

Dirty-Handed Christians...Start In the Heart!

Matthew 15:1-20

September 29, 2019

About a month from now children will be putting on a costume to pretend to be someone or something they are not in their day to day lives. They will be dressing up as their favorite princess or action hero. Some may go the scary route and be a skeleton or a monster. Whatever the costume, the child will take on and act the role of who they are pretending to be. Halloween is a night of pretending to be someone they wish they could be. Once a year, on Halloween, the costumes go on and the candy flows as the children enjoy being someone they are not in their day to day lives.

Many teenagers and adults get in on the act of pretending to be someone they are not on Halloween. However, most teenagers and adults put on the mask just about everyday they walk out the door to school, to work, to life. Instead of Halloween it can be known as "**Hollow-being.**" A more common phrase would be **Hypocrisy!** People pretending to be someone they are not.

It is a question of hypocrisy or honesty?

It is a question that starts in the heart.

Hypocrisy is pretending to be something you are not and have no intention of being.

Hypocrisy starts in a hollow heart.

Honesty begins in a humble heart.

Jesus often caught up with some Hollow-being people called Pharisees. They were good at hypocrisy. Jesus called them out on it many times. They loved to dress up the part of "holy one" and made sure others saw them.

Jesus saw them. Jesus saw beyond the costume to their heart. As dirty-handed Christians this is where we begin...we start in the heart.

To Jesus, the Pharisees were a group of pretenders whose hearts were hollow. They were a group of religious people who did know a lot about God...but they didn't really know God. They faithfully attended the services in the temple and knew a lot of the laws of God. But their hearts were not in it. They lived a life of hypocrisy from hollow hearts.

They were so into cleaning their hands, not so much for a hygiene purpose, but for a religious reason. They wanted to make sure that if their hands had touched anything "unclean" in the market place that they cleaned them before the meal. Jesus didn't wash his hands at a meal he had with them and they were besides themselves.

I would like to think Jesus purposely did this to make a point to the Pharisees. That point being that a relationship with God starts in the heart...a humble heart and not a hollow heart. He sought to show them honesty and not hypocrisy. He showed them that he desired followers who got their hands dirty in the everyday life, the market place of life, with others. Jesus was showing them that to know God was to be found in a humbled holy heart and not a pretentious hollow heart.

The Pharisees did what they did to get noticed. They gave not because of compassion but for recognition. They would be the ones who would want their name on some plaque in the temple that they donated the funds for that pew or pulpit or some other church furniture or stain glass. They would want their picture of giving the check to a certain organization to make the front page of the local newspaper.

Jesus recognized that their compassion, their worship, were not from humbled hearts of love honoring God, but were from hollow hearts that honored themselves.

Jesus pulled out of the book of the prophet Isaiah, to point out exactly what the Pharisees were doing.

"These people make a big show of saying the right thing, but their heart isn't in it.

They act like they're worshipping me, but they don't mean it.

They just use me as a cover for teaching (or living) whatever suits their fancy." (Isaiah 19:13)

Jesus made it clear that the life He desired from His followers starts in the heart.

A hypocritical heart is a hollow and pretentious heart that is not a heart pleasing to God.

If we were to do an inside look, an angiogram, of a hypocritical heart this is what we would find:

- +Pays more attention to its reputation than its character.
- +Carefully follows religious practices while allowing the heart to remain hollow and distant from God's touch.
- +Emphasizes or highlights one's own virtues (look at how good I am) while pointing out the faults and sins of others.
- +Think they know it all when they know they know little at all about a relationship with Jesus.
- +Beliefs don't match up with their behavior.
- +Talk the talk but can't walk the walk of faith...lip service over heart commitment.
- +Serve and give to get recognition from others...put self at the head table over Jesus.

Jesus used a couple of other illustrations to get his point across that a hypocritical heart was not the desire He has for his followers.

He told the Pharisees that when they do the dishes they only clean the outside of the cup of their lives. The inside of their cup, their lives, remains stained.

Can you imagine if you watched someone do the dishes and they only cleaned the outside of the cup, dried it and then set it at your place at the table, would you want to drink from that cup? How disgusting!

Jesus looked at the heart of the Pharisees as a cup that looked sparkling and shiny on the outside but was filthy on the inside. The heart of hypocrisy is one that is not cleaned on the inside. It starts in the heart!

He also compared them to a gravesite. It looks well manicured, beautiful headstone with flowers. But 6 feet under was a body decomposing. It may look whitewashed on the outside but inside it was dead, lifeless.

Have you ever had to deal with mold in your house or apartment? How would you treat it? In some flooded areas they have to take all the drywall out and replace it with brand new sheets of drywall. What if you decided to simply paint over the mold? Get a nice thick paint that would cover it up...out of sight out of mind mentality!

It might look nice on the outside for a while. Eventually the mold would permeate through the paint. The problem was still there. It starts in the heart!

Jesus was making the point that it starts in the heart! You can't try to simply cover it up. Eventually, the mold of the messes in your life will creep back to the surface. There is only one way to get rid of the mold on the walls of your heart...identify them...confess them...repent not repaint...ask God to come and remove the mold and give you a brand new heart of humbleness and holiness.

It starts in the heart!

Jesus didn't cut the Pharisees, the pretenders, those with a hollow heart of hypocrisy, any slack. He could see right through their masks to their hearts. He told them:

"They talk a good line, but they don't live it. They don't take it into their hearts and live it out in their behavior."

(Matthew 23:3)

Dirty-handed Christians seek to have their beliefs match their behavior.

They seek to live life out of a heart of humility and holiness.

God rewards lives lived out of a humble heart of holiness over a prideful heart of hollowness.

Jesus used the story of a fruit tree not bearing any fruit. It looked like a healthy tree from a distance. But when He got closer He realized there was not fruit on the tree. The tree was not what it was created to be. (Matthew 21:18-22)

Religion without substance is a fruit tree without fruit. That person is not living up to the purpose God has created them to be. A person with a hypocritical hollow heart is someone who is not living out their faith in Jesus in the daily.

One of the dirty-handed followers of Jesus, by the name of James, wrote in his letter that ***"faith without deeds is dead."*** (James 2:14-26) A heart that is humbled to Jesus lives out a true faith where one's beliefs match one's behavior. The heart is real and not fake. A life lived for Jesus starts in the heart and then works its way out into the living of daily life.

Everyday we walk out the door into life people are watching. Are you wearing the "holier-than-thou" mask? Are you walking into life as a dirty-handed Christian with a humble heart? It starts in your heart...hollow-being or humble being in Jesus? Hypocrisy or honesty? Real love or masked love? Holiness or moldiness?

What does it matter?

One of the biggest reasons people don't want anything to do with the Christian faith is because they see so many "Christians" wearing the masks of hypocrisy.

They see them talk the talk of faith but then see their actions that don't match up with the love of Jesus they proclaim. The person they see in church is not the same person they encounter in the weekly marketplace of life.

It starts in the heart!

As dirty-handed Christians, followers of Jesus, we are to walk into life with a humbled heart given over to Jesus. What does that begin to look like?

+We pay more attention to our character...to being real and Christlike than trying to look good to others.

+We seek to draw closer to Jesus each day. We desire His will over religious rituals.

+We humble our hearts in confession and seek to be there for others struggling in life.

+We know we don't know it all. But what we do know we live it and share it with love to others we meet in our daily living of life.

+We seek to walk the walk of a dirty-handed follower of Jesus... bearing spiritual fruit.

+We serve and give without needing any recognition because we know God sees and knows the desires of our heart.

It starts in the heart!

Hollow-being or humbling?

Hypocritical or humble?

Hollowness or holiness?

Hypocrisy or honesty?

It starts in the heart!

