

Sermon Text: Luke 12:1-3 Beware of Hypocrisy

Jesus warns of infectious hypocrisy because the character of our profession will be revealed.

- “First”—first of all
- A warning for you— “beware” not “behold”

1) What is hypocrisy?

- a) Narrowly defined:
 - i) Merriam-Webster: the act or practice of pretending to be what one is not or to have principles or beliefs that one does not have; *especially*: the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion
 - ii) Greek theater: hūpokritēs = play-actor under a mask
- b) Broadly defined:
 - i) LXX uses hūpokritēs to translate Hebrew words for “godless” and “wicked”
 - ii) Not practicing what you preach (Matt. 23:3-4)
 - iii) Using religion as a pretense for influence, power, self-aggrandizement, position, wealth, etc. (Matt. 6:1-5; 23:5-7, 25-28)
 - iv) Uncharitable/inhumane perversion of religion/law (Matt. 23:23-24; Luke 13:10-17; Mark 7:9-13)
 - v) Fault-finding in others while excusing yourself (Matt. 7:3-5)
 - vi) Willful lack of discernment (Luke 12:54-56)
 - vii) Using religious debate to avoid religious duty (Matt. 22:15-18)
 - viii) Hypocrisy is a self-idolatrous use of religion/virtue.

2) Why is hypocrisy so infectious?

- a) “Leaven”—invasive and pervasive
 - i) Used positively of the growth of the kingdom
 - ii) Used negatively of false teaching, hypocrisy and immoral behavior
- b) Desire for honor/approval:
 - i) “Hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue.”— Rochefoucauld
 - ii) Honor is given to those who embody the values of a community: monoculture vs. pluralistic society.
 - iii) Jesus warned the disciples in the context of the thousands in the crowd from whom he had received a mixed response: for, against, undecided.
- c) Desire for pleasure/reward:
 - i) “If we had no faults, we would not take so much pleasure in noticing those of others.” – Rochefoucauld
 - ii) You can ignore your failings by focusing on the failings of others.
 - iii) You can gain the praise of others by effectively denouncing the faults of others, while pretending to embody the values of society.
- d) Desire for influence/position in society:
 - i) Honor opens doors of opportunity—even misplaced honor.
 - ii) 1 Timothy 6:5 Paul warns of those who imagine that “godliness is a means of gain.”
- e) Self-idolatry is at the heart of sin, which is still a live principle in Christians (Romans 7:23).

3) Are you a hypocrite?

- a) Being hypocritical vs. being a hypocrite
- b) Self-examination:
 - i) Do I express love for God regardless of who is watching?
 - (1) If no one is watching?
 - (2) If religious despisers are watching?
 - ii) Do I express love for others regardless of who is watching?
 - iii) Do I express love for people who cannot or will not reciprocate in kind?
 - iv) Am I jealous for recognition for my services?
 - v) Am I more critical of others than of myself?
 - vi) Do I practice what I preach?
- c) We need to guard against arrogant presumption and anxious despair.

4) How can we stop the spread of hypocrisy in our lives?

- a) Believe in the true God who is the God of truth.
- b) Respect God more than you respect man (John 12:42-43).
- c) Don't pretend perfection that you do not possess.
- d) Be more critical of your heart than you are of others' behavior.
- e) Remember that the truth will out (Luke 12:2-3).
 - i) Luke 12:2 "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known."—True character will be revealed in the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man.
 - ii) Luke 12:3 "Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and whatever you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops."—The truth of a person's acknowledgement or denial of the Son of Man will be made known through the conflict of kingdoms.

Doxology: "But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that [the Apostles of Christ] command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ."—2 Thessalonians 3:3-5