

Real Christianity

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[0:00] Matthew 23 verse 27 and 28. And the Lord Jesus is talking to the Pharisees, the religious crowd of the day.

Matthew 23 verse 27 it says, He's talking there about hypocrisy. He's talking about hypocrisy which we know is people who are pretending. They're the counterfeit. They're fake, they're frauds, they're false, they're artificial, they're make-believe. It's the outward. They have a big show, an outward show, but they're lacking the inward, which is the real. In contrast, the counterfeit with the real. The real means it's genuine, authentic, true blue, fair dinkum.

It's real, it's true, it's the inward kind of Christianity. And that's the kind of contrast that our Lord paints here for us. It points a contrast between the counterfeit and the real.

[1:30] And that's what we'd like to look at today about being a real Christian. Being a real dinky-dye Aussie Christian. And friends tonight, our God is real.

God is real. It's not some make-believe story. He is real. He's a real person and he cares in a real and true way for every hurt, every wound.

No matter what comes your way in life, God knows where you're at. Each one of you here tonight, whether you are with the Saviour or not yet, He is with you in the sense He's here for you and He's real for you.

And He's one that you can call upon. As it says that we should call on His name. We should call on Him and turn from our wicked way and turn to His way. And the question tonight for every one of us is, is your Christianity real?

Have you got the real thing? When it's tested, when the tough times come, is your Christianity real? Does it stand the test? There's an illustration of an aeroplane.

[2:35] When you see these great big jetliners, when they come landing down at the airport, the aircraft landing gear is designed to take the weight of that plane going at 300 kilometres an hour.

Several tonnes of aircraft going at 300 kilometres an hour. And those tyres have got to go from zero to 300 kilometres an hour. Instantly.

That tyre rotation. And at the same time, all the cargo, all the weight of that plane is put down on those tyres at that instant. When the rubber hits the road. And that's what it's like for us, for you and I, as Christians, when the rubber hits the road, that's when our Christianity gets tested.

It gets tested to see whether it's real, whether it's the real thing or not. Whether it's that brand of Christianity that is the real, or that which is the false, the counterfeit.

Alright? And we need to ask ourselves whether we're keeping up the appearances, or whether it is the real thing that we have. Now I've got a note here. Look at that.

[3:40] You've not seen one of them before, have you? A million dollars. One million dollars. That's fake. Yeah. That's right. It looks kind of real, doesn't it? It kind of feels kind of real.

But it's not real. It's not a real note. Like Dushin said, it's not a real note. It's a fraud. It's a counterfeit. But in a sense, of course we know it's really to get a point across.

It's got a special message if you read the fine print. Who'd like to have a million dollars tonight?

There you go. A million dollar question. Yeah. You can read it later.

And the point I'm making is that some things are counterfeit and some things are real. And we know that there's actually real counterfeits out there in circulation too.

That there's pretend money that people are, I guess, especially copying on colour copiers and trying to pass off as the real thing. And the fact is that some people try to pass themselves off as a real Christian when they're not.

[4:42] Well, maybe they are trying to be, they mean well, or they think that they're a Christian. But when the rubber hits the road, when that landing gear hits the tarmac, things just fall apart because they haven't got the real thing.

And when the rubber hits the road of life, the Christianity that you have gets tested. Is it the real Christianity? Is it the real thing? Because today there's so many counterfeits about. There's so many imitations. It's like, you see, sometimes you can buy some shoes that might have a brand name. You might say Nike, for example. But they might be made in some eastern country and it's just an imitation of the real brand. And when they get tested, you see that they're not the same quality. And that's like that for us. If you're a real Christian, you'll have that real quality, that strength of character, that strength of trust in Christ, that you're his and he is yours.

[5:43] And so some things about being a real Christian. Being a real Christian. And what will show through. And real Christians have real Christian living.

Someone wrote this little story. It's a 24 by 7. It's a 365 day a year. Christianity. An everyday Christianity.

God doesn't want us to just be Sunday Christians. Sunday Christians, but full on Christians. Here's a story about what people would rather see today.

It goes like this. It's called Silent Sermons. I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day. I'd rather one should walk with me than merely show the way.

The eyes are better student and more willing than the ear. For counsel is confusing, but examples always clear. And best of all the preachers are the men who lift their creeds.

[6:42] For to see good put into action, this is what everybody needs. I soon can learn to do it if you'll let me see it done. I can see your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.

And the lectures you deliver may be very fine and true, but I'd rather get the lesson by observing what you do. For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give, but there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

And people are watching you. As a Christian, what you do will speak a lot more than what you say. You know, some people might think, blab, blab, blab, I'm a Christian.

But when you see how they live, you know it doesn't quite measure up. It doesn't stack up. And real Christians will live the real life. Real Christians will have real faith. They'll have the faith in God that will see them through.

And in a way, the opposite of faith is worry. There's a story told about the Apollo 13 spacecraft. The astronaut Jim Lovell was in charge of the Apollo 13 spacecraft.

[7:50] And suddenly there was an explosion. Bang! Something had gone wrong with the aircraft, with the spacecraft. As it was on its way to the moon, the oxygen was almost gone. Their electrical system was out.

The spaceship was plunging towards a lunar orbit. It looked as if they were destined to be lost in space, thousands of miles from home. And during a press conference, because they did actually get safely back, Lovell was asked, Were you worried?

Were you worried? You know, this explosion, oxygen running out. To everyone's surprise, he said, No, not really. He said, Worry is a useless emotion. I was too busy fixing the problem to worry about it.

He was putting his energy into fixing the problem and finding a solution rather than worrying about it. And in a way too, as real Christians, when the troubles of life come, you've got someone to turn to to help you with your problem.

Someone who, the Bible says you can cast all your cares on him. All of your worries, all of your concerns, you can cast upon him. And he will care for you. Faith is the opposite of worry.

[8:59] So when you're faced with troubles and worries and concerns in life, use faith as the counter of worry, as the contradiction of worry.

Use faith to overcome. Do we live our lives in his care? Do we give him our everyday concerns? Or sometimes do we just resort to worry like the world around us?

When it comes to our worries, God can calm your anxieties and your fears and help you with your everyday lives.

And real faith is faith in action. Real faith is faith that's lived out in the day by day. And we see it, especially in the lives of God's persecuted people around the world today.

For example, in China. Christians in China, they worship in churches that are not state run and face prison or torture. Imagine if you were at risk tonight in coming here or facing prison, just for being here, just for being together with other Christian people.

[10:08] That you could face torture for it. That's a reality in places like China. In Sudan. In Sudan, some Christians, often children, are sold into slavery for \$15 a head.

This is happening now. There's a real faith that will see you through. We've got nothing to worry about here. In contrast, if you've got real faith, if that should happen to you, you will stay strong. You'll stay firm. You'll stay steadfast. Real faith will see you through. And real care is something that you'll see in Christianity too. You could think.

There's an example here. There was a special Olympics. You know, people who had disabilities in Seattle. And there was nine contestants. They had various forms of disability, whether physical or mental.

And they had the 100-yard run. And the gun started. And off they were in the dash, in the race. And one boy stumbled on the asphalt.

[11:13] And he tumbled over a couple of times and he began to cry. And the other eight who were running in the race, they heard the boy crying. And they slowed down and paused. And they all turned around and went back.

And every one of them. And one girl with Down syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, This will make it better. And then all the nine linked arms and walked together to the finishing line.

And everyone in the stadium stood and cheered. And the cheering went on for 10 minutes. And this was a race. And yet they all crossed the finishing line together.

And that's like it with Christianity too. That we're running the race. But it's not a selfish thing. We care about our other Christian brothers and sisters. We care about each one.

It's not a competitive thing that we're out to beat one another. But we want to help each other get across that finishing line. We want to run the race with patience. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

[12:10] We want to care about our brothers and sisters. We want to bring people along with us to heaven. We don't want to be selfish and keep it all to ourselves. And have a me-centered kind of Christianity that really doesn't care about the lost.

Just imagine tonight if the police knocked on that door and came in and told us, Hey people tonight, there's a child gone missing that's lost in these streets around us.

Maybe some of us in the church would say, Hey, we'll help you look for this child. It's getting dark. It's dangerous. We'll help you look for this little lost child. While maybe the rest of us might remain here praying for this lost little child that's in great danger.

The point is, is a lost child any more value than a lost soul? And we should care more so for those who are lost eternally.

For those who are lost in great danger of God's judgment of being found Christless at the end of their lives. Friends, we've got a responsibility to reach the lost, to reach out.

[13:12] Just as much as it were searching and reaching a lost child that needed to be searched and rescued, we too have got a responsibility as God's church to be his hand extended, to be reaching out to the lost about us.

Real Christians will have that real care, that care of our souls. Real Christians will have a real care for the things that really matter.

And we'll press towards the mark and battle on. Real Christians will have a faith that will be strong and that will be active.

And that will be strong enough to handle criticism and difficulties that might come our way. There's a famous quote from Theodore Roosevelt who described how, just in worldly terms, how we should

live a life that is active and about doing something.

And he put it like this, he said, It's not the critic who counts, nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.

[14:22] The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, his face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcomings, who knows the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at his best knows in the end the high achievement of triumph and who, at worst, if he fails while daring greatly, knows his place shall never be with those timid and cold souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Now the easiest way for us not to make a mistake is to do nothing. And it's like that in the Christian life too. We can sometimes be reluctant to take a risk, to step out of the comfort zone.

We've been talking about witnessing before. It's scary. It scares me witnessing. You're standing out from the crowd, you're standing out from the rest of those around about with a message that some will scorn and they'll deride you, they'll laugh at you, they will have a go at you likely, those that don't understand.

And yet we know that for all them, there might be those who will be receptive. And you might have the wonderful privilege of helping another person find Jesus as his saviour or her saviour.

And that will be worth it all. That will be worth all the difficulty, all the discomfort. It's worth putting yourself out.

[16:13] Real faith will do that. Real faith will step over the line and step out of the comfort zone. Come and join us and do some witnessing. Come and reach out. Take some tracks and put them in someone's letterbox.

Do something for the Lord. It's better to do something than to do nothing because you're afraid of doing it wrong. And real faith will do something. It's active. It says that faith without works is dead.

Faith will put action into your life. Faith puts on the running shoes and gets out there on the racetrack. Faith puts the work boots on and does some work and serves the Lord.

Real faith. And real faith will have a real endurance. Real Christians will have a real endurance.

They'll have a stickability.

It says in 2 Timothy 2 verse 3, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Real Christians will face the battlefield of life.

[17:19] They'll face the combat zone. They'll leave the trenches and go into the front lines. Real Christianity will face the evil and trouble and conflict of the day.

And you can learn endurance. You can endure hardness. And difficulties will teach you that. Here's a little story, how someone wrote it, about the truth of endurance.

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will, when the road you're trudging seems all uphill, when the funds are low and the debts are high and you want to smile but you have to sigh, when care is pressing, you're down a bit, rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Life is strange with its twists and turns as every one of us sometimes learns and many a person turns about when they might have won had they stuck it out. Don't give up, though the pace seems slow.

You may succeed with another blow. Often the struggler has given up when he might have captured the victor's cup and he learnt too late when the night came down how close he came to the golden crown.

[18:37] Success is failure turned inside out so stick to the fight when you're hardest hit. It's when things seem worse that you mustn't quit. Real Christianity will go the distance.

It's a marathon event. It's a long distance event. Run the race with patience, with endurance, with stickability, with perseverance. Real Christianity is enduring.

It's lasting. It's persevering. So we're seeing real Christianity. Real Christianity has real faith. It has real endurance.

It has that real stickability, that real care, that real kind of keep on keeping on factor. And real Christianity, real Christians will have a real love for God.

You'll have a love for God. A love for God that bubbles up from the inside out. You'll have a love for God that is within you because you've had a new heart.

[19:40] You've had a heart transplant. As the Bible says, you've had the old heart, the rocky heart, the stony heart, the hard heart of sin taken out.

And God's put it within you. It talks about in Ezekiel how He's put within you a heart of flesh, a new heart, a new spirit He's going to put within us. It says it's got a parallel with becoming a Christian. That when we become a Christian, He gives us a whole brand new heart, a brand new start. And when we've got God's heart within us, when He's renewed your heart, you'll have His love within you, His real love.

And it'll affect your whole, every dimension of your life. What's your biggest goal in life? What's your biggest aim? What's the highest endeavour that you can aspire to?

What matters for you? When you have that love for Jesus, it puts everything in context. Listen to what Jesus hopes it will be. He summed up the Christian life like this.

[20:41] He says, Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength. This is the first and greatest commandment. And then He goes on how we should love our neighbour as ourselves.

Do we love God in that way? Do we really love Him? Have you got a love for the Saviour? Is He your passion? Is He a driving force? Do we spend time with God each day?

Do we talk to Him each day? Have we cleared some space in our calendars to attend church activities? Are we fair dinkum about reading the Bible, about learning to love Him more, to grow stronger in that love, to learn the mind of Christ for our lives?

The bottom line is get real tonight. Get real about your Christianity. Don't settle for the pretend, for the plastic, fake, imitation kind of Christianity, that counterfeit kind of Christianity that's not the real thing.

There's plenty of that about. There's plenty who would pat you on the back and pretend you're a Christian too. You've said all the right things.

[21:53] Maybe you've gone through the motions that people expect of you to become a Christian, but only God truly knows whether you're a real Christian, whether it's a real heart-deep, heart-deep Christianity, whether you've really had that conversion in your soul.

And friends, don't try to trick me, don't try to trick another Christian or trick the church people about you that you're a Christian when you're really not. It's between you and God tonight and I can only urge you as someone who cares for each one here tonight that your soul is so valuable, so precious and this is something too important for you to pretend about.

We've heard stories in the media, there's been stories about people telling stories about things and making Christians look foolish and making Christianity look like it's a lie.

There's people out there telling lies, not telling the truth. Don't be like that, friends, tonight. Be a real Christian tonight. Make Christ really your Saviour. Give your heart truly and really to Him.

Really and truly repent. Turn your back on the old life of sin and turn your life in Christ's direction, wanting to please to live for Him. The bottom line is get real tonight.

[23:10] Get real. Is your Christianity authentic? Is it the real kind? Or is it maybe just a, you've got a brand name on it that's not real? You know, you've got the name tag Christian when it's really not the real thing.

Only God knows your heart, whether your heart has truly been saved. And the word hypocrite, the word hypocrite in the Bible in the Greek word that was used for the word hypocrite, it literally means an actor on a stage, one who wore a mask.

Now you see these theatre masks on a little pole that might show a smiling face or a sad face or whatever kind of character that they wanted to portray. They had a mask on their face that portrayed a character.

And some people put on the mask of Christianity and that's what Jesus says, don't be a hypocrite. Don't put on a mask, be real. Take the mask off and show God who you really are.

Bear your soul to Him in all its sin, in all its lack of faith, in all its need, in all your great need of Him. Bear your soul to Him tonight. I urge you, each one, I would hate for it to be the case that I would have preached to many folk and that one day I will stand before the maker myself myself.

[24:30] And it says that I have to give account. As the Bible says that every man shall give account of himself to the Lord but for people who are shepherds who are guiding God's flock that I'll have to give account for your souls.

And I would like to hope and pray that I'll deliver the message clearly and soundly enough and faithfully enough that you won't have any excuse that if you choose to reject it, it's not my fault that I've not explained it well enough to you that it's been your free choice to reject it if you choose to. But I'd much rather know and trust, I pray, that you will have received it, that you'll have received that gift. That would be my joy that every one of us here tonight when heaven, when it's 100 years from now when we're all passed from this physical life, that we'll all be together, joined together as a, that we'll regroup as a full group of people here tonight.

That every one of us here tonight would know the Saviour, would know what it is to be a real Christian. But we won't be like an actor on a stage, like the hypocrites, acting out some kind of religious script.

They're not the real thing. They pretend to be people who they aren't, trying to convince the audience. Some people can be like that. They put on a show, they use all the right jargon, but they're not a Christian yet.

[26:02] The Pharisees were like that. These Pharisees, they had a down path. The Pharisees had it all sewn up. You know, they were the perfect representative of everything that people thought was following God at that time.

The people of the day would have thought, wow, they're so religious. They're so, oh, what a saint. As they saw the Pharisee walking down the street with the tassels on their robes and the scriptures tied to their, they used to tie scripture verses to them in special boxes.

They used to stand on the street corners and pray lovely flowery prayers, long prayers, and say all the right kind of things. And they used to make a show of putting their money in the plate.

Wow, look how much money they put in the plate. Now, they must be a real Christian. They're putting lots of money in the bag. Now, they were doing everything that, well, you can't say they weren't doing the right thing.

They're doing everything that looked like it was the right thing to do, but they were doing it for the wrong reason, for the applause of other people, to try to trick other people, when really for all their knowledge and all their Bible learning and all the talk that they had, they weren't the real genuine article.

[27:22] They prayed a lot of prayers, but they were not real, not for real. And more than ever, our fake world today needs real Christians. Our fake world, we see in the media, the church is often painted, the church meaning the church established church, the formal, traditional, nominal church of the day, the well-known kind of church of the day.

It's filled with fakes and frauds, people are committing downright sinful things and shaming the name of Christ. They're disgracing Christ's name by how they live.

Popular Christianity today, it's watered down, it's palatable, it's comfortable, it's undemanding. You go to some churches, you won't be urged to repent.

Some churches, they won't urge you to get things right with God, to find real faith and real Christianity. Christianity. They'll just pat you on the back all the way to hell.

And friends, tonight, you need to be urged and challenged. It would be remiss of me not to challenge you, not to urge you, not to press you to enter into that gate.

[28:33] Don't miss it. That gate, it's narrow. Many people miss it, it's only narrow. There's lots of other ways you can go. There's a narrow way that's the only way.

As Christ tells us, that narrow is the way that leads to life, but broad is the way that leads to destruction. And many there be that go there at. Real Christians, we're just wrapping up now, real Christians, to recap, real Christians have a real God.

We have a real God, he's real. God is real. It's not some late belief fairy story, he is real, he is a real person, the Lord Jesus is a real saviour that you can call upon.

Real Christians, they're real about serving God. It's not just a pretend thing, not just going through the motions, through the actions, it's a real thing, serving him. A real Christianity is about living for Christ every day, living for Christ every day, day by day.

It's a day by day walk. It's not like when you become a Christian, you say a prayer and, wow, I've arrived. No, it's a walk. It's a day by day walk.

[29:41] We're getting from glory to glory to glory. He's changing us. He's changing us into that same image and we're becoming more like him.

I trust day by day. Real Christianity is a pilgrimage. It's a walk. It takes time. It takes time. So don't get discouraged if you feel, well, I'm such a baby Christian, I really don't know anything.

The one thing that you know, if you know Christ as your saviour, if you trust in him, then that's the starting point. And everything else is a bonus. It's trusting him, it's having that faith in him, that Christ faith.

And real Christianity will be real when the rubber hits the road, when the testing times come, when trouble hits your way, then you will find that your Christianity will go the distance because it's real. Real Christians have got real faith, faith that will stick with him, that will trust him instead of worrying. And real care for one another, real care for the lost, that you'll care about the message, that you can't but share it.

[30:47] You can't but share it. It's just innate in you that this is too good to keep to yourself. And however way the Lord helps you to do it, you'll want to share, you'll want to go out tracks, you'll want to witness in some way and share your faith.

And real heart, real endurance, real love for God, that's what we're talking about tonight. Friends, I urge you, friends and brethren tonight, I urge you that you'll have that love for him, that love for the Saviour.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you tonight for how you love us so much, how you cared in Christ, you showed that love in the person of your son in dying for us on that cross.

Lord, we thank you for your great grace that you would do that for us and that you care for us when worry comes. Help us, Lord, to counteract our worry with faith.

Help us, Lord, to live our faith out in life, not just to have it in our mouth, but to have it on our feet, to have it in our heart, to have it in our day by day, our week by week.

[31:51] Lord, that will be a witness for you. You'll help us to live that life that will go the distance, that will endure, and that our faith will be true because it will be based upon you and what you have done in that work of the cross.

So it will be based on that turning from our sin and our falling of you. Lord, help us to make that step of faith tonight. Each one we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen. God bless you tonight.

I pray you be encouraged and walk with God this week again. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.