

Day 30 Take off the Mask

Matthew 5:8 (NLT) "God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they shall see God."

What a great promise Jesus makes to those whose hearts are pure: "They shall see God." To see God, our hearts must be pure.

Even in the Old Testament, we see that God has always been after hearts which are right toward Him. So what did Jesus mean when He said **"pure in heart"**? What does "pure" really mean? Does it mean "perfect"? Does it mean "sinless"? If it does, then we are all in deep weeds. A pure heart means that we are in the process of being cleansed or perfected. It means that our hearts are being perfected by the work of the Holy Spirit. **The Greek word "pure" is "katharos." It is where we get the word "catharsis" from; which means, "to make pure by cleansing."** It was applied to milk or water that went through a process of being cleansed.

What exactly are we being cleansed from? This is not just simply getting rid of some wrong behaviors or habits or sinful actions in our lives, although that's truly necessary. There is, however, a big obstacle to having a pure heart. This will completely hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Jesus warned His disciples about this issue again and again. We see that throughout Jesus' ministry. This topic of discussion was not only present, but Jesus was confronted with this problem everywhere He went. His ministry was under constant barrage with this heart attitude. This is such an important principle to understand that three of the Gospel writers recorded Jesus' warning about it! ***"Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6 Then Jesus said to them, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees'." Matthew 16:5-12 (NKJV)***

The disciples are thinking about bread, and Jesus had to rebuke them and remind them that He just multiplied the fish and the loaves-- twice. He was not talking about bread; He was talking about something within the hearts of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and that same unhealthy quality has a way of slowly growing in us and polluting our hearts. Mark writes: ***"Then He charged them, saying, 'Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod'." (Mark 8:15 NKJV)*** Mark adds "the leaven of Herod," and, by doing so, gives us a deeper insight into what Jesus is warning the disciples about. **The greatest opposition that Jesus faced was not from those who professed not to know God, but those who professed that they knew God the best!** What is Jesus warning them about? He is warning them about something that has the potential to ruin and rob the joy of a blessed life. If we allow leaven to grow in our hearts, it will actively work against the purity that only Jesus can bring into our lives. Finding and keeping this joyous and glorious blessed life will hinge on identifying and eliminating this leaven that Jesus warned us about. This leaven will hinder us from having a pure heart and, actually, produce the complete opposite. Luke then brings in the final detail of what this leaven obstacle is.

"In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy'." (Luke 12:1 NKJV) Jesus makes this of primary importance. While the crowds gather, He downloads the truth first of all to His disciples. He clearly tells them what the leaven is. Did you see it? What is the leaven of the Pharisees that will hinder us from possessing and reflecting a pure heart? **Hypocrisy! I am going to say it again: Hypocrisy! Here's the thing about hypocrisy:**

Everybody hates hypocrisy, especially in others, but no one is willing to admit it when they are acting in hypocrisy; which, by the way, is the very essence of hypocrisy. "I am not a hypocrite, but I sure know a lot of hypocrites."

What is interesting with both the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod, is that there is always a hidden agenda. I think we are all mature enough to understand that everybody has an agenda. **Having an agenda is not bad in itself, but pretending to have one agenda, while hiding the true agenda, is the very essence of hypocrisy!** One of the reasons why politics is challenging, is because the stated agenda is not very often the real agenda. So Jesus warns the disciples about Herod who was a politician, and He warns his disciples about the Pharisees who were highly political. He warns them to be careful not to allow that hypocritical, political spirit to determine what they do and how they treat people. The spirit of hypocrisy is a politicking spirit and it is all about: **Positioning and posturing. Politics is about gaining an advantage over someone else and using whatever method or message to accomplish that! Pretending to care when, in essence, you don't give a yarn...**

Look at this same verse in Luke 12 out of The Message paraphrase: *"By this time the crowd, unwieldy and stepping on each other's toes, numbered into the thousands. But Jesus' primary concern was his disciples. He said to them, 'Watch yourselves carefully so you don't get contaminated with Pharisee yeast, Pharisee phoniness. You can't keep your true self hidden forever; before long you'll be exposed. You can't hide behind a religious mask forever; sooner or later the mask will slip and your true face will be known. You can't whisper one thing in private and preach the opposite in public; the day's coming when those whispers will be repeated all over town'."* (Luke 12:1-3 MSG)

Jesus says, in the end, we will all see the forest from the trees. All the pretending and even flat out lying will be exposed. Lives that are lived one way, when we think nobody is watching, compared to lives lived on the proverbial public stage. The word "hypocrite" implies the wearing of a mask. Actors would wear masks to play different parts and also to amplify or disguise their voices. To be hypocritical is to play a part, to hide behind a mask, and only in private, reveal the true identity. **The greatest challenge to having a pure heart is this duplicity that is birthed from the seeds of hypocrisy.**

Where are you playing the hypocrite? Here's a hint: Wherever you are doing the opposite of what you say you believe; wherever you expect one thing from others, but do something completely different yourself; wherever you compromise or pretend, and then, justifying it, even using so-called religious verbiage, to cover up what God really knows. We need grace when we are honest about our sin, but we need truth when we try to cover it up. The remedy for hypocrisy is the truth. Because truth brings light, light brings exposure, and only when we see how something really is, do we have the capacity to change it. Jesus is telling His disciples that if we are going to be His followers, then honesty and integrity is truly the best policy. Jesus uses leaven as an example because He wanted them, and He wants us, to understand that, if we do not keep ourselves in check, something small can turn into something big. Something that we think is not a big deal, can eventually strangle the very spiritual vitality out of our lives. Once we have allowed the leaven in, we need to do everything we can, through the grace and truth of God's Word, to purge ourselves from it.

We see in Exodus 12, as they were preparing for Passover, that the Lord commanded them to remove all leaven from their homes. In the same way, Paul admonishes the Corinthians about sin and compares it to yeast that will spread throughout the whole body. **"Your boasting about this is terrible. Don't you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old 'yeast' by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of**

dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. 8 So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread of sincerity and truth’.” 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (NLT)

We must be leaven free; meaning, we need to stop playing a part and allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse us from any yeast that we have allowed within our hearts. Jesus has become our Passover Lamb, and instead of the old bread of wickedness and evil, we celebrate with sincerity and truth. Sincerity, because we refuse to wear masks. Sincerity, because who we are in private, is who we are in public. Sincerity, because the vessel we possess has been made whole and stamped in God’s holiness. Sincerity, because we are like a fresh batch of dough without any yeast of hypocrisy. Sincerity, because we live in the arena of truth and His truth sets us free.

So take off the mask. The only audience that matters is the Audience of One and He already knows everything about the person behind the mask.

Reflection and Prayer:

- **How serious do you take Jesus’ warning about the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod?**
- **Where in your life are you posturing instead of humbling yourself? Where are you politicking instead of trusting? Where are you role-playing instead of being honest? Where are you guarding instead of being vulnerable? Where are you justifying instead of walking in truth? Where are you blurring the lines instead of walking in the light? Where have you given yourself an out when you should’ve been held accountable? Are you getting mad at any of these questions?**
- **Is it possible to live a life free from the leaven of hypocrisy? Absolutely! The first step is to identify the leaven in our own lives. Have you done that lately? Answering some of the previous questions(honestly) will help. If you can’t be honest, ask a true friend to help.**
- **Ask the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of truth, to reveal any hypocrisy in you. Then ask Him to start the process of purifying your heart.**