

A Surprising Gospel

Matthew 23:1-12

"Be Great"– June 4, 2023



Introduction

Many Americans struggle with bad knees. There is a lot of information about exercises and stretches to prevent having to have knee surgery. Yet there is MORE information on the internet about bad looking knees. Many more people are more concerned about the appearance of their knees than the function of them.

In this passage, Jesus was addressing His disciples publicly, for their benefit. He was recognizing and calling out the Pharisees about their concern for the outward appearance, hypocrisy, and pride. We can learn from His message as well.

Sermon Outline

1. The problem with the Pharisees Vs. 1-7
2. The call to humility Vs. 8-12

Read & Discuss

1. Read vs. 1-7

There was a problem with what the Pharisees and Scribes said verses what they actually did. They may have felt that they had rightly inherited Moses' position of leadership and instruction - a position of authority. Jesus told His disciples to do what the Pharisees told them to do when they were using the law rightly. ([Deut. 17:8-13](#))

The Pharisees and Scribes loved religion, but this didn't equate to them having faith. They had set themselves in important places. Jesus instructed the disciples to do what they said, but not to do what they did. Do you see the difference in being religious and having faith?

The Pharisees and Scribes were making heavy burdens for others, and they prided themselves on bearing heavy burdens. They expected others to bear those same burdens. When people were crushed by those burdens, the Pharisees and Scribes showed no love or care. Their pride kept them from loving others.

Jesus promises a "different burden." He promises a light and easy burden so that we can rest and learn from Him Who bore the heavy burden of our sin. ([Matthew 11:28-30](#)) Are you trying to bear the burden of looking good in front of others? Are you doing religious things just to earn God's favor? Going to Jesus puts us in a posture of need, and we **are** a people of need. When we recognize this, we become sympathetic to and compassionate with others.

There was also a problem with the motivation for what the Pharisees and Scribes did. They did everything for the sake of public appearance. All of their deeds were done to seek the approval, respect and praise of others. Their visible religious garments were to show off their devotion to religion. Everything was made bigger to make sure everyone saw them. They also loved the best seats in the house. They loved the privileges that their titles gave them, and they used authority to their advantage. They had elevated themselves.

We don't have phylacteries, but we have Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. We use social media as a place to display titles and achievements. People take thousands of selfies and post pictures of their good deeds. We don't think twice about "liking" it. We don't think twice about posting it. Do you consider your motivation for posting something on social media before you post it? Are you guilty of "liking" other posts without considering what you are really "liking?" The Pharisees only wanted all the public reward that society would give them. What motivates you? Why are you here in church right now? Would you still be here if people didn't know you were here? Jesus calls His people to something greater.

2. Read chapter vs. 8-12

We are a family together making disciples of each other for the glory of God. He is the one on the throne. Pastors and teachers do not take the place of God. ([1 Corinthians 1:10-17](#)) We all need Jesus' grace.

There is a danger for pastors or anyone in positions of authority to actually "believe the hype." They need God's grace all the time. The call to humility comes with being careful with titles. We should not wrongly

elevate leaders. The common denominator that binds us all together is Jesus' grace, forgiveness, and freedom from sin. You do not have to fight for importance in the kingdom of Christ. We all come to the King's table. We all have seats, because all of our sins have been forgiven by His sacrifice. Having freedom from the burden of seeking the praise of men gives us freedom to serve. ([James 4:10](#)) Have you taken time to consider the importance of your contribution to the body of Christ?

Jesus is the picture of the humble, exalted servant. The Pharisees refused to give up their titles which led to their condemnation. Jesus died in humility to offer deliverance from the penalty of sin and death. He gives true significance to those who come to him. Hope comes in humbly offering yourself to Him.

We are called to humility. When you realize that you have no capacity in and of yourself for that, Jesus meets you there. When you humble yourself before Jesus, He gives grace in abundance. We must look to Jesus. It is then that we can love others, giving them compassion and mercy in the same way we have received it.

Additional Reading: Romans 2; Philippians 2

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand, believe, desire, or do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at fbcum.org

Next week's sermon text: we turn to Genesis 29:31-30:43 "Envy and Rivalry"
