

# (Basics) 59. Hypocrisy

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes Jesus' condemnation of hypocrisy as a serious sin that stems from a disconnect between one's outward appearance and inner reality.*

**Duration:** 12:27

**Scripture:** Matthew 23:13-15, Matthew 23:23, Matthew 23:25, Matthew 23:27, Matthew 23:29

**Topics:** "Hypocrisy", "Spiritual Deception"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the parable of the ten virgins who went to meet the bridegroom. Externally, all ten virgins appeared the same, wearing white dresses and going to meet the bridegroom. However, internally, there was a significant difference. Five of the virgins had extra oil to keep their lamps burning, while the other five did not. The speaker emphasizes that an external life alone does not prepare us for meeting the Lord when He comes. Jesus detested hypocrisy and condemned those who honored Him with their lips but had hearts far from Him. The speaker also mentions the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who were punished for their hypocrisy in pretending to be dedicated to the Lord. The sermon concludes with the reminder that hypocrisy is what Jesus hates more than anything else.

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## Transcript

What are the sins that Jesus hated the most? When we see sin, like sickness, more serious than sickness, we will learn to hate it more than we hate sickness. Jesus came to reveal the serious sins that ruin our life. We want to turn today to Matthew's Gospel, first book of the New Testament, in the first page, chapter one, and verse twenty-one, where it says the reason why Jesus was called Jesus when He was born as a baby is given here.

You shall call His name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins. Jesus means savior, one who has come to save us from our sins. So if you want to know what it is to be saved from sin, you need to know what sin is.

And in the minds of many, many people, sin is a very vague concept. It is not clear what sin is. If you were told that you are being saved from leprosy, you know that, or saved from tuberculosis, or saved from a pit in which you have fallen, these things are clearly understood.

Or saved from failure in an examination. These things you understand. But when you say saved from sin, what do you understand by that? That depends on your definition of sin.

If you think sin is just getting drunk and gambling and wasting your money and fooling around with other women and things like that, then if you don't do those gross sins, you will think you are saved. You know, if you go by the Ten Commandments, where there were gross sins like murder, adultery, theft, and giving false witness in court to injure another person and things like that, I think most people in the world, many people anyway, would say, well, we are not committing those type of things. We don't need salvation.

If those are the only things that are sins, a lot of people don't need Jesus at all. But when we read the Gospels, we find that Jesus spoke about certain other sins which are not listed in the Ten Commandments at all. And so when we see the teaching of Jesus, we find that sin is not primarily external.

I mean, a mango tree is a mango tree even if it doesn't produce mangoes. It may be barren, but it is still a mango tree. When it produces, it will produce mangoes.

It won't produce apples or coconuts. In the same way, sin is like a tree. Whether the fruit of it comes out of our life or not doesn't make a difference.

Sin is still there within. It's in the heart. Jesus said it's from the heart that everything comes out, evil thoughts, murders and adulteries and everything like that.

And that's why Jesus spoke about sin in the heart, to deal with it there rather than after it has come forth. And when we look at the overall teaching of Jesus, we find that there are certain sins which He listed, which He spoke against rather, which men don't consider seriously. In Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9, God says, My thoughts are not your thoughts.

That applies in many areas. God's thoughts about sin are different from man's thoughts about sin. Man doesn't take sin so seriously.

Man thinks sin is only these external things. But God says there are a lot of other things which are sin. And number one among them would be hypocrisy.

Now in the Old Testament, you hardly ever find a condemnation of hypocrisy. It's very rare. The prophets mostly spoke against adultery and worshipping idols.

These are some of the main sins and greed, covetousness. But when Jesus came, though He spoke about these things also, He spoke much more about hypocrisy. In fact, when a woman caught in an adultery was brought before Him, He didn't even want to stone her.

He saved her life. There was a thief and a decoy who had murdered people who hung with Him on the cross. He forgave him and took him to paradise.

But when He met religious leaders, the leaders, the elders, the bishops of the synagogues of that time, the Pharisees, He condemned them outright because they were hypocrites. He kept on saying, for example, in Matthew 23, He said in verse 13, Woe unto you. Woe unto you means like the Old Testament, curse.

A curse be upon you. Scribes, Bible scholars, Pharisees who were the religious leaders of that time, who had studied in the Bible schools and become elders in the synagogues, hypocrites. Again in verse 14, A curse on you Pharisees, hypocrites.

A curse on you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Verse 15. And again in verse 23, A curse on you.

Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Again in verse 25 and again in verse 27 and 29. So frequently, He condemns them for their hypocrisy.

And He calls them serpents. Verse 33, brood of vipers. How will you escape the sentence of hell? You never find Jesus speaking like that to a prostitute or to a murderer.

But you find Jesus speaking like that to the most religious people of His time, who read the Bible, Genesis to Malachi, every day, and who were very devout in their external piety. And so we see there how much Jesus hated hypocrisy, more than anything else. This was what He sought to condemn, because the reason was, Jesus said in Mark 7, verse 6, Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written there, This people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me.

What was it that Jesus detested? It was their saying so many wonderful things to Him with their lips, but their heart was far away from Him. They appeared to be devoted to the Lord, but in their heart they were interested in themselves, and their money and their other things, and they were seeking their own gain everywhere, but pretending to be holy. What did the prostitutes and thieves and murderers have better than the Pharisees? Not an external life, but the fact that they were honest.

They were murderers and they didn't pretend that they were not. The prostitute acknowledged that she was a prostitute. She wasn't pretending to be holy.

So we find that Jesus hated pretense. Words spoken with the lips, holy words when we pray, words that make us appear very holy and humble, it can be a lie. To be a hypocrite is to be a liar.

It is to give an impression to people of being spiritual when you are not really spiritual. And you know one of the first sins that children learn and commit is the sin of telling a lie. They don't commit murder and adultery and things like that first.

It's telling a lie from birth, right from the earliest years, they begin to tell lies. They begin to deceive their parents. And as we grow up, we develop this art of deceiving others, of giving people an impression about ourselves which is not really true, fooling them.

And then if you become a Christian, you develop that still more by trying to give people the impression that you are very spiritual in order to impress them. And that is the sin which the Lord hates more than anything else. You remember the story that Jesus said about ten virgins who went to meet the bridegroom? What is the difference? Externally, they were all virgins.

That means the external life of all ten was good. They wore the same white dress. They all went to meet the bridegroom.

There was no difference as far as those things were concerned. Exactly the same. But there was a lot of difference inside.

Inside, maybe the pockets of one of those cloaks, five of them had oil, extra oil to fill up the lamps when they started dying out. Initially, all ten had their lamps burning. But when their lamps started dying out, then we read that five of them only had oil.

What does this parable teach us? This parable teaches us that an external life alone does not prepare us for meeting the Lord when He comes. We must have a hidden life as well. That's what the flask of oil

symbolizes.

A hidden life of a walk with God. That oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit. An inner life where we're walking with God, where our love for the Lord is clear and pure and wholehearted in addition to the lamp burning.

So it's not enough to be a virgin, to have your external life right. Those five virgins were left out when the bridegroom came just because they did not have that inner flask of oil. So what was Jesus emphasizing here? If you're a hypocrite, you're going to miss out when the Lord comes.

The first sin that was judged in the early church, what was it? Ananias and Sapphira were punished not for murder or adultery or anything like that. It was hypocrisy, pretending to be spiritual when they were not really spiritual. That's a lesson for us.

Ananias and Sapphira didn't cheat anybody. They didn't harm anyone. But they came to the church pretending that they were totally dedicated to the Lord when they were actually not.

Do you realize how much Jesus hates this? They were killed. Let's learn from this that hypocrisy is what Jesus hates more than anything else.

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