

# The Leaven of the Pharisees & Saducees

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[0:00] Good morning.

Those of you I've not met, my name is Dave, and it's my great privilege to open up God's Bible. You're going to be reading the first 12 verses. If you don't own a Bible or you don't have one with you, they're on the back table. They're there for you. As you turn there, I'll tell you a quick story. The first time I ever preached a sermon, I knew the advice that they always give to first-time preachers, and that is, don't preach everything you know all at once. You'll be tempted too, but don't do it. I knew that advice, and I studied the passage with that in mind, and I paired my sermon with that in mind, and I entered the pulpit with that in mind, and then I got there and I preached every single thing that I knew.

[1:17] I buried that poor congregation just under an avalanche, which means that they didn't get anything at all from the sermon except suffocating.

Which is why, if you have a conversation with me about preaching just in general, I'll tell you this. Preaching is an exercise in cutting. Cutting away the distractions, cutting away the secondary issues in getting to the heart of the heart of the person.

Everything I can do to get us to the heart of the person. Especially a text like this one that we're about to see in Matthew chapter 16, which is just brimming over with ideas.

You could probably preach five or six different sermons from this text. And so my goal in preaching is this, to get to the heart of a passage. What is God chiefly after in this?

And to bring that to us, that it lands undistracted with weight in our heart. So, with that in mind, let's go to Matthew chapter 16.

[2:27] I'm still not used to having something in my hands, so I have to forgive me. And we're going to read the first chapter. The Pharisees and Sadducees came to test them, and they asked them to show them a sign from heaven.

And he answered them, When it is evening, you say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, it will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.

You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky. You cannot interpret the signs of the sky. An evil and adulterous generation speaks for a sign.

But no sign will be given to them, except the sign of Jonah. So he left them and departed. When the disciples reached to the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread.

Jesus said to them, Watch, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Pharisees. And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, We brought no bread.

[3:36] But Jesus, aware of this, said, Oh, you of little, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive?

Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread, to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Pharisees?

Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teacher of the Pharisees and Pharisees.

So what is this passage chiefly about? What does God, the Holy Spirit, who through Matthew gave us this text, what does he want us to draw from?

We could look at the first section, verses one through four, and see the foolishness of making demands of God. We could see Jesus giving us an example as he doesn't play the enemy's game, right?

[4:53] He doesn't engage on their turn. We could see that Jesus is modeling for us patience, right? He's waiting on God's time to give him a chance.

Or perhaps we could look to the second section, verses five through twelve, and remind ourselves that we ought not follow the disciples' example, right? As they let the cares of life crowd out their focus on their spiritual life.

Or we could look at Jesus' frustration that they don't remember his previous miracles. We remind ourselves always to look back on God's past faithfulness as we walk forward through life's difficulties.

All of those and more are good and right and beautiful truths embedded in this passage. And some of them are going to play in a supporting role in this passage. But they're not a time.

Let me summarize these verses, the story of this passage, in a way that highlights what I think is a time. Jesus' opponents come and try to discredit him.

[6:01] He doesn't play their game. And as he leaves with his disciples, Jesus doesn't want them to miss the lesson of that exchange that he had with the Pharisees and the Pharisees.

So he spells it out to them in verse six. Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Pharisees. At first, verse seven, they don't get it.

We have to clarify in verses eight through eleven. They finally get it in verse three. So this whole passage revolves around verse six.

That's the lesson he wants the disciples to get from this verse between verses one through three. It's the thing they don't get. It's the thing he has to explain. Jesus wants his disciples to learn.

And if you're his disciple, he wants you to learn it, too. And if you aren't his disciple, you know. He wants you to hear it, too, so that you don't end up numbered among the Pharisees and the Pharisees.

[7:04] And he calls evil and adultery and God's sake. So let us pray. And let us then beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the Pharisees.

Lord our God, without you, the builders build in vain. I preach in vain.

We are here today in vain. Father, will you, for the power of your Spirit, make us alive to your will? That we might heed its warmth and love the Savior. We pray this all in his name.

If we are going to watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, we ought first probably to start with the Pharisees and the Sadducees in verses one through three.

[8:15] Now, for you and for me, this just looks like an introduction. The Pharisees and the Sadducees came to test him. They asked him.

But if we slow down for just a moment, there's something super critical for the whole rest of the sermon, just in those first two words. Verse one probably doesn't seem extraordinary, right?

The Pharisees and the Sadducees, those are the bad guys, right? Well, yes and no. This scene probably would have shocked Matthew's audience. Because the Pharisees and the Sadducees are not friends.

They're not friends at all. I recently returned from a study in Israel, and our guide, a Jewish man, said, where you find two Jews, you will find an Archie.

And this was certainly true of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. If you had to find a modern American analogy to this, the closest thing you might find, it's not a very good analogy, but it kind of gets at least some of the antipathy.

[9:22] It's probably Republicans and Democrats. Right? They're both Americans, but they're not on the same page in a lot of ways. Right? You might call the Pharisees Republicans because they're sort of the conservative guys and the Sadducees Democrats because they're a little bit more liberal.

And you might call the Essenes and the Zealots who are not in this passage the libertarians because they're just weird.

Now, again, these are not, these don't map super well to our current context. A Pharisee would never vote Republican. A Sadducee would never vote for Democrat. They would not understand or like our modern party at all. But they were indeed ends of a political and religious spectrum.

So when Matthew says the Pharisees and the Sadducees came to test them, that's like saying Donald Trump and Nancy Pelosi together came to confront Jesus. It's jarring.

[10:24] It should be unusual to us. What on earth would get these two warring factions together? These two rival parties, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, in their common hatred of Jesus, found a sinister bond of union, says one.

Basically what's going on is the enemy of my enemy is mine. So they're finding, they can in this instance because their hatred of Jesus overwhelms their hatred for his family.

They are saying better together in opposition to Jesus. So already in that attitude, we're beginning to see the root, the foundation of what Jesus is calling the leaven or the yeast of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

We see more of it when we ask, what do these friends do? They test Jesus. Verse 2, to test him, they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.

Now we should not read this as an honest question. We know, if you've been with us as we've walked through Matthew's Gospel, back in chapter 12, a very similar exchange happened. It was just the Pharisees at that time.

[11:50] And after he sent them away and confounded them, we read in chapter 12, the Pharisees went out and conspired against Jesus. How to destroy him.

This isn't an honest inquiry. This is them trying to play that out. They're trying to figure out if he's the real deal. They've decided he isn't. They're trying to trip him up.

And so their hope is that either he'll try and fail at a sign and discredit him, or they'll at least be able to say, well, he couldn't produce one. He didn't produce one. He didn't want to produce one.

And so they could call him a coward. Now, how does Jesus respond to them? Two ways. First, he talks about signs in the heavens, and then he calls them evil and adulterous.

First, the signs. In verses 2 and 3, Jesus explains to them, well, you can read signs like the weather. But you refuse to read signs you don't like.

[12:50] The issue isn't their ability. They can read the signs. They can read the signs of the weather. This is the correspondent to our modern saying. Red sky at night, sailors delight.

Red sky at morning, sailors take warning. The issue isn't their education, right? They had the Hebrew Scriptures. They were experts in it. They testified the many signs of the coming Messiah. I love how the Puritan Matthew Poole put it. He said, it's as if Jesus was saying, I was born of a virgin, which was prophesied in Isaiah chapter 7. I was born in Bethlehem, as was prophesied by Micah chapter 5.

John the Baptist came in the power of the spirit of Elijah to prepare my way before me, as was prophesied by Malachi chapter 4. The prophet Isaiah chapter 35 foretold that when the Lord comes, the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

Then shall the lame men leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. The Poole continues, all these are the signs of the time when the Messiah was to come, but these things you cannot discern.

[13:58] You come and ask a sign that you might believe in me when you have so many. And yet, and here is the thing I think that is at the heart of it.

You will not believe. You pretend yourselves to be the children of Abraham, but you are not his children. He saw my day far off and rejoiced.

You will not believe though you see me among you and at your doors. He believed without any sign. You will not believe though I have shown you many signs.

The issue wasn't their ability. It wasn't information or education. It was their unwillingness. A refusal to believe.

They rejected Jesus before he began, so no amount of signs would ever satisfy them. Which is why the sign he does say he'll give them, the sign of Jonah, is so fitting.

[15:10] And that's the situation in chapter 12 we've already alluded to. He's already told them this is what's in store for him. Matthew 12, 38. Some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him saying, Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.

Sound familiar? But he answered them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

And here he explains it. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment, and with this generation condemn it. For they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

This is perfect, the perfect sign for the hardened Pharisees and Sadducees. Kind of for two reasons. First, Jonah's the hardened prophet. All the other prophets say, Here I am, Lord, send me.

[16:14] Jonah's like, I'm getting out of here, right? And so the sign of Jonah actually softens Jonah's heart. That's the hope that the death and resurrection of Jesus will soften our hearts and make us yearn for him.

And secondly, it's the perfect sign for the Pharisees and Sadducees because of how the story ends, right? See, getting thrown into the sea, being abandoned for dead, being swallowed by the great fish, that's actually not much of a sign.

Anybody can be given up for dead, right? The great sign is coming back to the land of the living. That's the incredible part. Which mirrors Christ, right?

Anyone can die. The Romans crucified many, many people. It's the resurrection that's incredible. But even that's not enough for some.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus speaks words that apply directly to these Pharisees and Sadducees, doesn't he? If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.

[17:28] Luke 16. And so there's an incredible irony in this, right? The thing that they want, they want Jesus dead, right?

That's not his undoing. It's theirs. The Sadducees don't even believe in resurrection. Like, they're religiously liberal, not mostly politically liberal. Politically, they're aligned with Rome.

They want to just get along with Rome really well. So they're mostly politicians. And what that means is they downplay all their religious beliefs, including resurrection. They don't think there's going to be a resurrection at all.

They're functionally atheists. They just are religious in name only, so to speak. So they don't believe in resurrection. So they can't even imagine that when they get what they want, Jesus crucified, that that is exactly what will undo them.

Because the sign of Jonah is that in three days he comes back. And he dismantles their entire system of beliefs. Rome's not what matters. Christ is what matters. Resurrection is real.

[18:29] And so too with the Pharisees. They did believe that God would raise people from the dead at the end of all things. But they couldn't fathom that it was through their own evil plot that the Father would vindicate Jesus Christ the Son.

And so their success was their own undoing. And so here we have in the sign of Jonah, God using his enemies' schemes against them.

If you are here at the very, very first sermon we preached in this series in Matthew, I quoted something from the early church preacher John Chrysostom.

What is marvelous, he said, in this gospel. You will see death destroyed by death.

And curse extinguished by curse. And the dominion of the devil put down by those very things whereby he did prevail.

[19:36] Using the enemy's tools against them. The Sadducees didn't believe there was such a thing as resurrection. So in plotting his death, they were paving the way for him to dismantle their whole system of belief.

The Pharisees thought killing Jesus was their way to get rid of a rival. But in fact, it was the way of God raising him up higher than any name that can be named. It was their undoing.

As Paul said in Romans 1, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead.

That's a sign of Jonah. And if we're familiar, I think, with this attitude that the Pharisees and the Sadducees have.

Having our minds made up before we even begin. Have you ever been in a conversation with someone who had their mind up and couldn't possibly even hear what you had to say about something?

[20:39] We see it in our own homes when we have arguments. We see it in the national stage, in politics. We see it in every single conversation where someone has already made up their mind before they begin.

And the problem isn't friends out there only. It's in our hearts too. It's in here in each of us. We do it too. Of course we don't see it, right?

Of course we think we're reasonable. There are psychologists who make their entire careers researching these cognitive biases, right? Confirmation bias. We only pay attention to the news that reassures us of what we already believe.

Echo chambers. We collect for ourselves sources of information that already accord with what we believe. The framing effect where, you know, we put a different spin on the same facts or the same situation than someone else would based on our own preconceived ideas.

Here's one as it relates to God. Have you ever heard someone say, or have you ever said, I couldn't believe in a God who, fill in the blank.

[21:53] Friends, God either is or is not. And if he is, it does not matter what you think or would like him to be like. He simply is. You just have to deal with that, right?

It's not about what you would prefer to accept. The sign of Jonah is the sure and certain testimony that Jesus Christ is the right.

And so it is him that you have to go to. It's more than that though. It's also the sure testimony about what kind of a God he is. Right?

He is not a disinterested, far off deity. His presence among us is a sign.

God with us is a sign. His personal presence among his people, even among his enemies, that he's willing to put up with them, is a sign to us. About who and what kind of a God he is.

[22:54] Right? When a natural disaster strikes our country, what does the president do? They make a speech, but then they go to wherever that disaster happened, right? Why?

They're not doing any rescue missions. They're not rebuilding anything. They're not, I mean, they'll do, you know, at a soup line, like a customary, you know, one thing. What are they doing?

They're signaling, right? It's a sign that the country is with the victims. It's a sign that they aren't forgotten. A sign that help is on the way. A sign that they're cared for. And Jesus' presence, his physical presence, he didn't stay in heaven.

He came. The one who said, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. He came to our world and spent time with the lowly.

And healed and taught and was scorned and mocked and rejected, as we see in today's passage. All for us. His very presence is the sign of his great love.

[24:01] And so I'll ask you, if you don't follow Jesus, if you're not yet his follower, why not? If you have genuine questions, you're just not sure.

Or, perhaps, are your questions a smokescreen? Or a hardened heart? Unwilling to accept him no matter what. And that might be a question if you're talking with someone who is not a Christian. That might be a question to ask them, right? Is that a real, genuine, thoughtful question? Or is it a smokescreen? If you could have all your questions answered about the Gospel, would you, you know, would you actually embrace Christ?

Or is this just a way to keep him at arm's length? I want you to see how serious Jesus thinks the answer to that question is.

Right? If you're hardened against him and his church and his word, he has very strong words for you. You belong, just like the Pharisees and the Sadducees, to an evil and adulterous generation in God's eyes.

[25:25] And so in verse 4, we read heartbreaking words. He left them and departed. Friends, it is a terrible thing to have the living God turn his back and walk away from you.

He walked away from them because they've already turned their backs on him. And so, friends, seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion. And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Isaiah 55. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. So we have laid the groundwork to understand the message that Jesus wants his disciples to learn.

And so, verses 5 through 12, he points it out to them. The disciples reached the other side. They had forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus interrupts that idea and said to them, Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

[26:52] Now, the thing that first grabs our attention, right, what is it? It's how obtuse the disciples appear, right? We read verse 7 and think, man, these guys are idiots.

But I have spoken with some of you when you're hungry. So let's cut them some slack. I like what Grant Osborne had to say about this. When he calls them, you have little faith.

Here. He said, the disciples were of little faith, not because they had no faith, but because their faith was obscured by self-interest and the priority of personal needs and wants, in this case, food.

He says, this characterizes us, all of us, most of the time. We do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns. We have not learned to set our minds on things above, on earthly things.

Our treasures are on earth rather than in heaven. And that's what's going on in verses 7 through 11. Jesus is trying to tear their attention back, bring them back to the main idea, the thing he wants them to learn from his exchange with the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

[28:06] Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And so I think three questions come to us. First, what exactly is this leaven or this yeast, depending on your translation, right? And then secondly, of all the people in the world, why would you be saying this to the disciples, who aren't Pharisees and Sadducees?

And third, with no Pharisees and Sadducees left in the world today, how do we, as Christ's disciples, heed this warning today?

So first, what is the leaven? When Jesus says the leaven or the yeast, which Matthew then explains is the teaching, verse 12, of the Pharisees and Sadducees, I don't think what he wants us to do is go line by line through their beliefs and make sure that we don't believe any of their beliefs.

First, I think it's not natural to read the passage that way because the Pharisees and the Sadducees are very, very different in their ideas, but throughout the entire passage they're treated as one entity, one group throughout the whole passage, always appearing together.

He doesn't distinguish between them. He makes no line of demarcation between them. They're always a group. And second, Jesus doesn't condemn all their teaching. He agrees with both of them that the Bible is God's word.

[29:34] He agrees with the Pharisees against the Sadducees that really observing God's law is super critical. He agrees with the Sadducees against the Pharisees that we aren't bound by the additional traditions of the rabbis.

If you look back to chapter 12, when Jesus interacts with the Pharisees about the Sabbath, they say, why are you breaking the Sabbath? And he's like, I'm not. I'm just breaking your rules about the Sabbath, not God's.

That's what they did. They piled on lots of rules on top. Jesus doesn't condemn all their teaching. So actually we should believe some of the things they did. Even though the two groups differ, even though they considered each other enemies, there's something at the heart of their teaching, of

their belief, that they both share.

It's the very thing that drew them together in verse 1. They reject Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior of the world. All their other errors spring from that one error.

As different as they might be, both of their false systems originate with a rejection of the true Messiah. And that's why he calls it leaven or yeast, because it just proliferates.

[30:58] It spreads throughout the whole. And so this leaven, the teaching that Jesus wants us to watch and beware of, is this attitude or worldview that prevents them from accepting Christ.

Now, can you see how rejecting Jesus might produce both of these systems as different as they are? Rejecting Jesus produces both Pharisees and Sadducees, even though they themselves are enemies.

Watch this. If you reject Jesus the Messiah, you reject the grace of his cross. Without grace, you need to earn your place with God.

Good luck with that. And so regulations replace worship. And you quickly become judgmental and immoralist.

You become a Pharisee. But at the exact same time, you can take it a different direction. If you reject Jesus the Messiah and you reject the power of his resurrection, without the hope of that, you begin to live for this life.

[32:14] There's no resurrection. This is all you've got. And so you make moral and political concessions to fit in with the culture around you. But you look just like the world.

You become a Sadducee. The same exact heart problem, the rejection of Jesus, can produce wildly different problems in people's lives.

It's the same exact leaven, the same yeast, the same problem that produces both the Pharisees and Sadducees. Friends, there is zero room for error on the gospel.

Because this one idea, rejecting Jesus, is the leaven, the yeast that spreads throughout your whole life. And naturally leads to every kind of false teaching and practice and ultimately to your destruction.

When the gospel is at stake, our very relation to the living God is at stake. That's what Paul said in Galatians chapter 1.

[33:36] Galatians is written because the Galatian church is incorporating something probably similar-ish to the Pharisees into their life.

The Galatian church. And he says to them, I am astonished that you are, what does he say? He says, that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Friends, when we shift the gospel just a bit, we aren't abandoning just an idea. We are abandoning, deserting him who called us. There is zero room for error on the gospel.

But, of all the people in the world, why is he saying this to the disciples? They are not Pharisees. They are not Sadducees. They were invested in Jesus.

They have been following him around at this point probably close to three years. In chapter 19, Peter is going to say, we have left everything in follow of Jesus.

[34:47] They are invested. They have sunk costs, so to speak. It is not like they are going to defect now, right? So why would Jesus say this to them? Why is this a lesson that he makes sure he is going to point out to them?

And why does Matthew record it so that we are certain not to miss it either? Because it is our natural inclination to stray.

And because it is the message that we are going to hear time and time again from our culture, from false teachers, and even the sin from within our own hearts.

The danger is real for us as well. Which is sort of the answer, right, to that last question. With no Pharisees and Sadducees left, how do we as Christ's modern disciples, how do we heed his warning today?

Well, first, right doctrine is critical. Everyone is a theologian. That is actually the title of a recent book, a couple years old, by R.C. Sproul.

[36:09] Everyone is a theologian. Good book. Recommended to you. No matter who you are, you have an idea of who God is, and that is what theology means. Study of God. Everyone is a theologian.

The question is, what do you believe in God? We've already seen in Galatians 1 that leaving the true gospel is deserting Christ himself. I'll read to you from Acts chapter 20.

As Paul commissions the elders of the church in Ephesus. He says to them, listen to how much he says to them about right doctrine.

Acts 20, verse 20. I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. And he turns from his ministry to their ministry.

[37:24] Acts 20, verse 29. I know that after my departure, here's the warning he has, and this is the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. After my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

And from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with fear.

So friends, know your Bible. We spoke during the announcements this morning about how in just a few weeks we're going to be voting on new members in our church.

Part of Shoreline's membership affirmation is this, I am a steward of Shoreline's gospel witness. That means I am on the lookout. I am being watchful of the yeast of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

I am a steward of Shoreline's gospel witness. If any leader begins to teach a false gospel, I will act. I will examine the scriptures and consult that leader in the spirit of reconciliation found in Matthew 18.

[38:42] If further intervention is necessary, I will bring it to the elders. Beware. The leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, including the preaching of this pulpit.

Right? How do we watch for that leaven? We watch for it in the walls of the church.

We also watch for it outside because you're hearing, what, 30, 40-minute sermon from me today.

And if you're in a community group, you've got another hour of Bible study.

And whatever you're doing in your own personal life. But how much TV do you watch? How much radio do you listen to? How much do you hear the message of this world? There's probably more, right?

There's no neutral zone in this world. And I'm not saying turn off all the radio. No, that's not what I'm saying. But I'm saying be watchful, be thoughtful as you consume content. What is this saying, right?

[39:45] The world says, I saw this this week, someone kind of put this dichotomy back and forth. The world says, follow your heart, which sounds great, right? Jesus says, follow me. In two weeks' time, he's going to say, take up your cross and follow me.

The world says, believe in yourself. Jesus says, believe in me. The world says, discover yourself. Jesus says, deny yourself. The world says, be true to you.

Jesus says, be true to me. Be watchful friends. One of the hardest things to be watchful for are not the big, dark, you know, like Satanist stuff.

The stuff that's only a tiny twist, right? The Pharisees look super righteous. They're all about the word. But it is the tiny corruptions of the truth that are most sinister.

Not the outright evil, right? If Satan came all the time blaring a message of, you know, dead babies and take your pay, like just outright evil, we run from that, right?

[41:09] The whole world gathered to put down Hitler. The scripture said that he appears as an angel of light.

That's why we have to test everything. Hold fast to what is good, 1 Thessalonians 5. When something agrees with Christ only in part, but not in full, that is not a solid place to stand.

Right? The Pharisees and the Sadducees both agree with Jesus on some things, but not the most important thing. Jesus agreed with the Sadducees against the Pharisees that we don't need to observe the rabbi's teaching in addition to God's laws.

He agreed with the Pharisees that there would be a resurrection of the dead. Yet he called their teaching jointly. A yeast that is evil and adulterous in God's eyes.

Because where it counts, they both deny Christ. And so as we look around us in the world, it is not enough to agree with Christ superficially. It's wonderful that our Mormon neighbors agree with Jesus that couples should not cohabit before marriage.

[42:30] But they still need Christ. It's great that our Muslim neighbors agree with Jesus on most of the sexual ethic.

But they still need Christ. It's terrific that Republicans agree with Jesus on abortion, but they still need Christ. It's wonderful that Democrats agree and share Christ's concern for the downtrodden, and they still need Christ.

We're grateful that our atheist friends can be good people by human standards without Jesus, but they still need Christ.

We're happy to see Buddhists be peacemakers without Jesus. But they still need Christ. Anything that gets only part way there, that is only partially in agreement, but is not yet Christ, still needs him. Christ and Christ alone counts. The most subtle form of this.

[43:44] The thing that is most prone in our lives, yours and mine, look at me. The most prone thing. Right? You're here today on purpose.

Right? You came here for a reason. The most subtle form of this is a Christless Christianity. We can do church without reference to Christ.

You can show up here and never truly engage with God. Never actually be trusting in him. You could be here trusting in your own religious observance, just like the Pharisees. Just showing up here and reading words off a screen doesn't mean that you have entrusted yourself to Christ.

We can go through the motions without ever really lifting our eyes beyond the cares and concerns of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

And friends, this is where the cares and concerns of the world, like the bread that was consuming the thoughts of the disciples, comes into play.

[45:03] We can arrive at church, serve in church, sing at church without ever truly directing our hearts heavenward to the risen Savior.

Without humbling ourselves. Without humbling ourselves. Without, so without formally rejecting Jesus, we can practically deny him by practicing our Christianity as if he's not there, as if we're just going through motions.

Friends, be watchable. Be always growing in the faith. That's how you know. Right? That you're not doing that Christless Christianity thing.

Be always with the flock of God. Let them encourage you. Be always in prayer, because that is where Christ is. Friends, watch. And beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Let's pray. Father in heaven.

[46:14] Father in heaven, I pray that you would right now help us, give us the grace to really reach out to you.

To lay hold of you. In humility, in humility, cast ourselves on Christ and him alone. So that we might not be found.

Be numbered with the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Practicing a pale shadow of true religion. We ask all these things confidently in his name. Amen. practicing a pale shadow of true religion.

The Father actually leaning on, loving, and pursuing the risen Christ.

We ask all these things confidently in His name. Amen. Well, let's stand and respond by singing this hymn, "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus."