the Pharisees. It tells us in the chapter. That they were whitewashed. So. They had this plaster. That was all white. And gleaming. Bright. They look good on the outside.

[16:20] This gleaming. White. But inside. Was full. Of dead men's bones. Literally crammed full. Crammed full. Of the bones of the dead. It's like this tomb.

That the dead. Were. Put in. And so. We could think of. Such a thing. So these men. They looked. Good on the outside.

By all appearance. But. They were. Full of decay. And rottenness. And death. It's saying here. Of these men. Not. That their works. Were. Were right.

Their works. That they were doing. Were works. To be gazed upon. By men. It was all a show. It was a. Prominence. And position. And a praise. That they wanted. And really.

They were self-deceived. And it's sad. When. Someone can. Be such. Minded. That. They're. Even deceiving. Themselves. Believing.

[17:17] That the external. Observance. Is enough. But missing the point. That it's the within. It's the inside. That. We've got to get right. A heart. That it be aligned. With God's will.

Not just an outward. Compliance. You think of the time. The woman caught. In the very act. Of adultery. And these men. Were them. Amongst them.

Who wanted to pelt her. With stones. To kill her. And the Pharisees. Were quick to condemn. And point the finger. But not dealing. With their own sin. That lingered.

In their own hearts. And then another occasion. The Lord was watching people. Giving their offering. The Pharisees. Made a farce. And a show. And made it a spectacle.

Of their giving. Of how much they were giving. Of large amounts. And yet the widow. Is the one the Lord commanded. It just dropped in. A little. But that represented.

[18:14] All that she had. And she was giving. Far more. So the Lord saw within. He saw her heart. Her spirit. Look within. The question is.

What's on the inside? Very important. People can put on appearances. But the truth. Will come out. What's on the inside. Will come out. Sometimes we can.

Seem to have it all together. When really. There's things. That we need to sort out. And there's a story told. About. The Queen Mary. The largest ship. Of its time.

And. They were doing some. Repainting of it. And. When they got to the smokestacks. They.

Scraped the. The paint off. To repaint. But it just crumbled to bits.

Because the three quarter inch steel. Plate. From which the stacks were formed. Had all rusted up. It all. There was nothing left. It was just 30. Coats of paint.

[19:11] And. It's like. The. It wasn't real. It was just a veneer. It was just superficial. And. What about our spiritual life. How's the inside.

Is it. Is it right. Are we right. Are we concerned. More about. How others perceive us. Or. What are we. Like before God. Can we be honest with him.

To seek. To genuinely. Get our heart right with him. Do we look at others. And see their faults. And yet miss our own. Look within. Think about your own.

Heart tonight. And put your focus there. How can my heart. Be made right with God. How can I.

Restore that. That love. For him. And how can I refresh my. Relationship with him.

How's that inner purity. Can I let God transform. And cleanse my heart. Within. That's what matters. And so let's not. Settle for the exterior.

[20:08] For the externals. But. Look within. And ask the Lord. To look deep within. To be real. To be real. With your faith. And if you look for fault. Then look within.

That's where we should start. Isn't it. To sort ourselves out. Spiritually. So. To be real. Look for what counts. Not the gnats. But the camels. Don't miss that. Look within.

Not just having an external. Presentation. But that the inside is right. And then thirdly. Number three. Look after people. How do you treat people.

Does what we say. Measure up. With what we do. The Lord Jesus. Challenged the Pharisees. To care for the righteous. And. As we had read. It says of them.

That they'd made this. Fuss. Of making. Memorials. And decorating. These monuments. And adorning them. To the memory of. God's people. That had passed away.

[21:05] But they hadn't cared about them. While they were still alive.

They did not honor. And care for them. It's kind of ironic. How the Pharisees. They honored the memory. Of these prophets. Yet they rejected.

The Lord Jesus. Who was the very fulfillment. Of these prophecies. The Pharisees. By their actions. They bore witness. Against themselves. And they showed. That they were the descendants.

Not just by blood. But by behavior. Of those who killed. The prophets. And the bottom line. Was that they did not. Consider others. And of course. Earlier in the chapter.

It reads. For they bind. Heavy burdens. And grievous. To be born. And lay them on men's shoulders. But they themselves. Will not move them. With one. Of their fingers.

So the Pharisees. Would load up people. With all kinds of burdens. But they did not help. Burdens. Heavy. Hard to bear. They would not lift a finger. To help. The sense of it.

[22:00] Is that they were always. Doing this too. And we know. In some circles. There's some. Who had burdened people down. With burdens. Too heavy to bear. Too heavy.

Impossible burdens. Of religion. Of performance. And these ones. They prayed. They used religious jargon. They paraded. Their good works. But it was not real.

It wasn't real. And they didn't consider. Others. They didn't consider. Other people. Now it's sad. Of one. I'll tell you.

About this man. He made free use. Of Christian vocabulary. He talked about. The blessing. Of the almighty. And the Christian confessions. Which would become. The pillars. Of the new government.

He assumed. The earnestness. Of a man. Weighed down. By historic. Responsibility. He handed out. Pious stories. To the press. Especially. To the church papers. And he showed.

[22:57] His tattered bible. And declared. That he drew strength. For his great work. From it. As scores of pious people. Welcomed him. As a man. Sent from God.

Indeed. Adolf Hitler. Was a master. Of outward religiosity. With no inward reality. There's some. He would have. An outward show. And yet.

Inward. Not have faith. Because. He had some catholic. Faith. I believe. But. Yet. There was not that. Knowledge of God. Not that. Relationship.

With our Lord. Yet. There's some. That are like that. Aren't there? That would put on this show. And they miss out. The real point. To miss the point. And. We too.

We can look for faults. Of others. And miss the faults. That are in. Ourselves. We've got to look. At ourselves. And consider. These things. Some would find fault.

[23:52] With a splinter. In someone else's eye. While they've got a log. In their own. How. Are we tonight. Can we be real. Can we be authentic.

How can we avoid these traps. These failings. God's interested in people. So. To recap. Look for. What counts. Let's keep the main thing.

The main thing. Let's. Be about. The Lord's. Service. To be about. Our father's business. What kind of camels. Are you swallowing. While you're busy.

Straining out the gnats. We can make that mistake. We focus on the. Minor things. That really. Are just. Distractions. And we're missing the camels.

And we're just busy. Gulping down. These things. That we ought to be more mindful of. Of significance. What about looking within. That's where our Lord looks. Isn't it. To our heart.

[24:48] And he sees beyond the gloss. And any make believe. Our Lord sees beyond any pretense. Or show. He sees the real you. The real me. Are we like that with others.

That we. Are real. Real with God. Real with others. Are we like the cup. That's all clean on the outside. Yet. Inside. We're full of this. Yucky stuff.

You know. The cup looks good. It's gleaming. But inside. It's all of this. Sin. Harboring. Bitterness. Unforgiveness. Harboring.

Hatred. A lack of faith. The secret sins. In our heart. Yield it to the Lord today. That that cup. Will be clean. From the inside out. Amen.

And get real. That our faith. Would be authentic. And true. And sincere. As David cried out. For such a faith. He cried out. For such a heart.

[25:43] And he cried out. As we know the occasion. Oh he's falling into sin. With Bathsheba. He says. Create in me. A clean heart. Oh God. And renew. A right spirit.

Within me. He wanted that inner transformation. He wanted to get the heart right. That's where God starts. With our heart. And let's seek God's guidance too. To root out. Anything.

That would be. Of hypocrisy. Of carnality. Search me. Oh God. And know my heart. Try me. And know my heart. Know my thoughts.

And see if there be any wicked way. In me. And lead me. In the way everlasting. That's a good prayer. Isn't it? Search me. Oh God. Search me. Know my heart.

Know my thoughts. Try me. Look within. And thirdly. Again. To repeat. Look after people. Don't wait till they're dead. To honour and care for them.

[26:38] For God's people. Sometimes. We shoot the messenger. We attack the man. When actually. They're doing something for God. Let's try to encourage them. While they're with us.

Do it today. While they're still with us. And make a personal commitment. To integrity. Now let's not be like the Pharisees. Loading people down. With burdens they can't carry. But rather.

Let's be one. That will lift the burdens. Lift the burdens off them. And. Importantly. We. We. Told. That we ought to. Keep our heart.

Keep thy heart. With all. Diligence. For out of it. Are the issues. Of life. It's the heart. That God starts with. Isn't it? It's the heart. Look for what counts.

Nats. Or camels. Look within. Get your own heart right. And then. Look after people. That. It's a faith that. Is.

[27:34] Such a faith. That the good Samaritan. Displayed. That he. Was one who. Put his faith into. Practice. Into action. The faith that.

Our Lord commands. That we would not. Condemn the woman caught. In the act of adultery. But that we would. See her. Trust. And follow. The saviour.

That we can see. The Lord work. In her life. As in anyone. Who's in that situation. We can know. God's can. God can do. Wonders. With.

The people. We might. Discount. God can do wonders. With the people. That we might. Write off. And say. They're beyond redemption. While they're still alive. No one's beyond redemption.

While. Someone's got breath. To breathe. They can have. Redemption. But. Some would say. They're beyond redemption. That. We don't even try. To reach them. But no one's.

[28:29] So far. That his hand. Cannot reach. His arm. Is not shortened. That it cannot save. And if you're here tonight. And you don't know the saviour. Then. Look to him.

That's what counts. Look within. He can see your sin. And he can save you. And take your. Heart of sin. And transform it. Into a heart. Born again. Made new. And.

He can help you live the life. Such that. You'll be an influence on others too. God helping you. We can be. Real. We can be authentic. With our faith. Let us pray. Lord we thank you that.

We can be a people who honour you. Not just with our lips. But with our lives Lord. Not just with our. Talk. But with our. Living. That we'll live our. Our faith out.

That we will. See people like you saw them. Like you saw the woman caught. In the act of adultery. And you saw. That she could trust you. You saw that she could. Be saved.

[29:25] Lord help us to have a heart. For others. Help us to have a heart. That's right with you. Lord. Search my heart. Know my thoughts. Try me. Lord see if there be any wicked way in me.

And lead me. In the way everlasting. Lord help us to have that kind of heart. And Lord not to. To strain out the gnats. And miss the. The main things. To. To realise what it is.

We ought to major on. What it is. We ought to be about. Your work. Your heart. Your love. Your compassion. Your word. Lord that will do.

And be the people. That you want us to be. Give us grace. Lord we pray. If there's any yet to trust you tonight. That even now. They might say. Lord Jesus I believe.

You died for my sin. And you paid for it there. At the cross. And help us Lord each one. To walk in that faith. In that life. And to be authentic. To be real.

[30:23] To live the life. And Lord help us when we slip. And slide. And stumble. To get back on our feet again. As we know. Your word tells us. The righteous man. Is going to fall seven times.

But the Lord's going to lift him up. We thank you for that. That promise of your word. That you are. The God who restores. And you help us get back on track. When we mess up. Dear Lord.

We know. We must trust in your grace. Because we need it. Every single day. We thank you for it. In Jesus name. Amen.