

The Pharisees

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 10th Jan 2010

Intro-

- What is your aim in life? Can I suggest that for us one of our primary aims should be to be more like Jesus and to help others to do the same- Matt 28. How are you doing with this? Last week spoke about the spiritual battle which is raging and the power we have to ransack the enemy's gates, but the need also to guard our own gates. This week I want to look at a certain group of people that Jesus singled out. This group was known for its intense spirituality, but Jesus warned not to be like them because their gates were wide open to the enemy's influence and shut to God. The group was the Pharisees- what made Jesus so mad with them, and how can we avoid being like them?

Read Luke 11:33-12:3

The Pharisees were characterised by a tight fisted attitude to life- 11:33-41

- 'Good eye'=generous, 'bad eye'=stingy, a poverty spirit. Our outward deeds of either generosity or tight-fistedness according to Jesus are a good indication of what we are like on the inside- either full of light or full of darkness.
- What characterised the Pharisees was an outward show of generosity in order to impress others (the outside of the dish looked clean-v39, but deep-down they really did not care about others- they cared more about themselves- the inside was dirty). If your internal light is measured by how much you have given to the poor how much are you glowing on the inside? Ebenezer Scrooge's life was changed by the sudden realisation of this.
- The motivation of the Pharisee was to give to the poor to get back from God- greed, mammon. They felt that they had to earn God's blessings- do we?
- Generosity comes from understanding God's grace to us in giving up Jesus and forgiving our sins- it comes from thankfulness. Women nurses from Haiti rejoicing that Dr Jesus was sorting out the girl with the growth in her face- Church exploding in praise.
- Generosity to forgive those that don't deserve it. Character assassination rather than giving benefit of doubt.
- "He who lives only to benefit himself confers on the world a benefit when he dies." -- Tertullian

The Pharisees had blind spots- they majored on minors and neglected the important things in life-v42

- Every person has a blind spot- see piece of paper exercise overleaf
- When we major on the small it can give the impression to others that we are incredibly diligent in the things of God & lead to a 'super-spirituality' attitude that those who know us better get really irritated by. It may fool some, but not God.
- Tithing herbs- i.e. Sorting out the small but refusing to sort out the big. Rabbi's saw variation in importance with regard to commands of scripture- some matters were 'heavy' in importance and some 'light' in importance. In a Rabbi's teaching on certain laws some things were 'binding' or to be obeyed in certain situations and other things were 'loosed', could be put aside in certain situations. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for not concentrating on the weightier matters of the law such as the love of God- 'straining out a gnat & swallowing a camel'. Obedience rather than sacrifice. It is no good being a wife-beater or a child-abuser but then remembering to say grace at the dinner table or read our Word for Today- the former rather

obliterates the meaning of the latter. What are our camels and gnats? Ask your husband, wife, mum, dad, best friend.

- Divisions caused by minor doctrinal disputes that do not really matter, or ways we do things as Christians (e.g. 'I don't like the way they say Amen!'). If they are saved we need to have some level of fellowship together- we will be with them in glory for eternity. Thinking we are right & others wrong- hotline to God, what teachers we are into etc. Overcome with the love of God
- Relationships are what is really important- with God and with others- family, family of God, work colleagues, friends. Pharisees went from wanting to tithe spices to wanting to kill Jesus with little in-between. Do we do the same to our brothers & sisters? If giving gift & realise brother has something against you first go & be reconciled.
- God's grace to us gives us the strength to tackle the big things in life- relationships and restore them, just as ours has been restored by His grace to us.

The Pharisees loved the status rather than service

- Finding out who we really are- not getting our identity from doing something, but from being a child of God. A mature servant is marked by what they do in secret for their master and that all the glory and honour should go to their master. When we slip into 'status' mode we sing 'it's all about me Jesus, and all this is for me, for my glory and my fame'- take the low seat of humility and God will grow you in your ministry (service).
- Full of pride- looked down on others who were 'not like them'- e.g. The publican (tax-collector)- 'Lord I thank you that I'm not like that Tax-collector' – child in Sunday School 'Lord I thank you that I'm not like that Pharisee'. 'Lord thank you that we are not like the dead church down the road'. What is our attitude to those around us- condemnation & arrogance, or mercy and humility?
- Grace saves us from pride or over-importance- saved by grace through faith (also a gift) not by works.
- "You can't change what you don't acknowledge." -- Phil McGraw
The young preacher had just announced to his congregation that he was leaving to another area. He was standing at the door after the service and greeting people when an old lady approached, her eyes swimming with tears. She sobbed, "Oh pastor, I'm so sorry you've decided to leave. Things will never be the same again." The young man was flattered, but took her hands in his and replied, "Bless you, dear lady, but I am sure that God will send you a new pastor even better than I." She choked back a sob and was heard to say, "That's what they all say, but they keep getting worse and worse!"
A young pastor was pleased that a particular woman in his congregation always asked for copies of his sermons. One day his pride got the better of him and he asked her about it. "Oh," she responded brightly, "they're just the perfect size for the bottom of my bird cage!"

The Pharisees were hypocrites

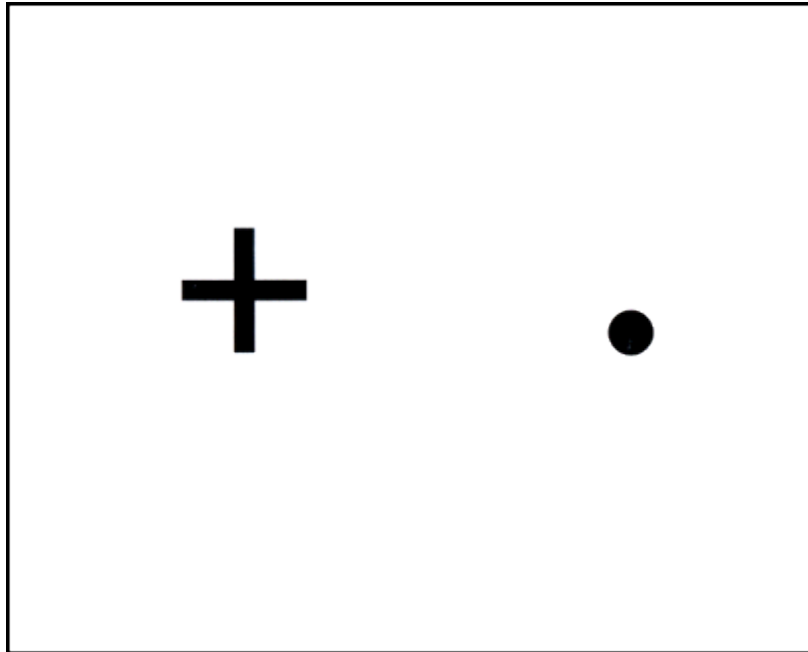
- Shocking- these were the good guys with the right theology (rather than the Sadducees who didn't believe in the resurrection or demons and angels), and appeared to be really holy (fasted 2x week- on Mondays & Thursdays, prayed 3x a day 9am 12pm 3pm)
- Unmarked graves- i.e. Ritually unclean
- Hypocrite=grk actor with many masks, very skillful at changing quickly
- Sincere=without wax-
man said to his wife he would trick a mouse into being caught in his mousetrap by using a picture of a piece of cheese- they next day sure enough there was a beautiful mouse in the mousetrap- only it was a picture of a mouse!
- What are your masks that you like to wear? 'I'm fine'- those who see us unmasked the most are usually those we live with and those who are not leaders within the church- 'more tea vicar?'.
- Understanding God's grace to us enable us to trust Him and those around us enough to be vulnerable to them, just as a child trusting a father to catch them.

- Bumper sticker read-' Jesus is coming, look busy'- not enough- a hypocrite is someone who is not themselves on a Sunday.
- "I never go to church," boasted a wandering member. "Perhaps you have noticed that, pastor?" "Yes, I have noticed that," said the pastor. "Well, the reason I don't go is because there are so many hypocrites there." "Oh, don't let that keep you away," replied the pastor with a smile. "There's always room for one more."- Unknown

Summary

- To avoid being like the Pharisees we need to appreciate how great is God's grace to us, resulting in a generous spirit, a discernment about what the important matters in life are, a willingness to serve unnoticed and a choice to live transparent lives before God & people.

Song: *The grace of God upon my life*



The Blind Spot

Close your left eye and hold this page about 8-9 inches from your right eye. Look at the cross and slowly move the page forward and backward until the black circle disappears. This will happen when light rays from the black circle fall on the place where the optic nerve enters the retina - commonly referred to as your "blind spot".

