**Calvary Fellowship 1.15.2023 Matthew 23:1-39 “Taking Off the Mask”**

* **So I want to start by telling U the story Carey & I’s first date**
* There’s a whole part of the story where Carey had to tell me to ask her out
* U have to understand - I’m a musician, which means I didn’t really have to ask girls out - they asked me out - that’s how it works when you’re in a band
* I’m not saying it’s right - that’s how I was living at 19 when I 1st met my wife
* So I showed up at her house on a Friday night & I walk up to the door
* And I’m wearing a black t-shirt w/ StarBlazers written in big orange letters
* StarBlazers has been my favorite show since I was 7 years old - it’s a Japanese Anime show - I still love it - but probably not 1st date gear
* I was also wearing pajama pants that I got at a thrift store for $1
* I had cut them into shorts & they were all frayed at the bottom
* I was also wearing a plaid baseball hat b/c I had a purple mohawk that I was growing out - so my hair was part purple, part black
* And b/c I was growing my hair out, I was growing out a beard at the same time
* I looked like a Chia Pet gone bad -I want U to imagine that guy showing up and saying, “Hi. I’m here to pick up your daughter.” - I don’t think so buddy
* As U can imagine, that was not met with enthusiasm by Carey’s step-dad
* When Carey introduced me to him, she said, “This is Bob.”
* He turned from his LazyBoy recliner & just blew cigarette smoke in my direction
* He was not a fan of me - good news is, 30 years later, he’s still not a fan
* **Now as a dad, I get it - I could have been the nicest guy in the world, but I what as on the outside didn’t match what was on the inside**
* The real problem is when this is reversed & we put on a good front, but what’s happening internally doesn’t match the polished exterior
* And this issue has been the plague of the church - b/c most non-Christians don’t have a problem w/ Jesus - they think Jesus is great
* Their issue is Christians who don’t behave a lot like Christians
* And we’ve all heard the critique, right? They say, “The Church is full of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_” - I guess you’ve heard it too
* Do U what that statement tells us? It’s not that unbelievers don’t want to believe
* In fact, I believe it says just the opposite - I believe unbelievers want to believe the Gospel, believe in the message of Jesus
* But they are looking to see if there’s any Christians who really believe the message of Jesus & really embrace the Gospel of Jesus
* “The great single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians, who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, then walk out the door and deny Him with there lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.” - Brenan Manning
* **Now, before we really get into this, let me define what hypocrisy is not & then we’ll define what it is**
* **Hypocrisy is not the Space between who I am and who I wish to be**
* **I’m sorry to tell U this, but you’re a sinner - now, U probably know this b/c U know, U live w/ yourself on a daily basis**
* We’re all sinners - so we will always fall short of God standard & we’ll even fall short of our own standards sometimes
* Even been on a diet & then eaten a donut? That’s what I’m talking about
* The other day I was driving by a donut shop & I prayed & said, “Lord, if it’s your will that I go into the donut shop, let a stop open up in the front.”
* Sure enough, after the 7th time around the block a stop opened up & I knew it was God’s will
* Hypocrisy isn’t saying the wrong thing or doing something wrong - that’s sin
* So let’s define hypocrisy: **Hypocrisy is pretending to be what you’re not**
* This issue of hypocrisy is what Jesus wants to talk about in His final public sermon - it is strange that this would be Jesus’ topic, but it is
* It’s not a sermon on loving one another - it’s not the message of salvation
* Instead, it’s about how hypocrisy kills everything it touches & to beware
* This is a heavy message, but it’s real & if we’ll all embrace it, our lives will be better for it & the unbelieving world around us will be more open to Jesus

**———(v. 1-12)———**

**#1 - Hypocrisy Focuses on the Public but Ignores the Private**

* **It’s important to note at the outset that Jesus is speaking to His disciples & to the multitudes about the religious leaders**
* And Jesus begins by affirming the authority that the religious leaders had
* He was acknowledging that they sat in Moses’ seat - that’s a phrase that we’re continued to use today - it means the seat of authority
* Catholics say that the Pope speaks “Ex cathedra”, that is, from the chair
* Colleges have people who are the chair in certain fields
* Boards are usually run by a chairman of the board
* But Jesus’ criticism isn’t their authority, but instead how they use it
* There’s nothing wrong w/ authority - authority is a neutral thing, like electricity
* However, what makes it good or bad is how it’s used
* They used their authority to put heavy burdens on people, but they wouldn’t put any burdens on themselves
* This is the “Do as I say, not as I do” stuff that drives us crazy
* **Here’s the key - everything they do, they do to be seen as holy by others**
* They enlarge their phylacteries - so what’s a phylactery? It’s a little leather box
* Orthodox Jews will wear them on their hands & on their foreheads
* Inside there’s 4 bible verses - 2 from Exodus & 2 from Deuteronomy
* “It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt.” (Exodus 13:9 NKJV)
* Now, I think most of us would read this & say, “Yeah, this is probably figurative language.” - when the Bible says to hide God’s word in your heart - I don’t believe God wants U to have an operation to jam something into your aorta
* But these guys wanted to be seen as the holiest of all people
* They wanted good seats in the synagogues & they wanted to be greeted
* They wanted the titles - Listen, some titles are fine - some I don’t like
* I don’t like being called "Reverend” - I like “Pastor” b/c that’s what I am
* But whenever I get invited to an official function, especially if it’s a military thing
* I got invited to a military promotion service & they asked what title they should use to address me in the program & I said, “Pastor Bob is fine”
* When I got there, it said, “The Right Reverend Pastor Bob Franquiz”
* I will say this - when I was in Georgia 2 weeks ago - we were tubing down this mountain & my wife broke her ankle & it was chaos
* We were getting down the stairs - security showed up - a medic was there to wrap her ankle & there were a bunch of people just watching the show
* And in the middle of all that, a guy walks up to me & says, “Pastor Bob, is that U?” - and I found that so comforting - b/c the people of God were w/ me, I knew that the Lord was w/ me too
* By the way, in Psalm 111 the Psalm says “Holy & reverend is the Lord’s name”
* God’s name is reverend - Bob’s name is not
* **But Jesus’ teaching here on not calling anyone Rabbi, father, or teacher is a little confusing if U don’t understand the context**
* In Judaism, leading rabbis had huge followings - they were considered masters
* In fact, the word Rabbi means more than teacher, it means “revered one”
* They were like spiritual fathers to their students - the more popular rabbis’ teachings were called “The sayings on the fathers”
* Jesus is saying that His disciples aren’t to take the role of father or master
* Why? B/c Jesus is the master & all of us are following Him
* That’s why there’s no house of Peter or Rabbi Paul school of theology
* All of us are following Jesus & He is the master - our job as Jesus says in verse 11 is to serve 1 another b/c He says that’s where greatness is found

**———(v. 13-22)———**

**#2 - Hypocrisy Lacks Integrity and Humility**

* **In this section, Jesus gives 8 “woes” to the religious leaders & this is important b/c it shows us the results of what hypocrisy does**
* Now, if U really want to go down the rabbit hole w/ this - check out the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 - Jesus’ 8 sayings for living a blessed life
* They correspond to these 8 woes perfectly - b/c these 8 ways are the key to a miserable existence
* We’re not going to cover all of them in detail, but we’ll hit the highlights
* **#1 - Hypocrisy Turns People Off to God - (v. 13) Jesus says they they aren’t going to heaven & they’re blocking others from getting in as well**
* All of us have places we won’t go/things we won’t do b/c of a terrible experience
* **This is the exact reason why I won’t go into a Waffle House - Cracker Barrel, all day long - but Waffle House is dead to me**
* I’ve been to Waffle House exactly 1 time in my life - it was 1995 & I was on tour w/ my band & we had just finished playing a show in Atlanta
* It was about 2AM & we were all hungry & at 2AM the only thing that’s open is Waffle House - but the best part is that the W wasn’t lit up
* So the sign read “Affle House” - so I walk in & I try to order some waffles
* The server says, “I’m sorry, we’re out of waffles.”
* I say, “That’s impossible. You’re waffle house.” - She says, “We ran out.”
* So I ordered the pancakes, but I’ve never been back in 28 years b/c if U say you’re waffle house, U better have waffles
* **And people do this w/ Christianity all the time - they meet some weirdo who says they’re a Christian & when he doesn’t behave like a Christian, they swear off everything that has to do w/ Jesus**
* Here’s what I’ve learned - non-Christians don’t need Christians to be perfect - they just need to know we’re trying
* Listen, it’s not unreasonable to expect Christians to act like Christians
* **#2 - Hypocrisy Reproduces Itself in Others**
* **Here’s how U know who you’re dealing with - what do the people who are influenced by them look like? What are their kids like?**
* B/c anyone can talk a good game, but U only reproduce what U are
* If U are a bitter & angry, guess what? Your kids will be just like that
* And U shouldn’t be surprised - why? B/c it’s a principle of life
* U always reproduce after like kind - that’s what God said in Genesis
* Everything - animals, flowers, fish, birds, people - everyone reproduces like kind - so if U want to know who U are, look at what you’re reproducing
* And here’s the best part - whatever U want to reproduce, U have to be that
* So if U want to have a family that’s full of joy & generosity & faithfulness & life
* You’re going to have to be that & the good news is that those are the things U want in your life anyway - but U have to be intentional
* No 1 wants to be around someone who looks like they’ve been baptized in lemon juice - they want joy & they want to be around joyful people
* When U walk into this church, do U know the most common thing people say about Calvary when they attend here? How much joy there is here
* They say things like, “U guys act like Jesus is really alive” or “U guys act like U really love each other” - it’s yes on both counts
* **But do U know that miserable people can’t take it - I’ll get an occasional email from people who can’t take the joy**
* They say, “I don’t understand why you’re always smiling & laughing. U should be taking the Lord seriously.”
* I’ll reply, “We take the Lord very seriously. We just don’t take ourselves that serious. We take the Lord so seriously that He said that we should live in such a way that our joy would be full. So if you’re not full of joy, you’re doing it wrong”
* They didn’t write back - haters gonna hate

**———(v. 23-28)———**

* **#3 - Hypocrisy does the Motion without the Emotion**
* **The people of Israel were commanded in Deut. 14 to tithe of their grain & their flocks - this was their income & in this culture, that was currency**
* If they lived too far away, they could exchange it for money & tithe that way
* But there’s no command to tithe your spices - they did this to prove how spiritual they were - it had nothing to do w/ giving or honoring God or furthering the kingdom of God - it was a show
* And even though they were trying to tithe down to the last spice, they totally ignored justice, mercy, & faith - here’s the point: tithing is the basics
* That’s kindergarten in spiritual life - some people haven’t made it out of kindergarten - but justice, mercy, & faith is the graduate level stuff
* Here’s why: b/c justice & mercy & faith is really what’s revealing my true in God
* Remember, the religious leaders were part of the Supreme Court of Israel (the Sanhedrin) & they didn’t care about justice or mercy
* “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matthew 5:7 NKJV)
* What is mercy? Not getting what U deserve - U did something wrong & U deserve punishment, but someone who’s merciful loves mercy
* Listen, what Jesus is saying isn’t something they’re never heard - He’s referencing a famous OT passage in Micah
* “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8 NKJV)
* **John, who was 1 of our pastors for almost 22 years ago, left to plant a church - were still great friends & we talk all the time**
* A few years ago, he lent his car to someone a while ago & they scratched it up
* John told me he forgave him & didn’t make him fix it - I got mad
* I said, “That’s totally irresponsible! U should make him pay for it!”
* John said, “Bob, I borrowed a friend’s car a week before & scratched it up accidentally & he forgave me, so I feel I should forgive him.” - I felt like an idiot
* That’s Micah 6:8 in action - I seek to do what’s right, but if someone falls short, I love to give them mercy b/c as I walk w/ God, I know that I fall short too
* The religious leaders totally missed it - that’s why Jesus said they strain at a gnat & swallow a camel - this was really funny in the 1st century
* B/c the gnat was the smallest unclean thing according to Leviticus 11
* The camel was the biggest unclean thing - So Jesus is saying, “You’re counting out your spices (straining at a gnat), but U aren’t merciful (swallowing camel)

**———(v. 31-39)———**

**#3 - Hypocrisy Robs Us of God’s Best**

* **I want U to notice what Jesus says here b/c it’s so loving & pastoral**
* He says, “I wanted to gather U like a hen gathers her chicks” - that’s love & protection - in fact, when there’s a fire, a mother hen will gather her chicks & die in the fire while holding her chicks so they can live - it’s a beautiful picture
* But U can only have love & protection if you’re willing to receive it
* Think about it - these people had been waiting for the Messiah for 1,500 years & they completely missed Him when He was standing right in front of them
* The life they desired - the future they were hoping for - the freedom they were so desperate to have - they missed all of it b/c of hypocrisy
* And that’s the thing about hypocrisy - it lets us act like we’re something w/o actually being it - but that never works out & it makes us miserable
* **But what’s the other option? To live authentically - to be real, even if it means revealing that we aren’t perfect - and that’s ok**
* A couple of years ago I went & got this test done called a calcium test for heart
* It’s 1 of the joys of being in your 40’s - U have to get the weird tests
* I really not looking forward to 1 I’m supposed to get when I turn 50
* So the nurse takes me back & she asks me a few questions before they put me in this machine that looks like a giant cannoli
* She asks the basic info & then says, “Do U drink?” - I said, No
* She said, “Do U smoke?” - I said no/ She said, “Do U do drugs?” - I said no
* She said, “Have U ever done drugs in your life?” - I said “No. But wow, that’s very detailed.” - she said, ‘Oh that’s not on the questionnaire, I just wanted to know if you’re a good pastor b/c I go to Calvary sometimes
* I wish I would have known she attended Calvary beforehand - I would have told I smoke crack 3 times a week just to see her reaction
* But here’s the point: when U have nothing to hide, U have nothing to fear
* So here’s the beauty of living authentically - it sets us free
* “Let love be without hypocrisy.” (Romans 12:9 NKJV)
* **In the ancient world, people saw things as either hypocritical or sincere**
* A (Gr.) hupocritis was someone who performed in plays & wore a mask
* They were pretending to be someone they weren’t – so they were a hypocrite
* U could have told them, “Wow. U are a fantastic hypocrite. Best I’ve ever seen.”
* I took my kids to see Hamilton last month - I don’t think it would have been receive as well if I called them hypocrites for their acting
* **But instead of being hypocritical, U wanted to be sincere**
* “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” (Philippians 1:9-10 NKJV)
* But when someone wanted to buy a stone statue for their front yard, they would go to the stone mason & pick their statue out & take it home
* But here’s the trick: They would all ask the same question – “Is it sincere?”
* B/c the word sincere in Greek means “No wax” – why is that important?
* B/c sometimes a stone mason’s hand would slip as he was chiseling the nose on the stature & instead of throwing away costing stone, he would take wax & mix it w/ pieces of stone & form a nose on its’ face & sell it
* So when I’d take my statue home & put it in my front lawn, the sun would come & melt the nose off of my statue – talk about a runny nose!
* When U asked if everything was sincere, you were asking, “Is there anything fake here? That’s why does has to be sincere - b/c fake love isn’t really love
* **That’s what people get wrong about church - they think it’s a museum for saints when it’s really a hospital for sinners**
* It’s what people get wrong about Christianity - they think it’s where U get accepted if you’re perfect - wrong - Jesus said He only came to call sick people
* Christianity only works in your life when U acknowledge that you’re messed up
* And it doesn’t work when U pretend you’re perfect
* What if, instead of trying to be perfect, we decided that we’re going to be real
* Do U know what you’d find? Real love - b/c when you’re hiding behind a mask, U never know if people love U or the fake persona U show them
* That’s why the only solution is to come to Jesus - that’s how Jesus ends this message - inviting those who were unwilling to come to Him
* **God wants U to be free - He wants U to have joy that comes from Him**
* Maybe you’ve been searching for joy & peace & hope & U haven’t found it
* Here’s the good news - U don’t have to look any further
* Jesus offers each of us life & peace & joy that’s lasting
* U don’t have to spend your whole life hiding behind a mask - God sees U & loves U anyway - God knows U & loves U anyway
* God created U in His image, so don’t hide that under a mask - instead, let’s give Him the mask & the moment that we do, we’ll be free to live w/ joy & freedom the life that He created us to live…