“Why Don’t Christians Practice What They Preach?”

Scripture Text: Matthew 5: 14-16

Introduction

Why Don’t Christians Practice What They Preach?

*We preach LOVE..................and yet many Christians treat others with contempt and hatred.

*We preach ABSTINENCE........and yet many Christian young people engage in pre-marital sex.

*We preach AGAINST THE USE OF ALCOHOL........and yet many Christians stand in the line at the grocery store to buy their cases of beer on Friday night.

*We preach MARITAL FAITHFULNESS..........and yet many Christians engage in adulterous relationships with people they work with........or sometimes even with someone else in the church.

*We preach FAITHFUL WEEKLY CHURCH ATTENDANCE..........and yet many Christians spend their Sundays sleeping in........or fishing......or on the golf course.

*We preach HONESTY AND TRUTHFULNESS........and yet some Christians can lie right along with the best of ‘em.

*We preach INTEGRITY..........and yet some Christians cheat on their taxes........and their time cards at work...........or steal from their employer.

*We preach GODLY LIVING........and yet many Christians are living for the devil.

Why Don’t Christians Practice What They Preach?

The Problem of Hypocrisy in the Church has always provided the skeptics with more than enough ammunition against Christianity.
You have friends and relatives who have probably said things like this at some time or another................

*I’m not going to that church, they’re all just a bunch of hypocrites.

*I can live just as good a life as all those hypocrites that go to your church.

*If that’s what it means to be a Christian...........I don’t want to have any part of it.

What Defense do we Christians have against such accusations?

Are they dead wrong about Christians? Or is there an element of truth in their charge?

I have three very simple points I want us to consider from God’s Word this morning.

I. The Truth About Hypocrisy
II. The Tragedy Of Hypocrisy
III. The Triumph Over Hypocrisy

Before we go any farther, let’s define the word HYPOCRITE.

Hypocrite comes from the greek word, ὑπόκριτης (Hoo-pock-ra-teeze)

HUPOKRITES literally means........”one who answers, or “one who talks back.” It was a term used to describe a “play actor” in ancient greek dramas. The actors would put a “mask” over their real face to conceal their true identity. They would then speak through the mask in dialogue with the other actors and actresses. In time hypocrites or hypocrite came to mean, “one who acts or pretends.”

The term HYPOCRITE is used 20 times in the New Testament and all twenty uses of the word were spoken by JESUS. He used it FIFTEEN times in the gospel of Matthew...........then again in Mark 7:6; Luke 6: 42; Luke 11: 44; Luke 12: 56 and Luke 13: 15.

Having now defined the word HYPOCRITE..............Let’s move on
to our first key point.

Let’s look at ..............................

I. THE TRUTH ABOUT HYPOCRISY

1. Are there hypocrites in this church? Are there hypocrites in EVERY church? Well, let’s let Jesus answer that for us.

   Please turn over just a few pages in your Bibles to Matthew chapter thirteen. (Read Matthew 13:24-30)

2. If a relative or a friend or someone at work asks you, “Are there hypocrites in your church.” Your answer would have to be “YES.” In fact........according to Jesus, we would be very truthful in saying there are “hypocrites” in every church in Washington County........as well as every church in the State of North Carolina........as well as as every church in this Country........and every church in the world.

   When someone says........"There are hypocrites in your church” that is a truth that cannot be denied!

3. But is it true that ALL CHRISTIANS ARE A BUNCH OF HYPOCRITES? Is it true that THE CHURCH IS FULL OF NOTHING BUT HYPOCRITES? Absolutely NOT!

4. It is true that ALL CHRISTIANS ARE SINNERS................

   BUT NOT ALL CHRISTIANS WHO SIN ARE HYPOCRITES!

5. Those who attack Christianity believe if a Christian commits a sin, that automatically makes him or her a hypocrite.

   That is simply NOT TRUE!

   The Apostle Paul gives us some very clear insight on this in Romans chapter 7. (Read: verses 15-25)
but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

6. Was the Apostle Paul a SINNER? YES
   Was the Apostle Paul a HYPOCRITE? NO

7. Like the apostle Paul, many of us are very sincere in our commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. We truly want to do His will. We truly desire to please the LORD and obey Him. But no matter how hard we try not to, we still sin.

   Why is that? Its because though we are new creation in Christ we still live in the same fleshly body with its sinful nature. And every time we try to do the LORD’S will our old sinful nature wars against us.

8. But the sincere Christian will take ownership of his or her sin by CONFESSIONING it to the LORD and REPENTING of it.

9. BUT A HYPOCRITE on the other hand will “hide” behind a mask of righteousness rather than confronting the sin in his or her life.

   * A HYPOCRITE is one who complains about the church service going past NOON........but doesn’t think a thing about sitting through an overtime at a ball game or sitting through a two hour movie or spending all day in a shopping mall.

   * A HYPOCRITE is one who goes out drinking with the guys on
Saturday night and stands up to serve around the Lord’s table on Sunday morning.

* A HYPOCRITE is one who doesn’t have much to put in the offering plate on Sunday morning............but has plenty of money to do anything else they want to do during the week.

* A HYPOCRITE is one who sings praises to God on Sunday morning, and swears like a sailor during the week.

* A HYPOCRITE is one who doesn’t have time to read the Bible, but has plenty of time to read the daily newspaper.

* A HYPOCRITE is one who can spend all kinds of time talking on the telephone, but can’t spend 10 minutes a day talking to the LORD in prayer.

10. THE TRUTH ABOUT HYPOCRISY IS THIS.............

There are hypocrites in every Church, which means there is likely some hypocrites in this Church.

But while all Christians are sinners, not all Christians are hypocrites.

Secondly, let’s look at.....................

II. THE TRAGEDY OF HYPOCRISY

1. There’s an old saying that goes like this, ”Those who are looking for an excuse not to become a Christian will find one.”

The Tragedy of Hypocrisy is it provides those who are looking for an excuse not to accept Christ or become a part of his Church the excuse they are looking for.

.......Is our hypocrisy a valid excuse for someone not to accept Christ?  NO!
2. But God takes the matter of your Christian influence and mine very, very seriously. And we will have to given account for it.

-In Colossians 4: 5, 6........”Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

-In I Thessalonians 4: 11,12 Paul wrote, “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your DAILY LIFE may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”

-Romans 14:13b make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way” (Romans 14:13).

3. The Tragedy of Hypocrisy is that there are many Christians who have been very careless in the way they behaved in the presence of those outside of the Lord’s kingdom.

........There are kids who never accepted Christ, because they saw the gross hypocrisy in their parents who were supposedly Christians.

........There are people who never accepted Christ because of the hypocrisy they saw in their so-called Christian friends.

4. Listen closely to those “razor sharp” words of Christ in Matthew 18.......

“Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man
through whom they come. If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands and two feet and be thrown into eternal fire.

And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.”

6. Folks........JESUS takes this matter of our influence on other people very, very seriously..........And we had better take it seriously too.

You and I are not our own any more! We were bought with a price and we belong to Jesus Christ. We no longer live, but it is Christ Who lives in us.

We have considered THE TRUTH ABOUT HYPOCRISY and THE TRAGEDY OF HYPOCRISY.

Finally, let’s look at......................

III. THE TRIUMPH OVER HYPOCRISY

1. Let’s go back to the passage of scripture we read at the outset of message.

Read: Matthew 5: 14-16

2. You and I are the LIGHT of the world..........We are a REFLECTION OF THE LIGHT OF JESUS CHRIST in the world.

Jesus is commanding us here to LET OUR LIGHT or better yet, LET HIS LIGHT shine forth from our lives........so that all our non-Christian relatives, friends and acquaintances will see a reflection of Christ’s glory living within us.

3. Let me illustrate this matter of “God’s Glory” in a way I think all of us can understand..........especially you ladies.

ILLUSTRATION: There are many differences between husbands and wives. One of those differences is in the way we get ready
to go to the store.

For us husbands, getting ready to go to the store basically involves seeing if there’s any spots on the clothes we already have on, smelling our armpits to see if remembered to put on our deodorant, and blowing our breath into our hand to see if we need to brush our teeth.

But for you wives, getting ready to go to the store is a major undertaking. First you have to take a shower and wash your hair. Then you have to dry your hair and style it and put hairspray on it.

Then you get your make-up bag and put on your make-up foundation to highlight your cheek bones and cover up any wrinkles or age spots. Then you put on your eye liner and your Maybelline or Cover-Girl mascara to give your eyelashes that full, luscious look. Then you brush your teeth and rinse with mouthwash. Then you put on your lipstick.

And once you’re done in the bathroom, the real fun begins……trying to decide which of the four outfits you’ve laid out you want to wear.

You try something on and come out and ask us if it looks alright. Being the “fashion experts” we are, we husbands always say, “yes, it looks fine.” Which for some reason you wives always interpret to mean, “Go back and try on something else.”

Finally after about an hour or two of getting ready, our wives feel ready to go out in public. Guys, do you know why our wives spend so much time fixing themselves up?

It’s because she isn’t just concerned with her glory, She is concerned with your glory as well.

Our wives don’t want to go out in public with us looking like yesterday’s left-over meat loaf.............They want to look like today’s Filet-Mignon. They want people to see you with her and whisper under their breath.............

*Boy he is lucky to have a beautiful wife like her.
*Man I wish my wife would fix herself up like his does.

Our wives work hard on their glory because they want to bring glory and honor to us, their husband.

4. Just as A WIFE goes to great lengths to make herself beautiful in order to bring HONOR and GLORY on her husband..........

........We who are the BRIDE OF CHRIST must do everything we can to bring HONOR AND GLORY to our Husband, Jesus Christ.

5. The Way to Triumph over Hypocrisy........is to carefully examine every area of our lives........our talk........our habits........our behavior........our priorities........our relationships........to make certain there is nothing in our lives that would bring dishonor and disgrace on Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

He often used Christian vocabulary in his conversations. He talked about the blessings of the Almighty and the Christian confessions which would become the pillars of his new government. He handed out pious stories to the press. And was often seen with his tattered Bible in hand. Scores of people welcomed him as a man sent from God.

But beneath his outward appearance of pious religiosity lurked one of the most evil men this world has ever known. His name was Adolph Hitler.

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Brothers and sisters, like it or not, the world is watching your life and mine very closely. They are watching to see if our walk measures up with our talk.
Ask yourself this morning, “Is my life a stepping stone to Jesus or am I stumbling block?”

Let us rid ourselves of all hypocrisy and live our lives in such a way as to bring glory and honor to the Lord Jesus Christ.