

Satan's Academy Award

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 27, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Matthew 6:1-2

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Shameful Display of Hypocrisy
 - A. In the Area of Donations
 - B. In the Area of Our Devotions
 - C. In the Area of Our Disciplines
- II. The Sinister Danger of Hypocrisy
 - A. It Deceives
 - B. It Defrauds
 - C. It Destroys
- III. The Serious Discernment of Hypocrisy

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you turn now to Matthew chapter 6, and hold it open there before you—the Gospel of Matthew chapter 6. Every so often, the theater and film people of this generation have an award ceremony that they call the Academy Awards. And there they give awards to actors and actresses. Many of those actresses are beautiful to look upon. Many of them have faces like angels; they have morals like alley cats. And they give them an award for being an actress or for being an actor. And if a person, I suppose, leads a good clean moral life, and they're an actor, then that perhaps is legitimate. Perhaps most of them do not live that kind of life. The Academy Awards. I believe that the biggest actors are not just found in Hollywood. Many of them are found in the realm of religion. I want to speak to you today about "Satan's Academy Award."

The Lord tells about these who are actors. They are play actors. They are in the church. The Greeks used to have actors who would wear masks. If they wanted to look sorrowful, they would put on a sorrowful mask. If they wanted to look happy, they would put on a happy mask. The masks actually had handles, and they would just hold them in front of their faces. The word for that is *hypokrites*. It's the word we get our word *hypocrite* from.

I want you to look at what our Lord has to say here in Matthew chapter 6, verses 1 and 2: "*Take heed that ye do not your alms for men, to be seen of them:*"—do you see the word

see? It's the Greek word *theaomai*. It's a word we get our word *theater* from. "Take heed," Jesus says, "that you're not just playing in a theater"—*otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites*—the play actors—*do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men*—that is, the applause every actor wants. "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (Matthew 6:1-2) Verse 5: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are"—"the actors are"—*for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.*" They're in a theater. "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (Matthew 6:5) On down to verse 16: "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites,"—that is, the play actors—*of a sad countenance:*"—they're wearing the sad mask today—*for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.*" That is, it's a play. "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (Matthew 6:16)

I read an article about Art Linkletter. Many of us know Linkletter's been in the entertainment realm for many, many years. Art Linkletter said that he was a professing Christian, until one day he had a great crisis in his life. And he really needed help, and he was meeting with some young people who were turned-on, on-fire Christians: no pretense, no false front. And they were in a hotel lobby in San Francisco. It came time to pray, and those young people said, "Let's pray," and they got down on their knees in that hotel lobby. Ark Linkletter, being a public figure, said, "I really felt funny about getting down on my knees in a public place like that. But," he said, "I had such a need of God, I realized all of this time I had not been a true Christian." And these were his words. He said, "I was a cardboard Christian—a cardboard Christian." And he said, "I threw all of that away, and I humbled myself before God, and got on my knees, and broke through to God, and met reality."

Now, reality is what this world needs. The world is sick and tired of make-believe, cardboard Christians, and the reality is what the world hungers for. It is the greatest need in the church of the living God today: reality—not hypocrisy, but reality. I've said before, and I want to say again, that the greatest argument for Christ, and the greatest argument against Christ, is the life of a Christian: one way or the other, whether it is realism or hypocrisy.

Now I just want to pick out, before we really get into the meat of the message this morning, a few scriptures that show what the Lord Jesus had to say about hypocrisy. For example, in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 15, He says, "Beware of false prophets." The word *false* is *pseudo*, pseudo-prophets—*which come to you in sheep's clothing.*" (Matthew 7:15) Every actor has his garb that he wears. But inwardly they're ravening wolves. Jesus said, "Now, watch out for these pseudo-prophets." Then He said, in Matthew chapter 23, verses

27 and following, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”—play actors—“for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”* (Matthew 23:27–28)

Jesus reserved His most severe language for the religious leaders of this time, the Pharisees. What was a Pharisee like? Well, he would read the Scriptures. He would worship. He would attend the services. He would bring a tithe. He was separated from the world. He tried to win others to his religion. But it was all outward. He didn’t know the Lord. And the Lord Jesus had the most excoriating, vituperative language for religious people. And yet, on the other hand, when Jesus would find the sinner caught in sin, in the web of sin, Jesus was the most compassionate. The woman taken in adultery, how compassionate was the Lord Jesus! When others said, “Stone her,” Jesus said, “Forgive her.” (John 8:1–11)

There was a tax collector named Zacchaeus. No one else would have anything to do with him, but Jesus went into his house, fellowshiped with him, and ate with him. As a matter of fact, they crucified Jesus because, they said, He was a friend of sinners. Thank God He is, because, if He’s not, He won’t have anything to do with me or with you. Jesus, the friend of sinners—Jesus—had the sternest words for these hypocrites, these actors, these who were candidates for Satan’s Academy Award.

Now I want you to look at the passage that is before us. And there are three basic things I want you to see in chapter 6.

I. The Shameful Display of Hypocrisy

First of all, I want you to see what I’m going to call the shameful display of hypocrisy. Jesus gives three illustrations of hypocrisy: one in the area of almsgiving, one in the area of prayer, and one in the area of fasting. That is, in the area of our donations and our discipline, Jesus speaks of hypocrisy.

A. In the Area of Donations

First of all, look in the area of donations. Verses 1 through 4: *“Take heed that ye do not your alms”—that is, your giving, your donations—“before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be a secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”* (Matthew 6:1–4)

Now Jesus here is not talking about the gift that you bring to the church on Sunday, or that someone would bring to the synagogue on Saturday. He's talking about giving to poor people, giving alms, gifts of charity. Now He's not against this. He's not saying it is wrong to do this. As a matter of fact, if you back in chapter 5, and look in verse 42, you're going to see that our Lord says, *"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away."* (Matthew 5:42)

The Lord is not against giving to the poor. As a matter of fact, the Bible clearly and definitely says this we ought to do, in Psalm 41, verse 1: *"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble."* (Psalm 41:1) And all of us ought to be looking for poor people that we can give to and minister to.

Now it is not the deed that Jesus says is wrong that these Pharisees are doing; it was their motive, and it was their method. Now, if the devil cannot keep you from doing a right thing, He will get you to do a right thing in a wrong way. The Pharisees, in Jesus' time, literally had little silver trumpets. When they wanted to give money to the poor, they would go out and stand in the marketplace: "It's time now to give money to the poor!" *Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta*: they would blow their trumpet. And when they would blow the trumpet, the poor would come, saying, "We're going to receive something," and not only would the poor come, but everybody on the street would hear the trumpet. Their ears would be attracted to the sound of that silver trumpet, and they would sound their trumpet, and then they would throw out their goodies to the poor to be seen of men. Everybody would say, "There's the Pharisee. Isn't he a generous man? Look what he's given to the poor."

Have you ever noticed at Christmastime that people want to give to the poor? They always somehow manage to get some media attention out of it. And many times these are politicians who want to be seen giving things to the poor. I mean, it is a media event. They want to be seen giving to the poor. All of us have our own little trumpet that we can sound so that others can see us give to the poor. Very few people go out—some do—under cover of night, when nobody else knows about it, and just simply give, for giving's sake. But there are always those who want to be seen by men.

Now what our Lord is saying is that it is not wrong to do it. It is the motive and the method. Now, notice in verse 3: *"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."* (Matthew 6:3) What on earth does that mean? Well, both the right hand and the left hand are connected to the brain. And it's really the brain that knows what is going on. What's our Lord talking about? He's just simply saying, "Don't be so careful in the way that you give." Now, if you're walking down the street, and there's somebody who's in need, just reach into your pocket, your right hand—that's where most of us keep our change—and just give it to him." What do we do when we want to know exactly what we're

giving? Friend, when we want to know exactly what we're giving, we take it out of our right hand, we put it in our left hand, and we count it. See, our left hand has to know what our right hand is doing, in order for us to count it out, in order for us to measure it out. Our left hand has to know what our right hand is doing. That's the kind of giving that some people give. But our Lord said, "Just go ahead and give it. Don't wait for everybody to see. And don't be so careful. Don't keep score. Let God keep the score."

B. In the Area of Our Devotions

Now our Lord speaks of hypocrisy, therefore, in the area of our donations. And then He speaks of hypocrisy in the area of our devotions. Continue to read, in verse 5: "*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the [play actors] are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues...that they may be seen of men*"—that they are putting on a theater. "*Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*" (Matthew 6:5)

Now I want to say, it is not wrong to pray in public, nor is it wrong to give in public. Don't misunderstand what Jesus has to say. It is not wrong to give in public. And it is certainly not wrong to pray in public. As a matter of fact, it is wrong not to pray in public. And we pray in public here. And the Bible encourages people to pray in public. The Bible illustrates how people prayed in public. For example, in the book of Acts, one of the great chapters is chapter 4, and it speaks of public prayer in Acts chapter 4 and verse 24: "*And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.*" (Acts 4:24) Together they prayed. And God is glorified when people come together to pray. As a matter of fact, He's going to give us an illustration of how to pray, when He says, "Our Father." Not "My Father" but "Our Father": people are praying together.

Don't be ashamed to pray in public. There's nothing wrong with public prayer. When you go into a restaurant, and a meal is set before you, and you bow your head at home to thank God for the meal, bow it in that restaurant. Thank God for the meal. And don't care who says or who sees. You don't do it to be seen of men, but you're not ashamed to be seen of men. For Jesus said, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is heaven.*" (Matthew 5:16)

We have a little boy, Philip, who died. I took Philip to the emergency room while Joyce stayed home to pray. Philip was one of those little infant crib deaths. I wrapped him in my coat and drove through blinding tears to the emergency room of the hospital, while Joyce stayed with our two other little children. I cannot tell you the agony in my heart, as I burst through those hospital doors and beat on the door to get somebody to come and take that little baby, and see if they could revive the life in that child. And I don't mind telling you,

dear friend, there in that busy corridor, as they left me on the outside, I got on my knees in that corridor. I didn't care who saw me on my knees. I was down on my knees praying. I didn't care if the whole world saw me, because I was not ashamed to be seen praying in public, because I had a need. I wasn't doing it to be seen of men. There's nothing wrong with that kind of prayer.

But what our Lord is saying, my dear friend, is, "Do not pray to be seen of men." Now what our Lord here is talking about is your private devotion. And what Jesus is saying is you do not do your private devotions in public. One of the secrets of prayer is prayer in secret. And, my dear friend, if you don't pray in secret, don't pray in public—if all the praying you do is just simply outward. You see, prayer as a pretense always has to have an audience. But prayer as a reality knows that God alone is the audience.

I think I told you of a young lawyer one time, who graduated from law school, hung up his shingle, had a spanking brand new office, didn't have one client in the world, sitting there behind his desk, getting ready to do business. He hears footfalls, somebody walking down the hall. He's very excited: maybe this is a customer. He picks up the phone, prepared to act like he's busy: "Hello." "Yes." "No, I'm sorry." "I've got a heavy corporation case tomorrow." "Oh, no, no, no, I can't see you then." "Perhaps." "No, not next Wednesday. The Wednesday after next I think my secretary will have a place on her calendar for you—the Wednesday after next." Then he hangs the phone up. And he sees the man standing in front of him, and he says, "Now, good sir, what may I do for you?" He said, "I'm from the phone company. I came to hook up your telephone."

Now I think, dear friend, that this is the kind of praying that Jesus is talking about. Jesus is talking about that kind of hypocrisy when there's nobody on the other line. We're just simply praying to be seen of men. We're trying to impress them rather than to impress the Lord.

Now our Lord tells us how we are to pray. Look, if you will, in verse 7: "*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*" (Matthew 6:7) When you pray, you don't pray to impress God. God is not impressed with the rhetoric of your prayers. God is not impressed with your much speaking. God is not impressed with your eloquence. You don't have to be a junior-size Shakespeare in order to pray. And you don't have to use King James English to pray. And you'd better beware of using trite phrases that are often repeated. I am guilty of doing that. That is one of the great dangers of a preacher: that at times you get little shibboleths, little phrases, that you put into your prayers.

Down at the old church one day, I had gone from early in the morning to late at night, and I had meetings all day long. I was weary. I was brain dead. I was just at the end of

myself. A man saw me at the close of the service. He said, "Pastor Rogers, I must talk to you. I must. I have a very big problem." I said, "All right, come on in. Sit down and talk." And my heart was right. I was listening to that man. I wanted to help him. And, finally, when he finished, I said, "Let me pray for you." All day long, I also had been dictating letters, signing them, "In Jesus' name, Adrian Rogers." When I got to the end of that prayer, I prayed, "In Jesus' name, Adrian Rogers." "Oh," I thought, "God, what have I done? Did he hear me say that, Lord? I mean, did he realize what I said?" I guess God knew who it was down there praying, "In Jesus' name, Adrian Rogers." I said, "Dear God, don't let me fall into that kind of business."

Oh, my dear friend, we do not pray to impress God, nor do we pray to inform God. Look in verse 8: "*Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*" (Matthew 6:8) You don't pray to impress God. You don't pray to inform God. You don't tell God one blessed thing when you pray that He doesn't already know. I've asked you before, does it ever occur to you that nothing ever occurs to God? I mean, God knows everything. God knows the beginning from the end. And He knows what you have need of before you ever ask Him.

So, if you don't pray to impress God, if you don't pray to inform God, what do you pray to do? You pray to invite God, and to enjoy God. Look, if you will, as He continues to tell us, "*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*" (Matthew 6:9-13)

Well, if God already knows that I have need of these things, why do I ask God? Why doesn't God just give them to me? I'll tell you why. God wants us to enjoy Him. God could do it without me; but, thank God, He will not.

Sometime ago, I was going to a speaking engagement, and the people said, "We'll send an airplane for you if you can come." I said, "All right. With that stipulation, I'll come"—because other than that, I could not come. My schedule was such that I could not come. But they said, "We'll send an airplane, and pick you up, and carry you over there." I said, "All right, I'll go." And it was to a college somewhere. And the man came over and landed out here in the Memphis Aero. I got in that airplane with him, and we were going over Arkansas. He said, "Are you a pilot?" I said, "No." He said, "Did you ever fly an airplane?" I said, "No." He said, "Would you like to?" I said, "Yes." So we're sitting there side by side. He's over here, and I'm over here. He said, "Do *this*, and do *this*; and don't do *this*, and don't do *that*." He said, "Now, take the controls." And so I did. For a long time I flew that airplane—

kind of like *this*, and kind of like *that*. But he's always sitting over there. He's always there with his hands on the control. He's just letting me fly the airplane. Now he didn't need me to fly the airplane. I couldn't fly it without him, but he could fly it without me. And if it had been me alone, I'd have piled it on the ground. But he just simply guided me, and helped me, and we had sweet fellowship, as I flew the airplane along with his help.

Now God could do it without you. But you wouldn't get the joy out of it. You wouldn't have the fellowship with Him, you wouldn't have that participation with Him, as together you do what He could do without you and you could never do without Him.

Why does God teach us to pray? Not to impress God; not to inform God; but to invite God—because God never ever wants me to be independent of Him and to fail see my need of Him. And if God just gave me what I needed without my ever asking, I would never really see my need of Him.

God does not force Himself upon me. God invites me to pray and to have fellowship with Him. And therefore the Lord Jesus gave us a prayer that no hypocrite can ever pray. Look at it, beginning in verse 9. I cannot say "*our*" when I pray, if there's no room for others and their needs. I cannot say "*Father*," if I'm a hypocrite and do not demonstrate the relationship of His fatherhood in my daily living. I cannot say "*who art in heaven*," if all of my interest and my pursuits are earthly things, like a hypocrite. I cannot say, "*Hallowed be thy name*," if I'm called by His name and I am not holy, as a hypocrite would be. I cannot say "*Thy kingdom come*," if I am unwilling to give up my own sovereignty and accept the righteous reign of God. I cannot say, "*Thy will be done*," if I'm unwilling, or resentful of God's will in my life. I cannot say, "*in earth, as it is in heaven*," unless I'm willing to give myself to His service here and now. I cannot say, "*Give [me] this day [my] daily bread*," unless I'm extending an honest effort to get my daily bread, or unless I'm genuinely concerned about the bread of my fellow man. I cannot say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us," if I'm a hypocrite, and continue to hold a grudge in my heart. I cannot say, "*lead [me] not into temptation*," if I deliberately choose to remain in a situation where I'm likely to be tempted. I'm a hypocrite, if I do that. I cannot pray, "*deliver [me] from evil*," if I am not prepared to fight evil in the spiritual realm through prayer. I cannot say, "*thine is the kingdom*," if I do not give to my King the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject. I cannot say, "*thine is...the power*," if, as a hypocrite, I fear what my neighbors or friends may say or do. I cannot say, "*thine is...the glory*," if I'm seeking my own glory first. I cannot say "*for ever*," if I'm so concerned about today's affairs. I cannot say "*Amen*," unless I mean it: "By whatever cost, may this prayer be answered."

C. In the Area of Our Disciplines

And so, what our Lord does, He talks about hypocrisy in the area of our donations. And then, He talks about hypocrisy in the area of our devotions. And then, He talks about hypocrisy in the area of our disciplines. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, verse 16: *“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces.”* (Matthew 6:16) That is, they actually put on a mask. The play actors of Jesus’ day, these Pharisees, when they would have their fast day, they would take ashes, and put ashes on themselves. They would take dirt, and put dirt on their face. They would tear their clothes, and they would go around now, wearing the costume of an actor, because they were fasting.

Again, there’s nothing wrong with fasting; nothing wrong with giving to the poor; nothing wrong with praying in public; nothing wrong with fasting. We ought to fast. Jesus didn’t say, “if you fast”, but, “when you fast.” And Jesus expects me to fast, and Jesus expects you to fast. But what were the Pharisees doing? They were doing the right thing with the wrong motive and the wrong method. They put on these gloomy clothes, a gloomy face, and they were going around trying to look humble.

A lot of people in the ministry do that today. I always feel a little funny when people ask me, “Are you a preacher?” I mean, people I don’t even know. They’ll walk up to me and say, “Are you a preacher?” I mean, I hadn’t been witnessing to them, or anything. They just say, “Are you a preacher?” I say, “No, I’ve just been sick.” Why do they ask that? I don’t want to look like a preacher. I’m not ashamed of being a preacher. I think that a man of God ought to dress and act in such a way that no one will suspect that he is but be amazed when they find out that he is. *We ought to be supernaturally natural, and naturally supernatural. In all spiritual things, we ought to be natural; in all natural things, we ought to be spiritual.*

But these Pharisees were just hypocrites. They were just going on putting on some sort of a show in the area of their disciplines. And our Lord said, “I’m sick of it. You’re play actors.” You know something harder than fasting? It’s fasting, and not letting anybody know it. That’s more difficult than fasting: not to let anybody know that you’re fasting when you’re fasting.

II. The Sinister Danger of Hypocrisy

Well, what our Lord is talking about here in these passages of Scripture are some sad demonstrations of hypocrisy. Now I want you to see the sinister danger of hypocrisy—the sinister danger of hypocrisy. What does hypocrisy do?

A. It Deceives

Well, number one: It deceives. Look, if you will, in verse 1. He says, “You do your alms before men.” (Matthew 6:1) Look, if you will, in verse 5. He says, “...that they may be seen of men.” (Matthew 6:5) Look in verse 16: “...that they may appear unto men to fast.” (Matthew 6:16) That is, it’s all a means to deceive other people. It deceives. And the sad thing about it is this: that the hypocrite who deceives other people begins after a while to deceive himself.

And then, the tragedy is this: that you have the problem leading the blind. Now just stay there in Matthew 6, and turn to Matthew 23. This theme runs all the way through the book of Matthew. Turn to Matthew chapter 23, and look, if you will, in verse 13: “*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte,*”—that’s one convert to your religion—“*and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*” (Matthew 23:13–15)

You see, the Pharisees were deceived, and they were deceivers. They were actors. And whenever they would make a convert, he would be a twofold child of hell. It is the blind leading the blind. One of the great problems in American Christianity today is hypocrisy, because not only is the hypocrite going to hell; he’s taking so many with him. It deceives.

B. It Defrauds

Number two: It defrauds. Go back to Matthew 6, and look, if you will, in verses 2 and 3. Jesus says, in the last part of verse 2, “*They have their reward.*” (Matthew 6:2) Look, if you will, in the last part of verse 6: “*Thy Father which seeth thee in secret shall reward thee openly.*” (Matthew 6:6) Look in verse 16: “*Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*” (Matthew 6:16)

In all of these passages, our Lord is talking about the word *reward*: the reward, the reward, the reward! Is it wrong or right to serve God for reward? It is right to serve God for reward. Our Lord teaches us to serve God for reward. As a matter of fact, we’re going to find, in this Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus said, “*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:20) Now that doesn’t make any sense at all, unless there is some treasure in heaven that you can lay up. And our Lord does not discourage it. The Lord does encourage you to have a reward.

But the problem with many people is that many people are going to defraud themselves. They're going to cheat themselves. For Jesus said, "These people who do things to be seen of men, they already have their reward." And the word *reward* is a technical word, which means "paid in full, no more payment is due; it is complete; it is paid in full." It's a very technical word of a bill that has been completely, totally, paid.

That is, if you pray to be seen of men, you're seen of men; you get your pay. You don't get any more. If you give to be seen of men, you're paid in full. When you're seen of men, you don't get any more pay. If you fast to be seen of men, when you'll get your reward is when you're seen of men. You are paid in full; you don't get any more. The sad thing, my dear friend, is that, when you get what you want, one day you will not want what you got; that is, that you have defrauded yourself; you have cheated yourself. There's no place in heaven where our Lord is going to say, "Enter thou into thy reward, and, well done, thou good and faithful servant." You're not going to get any of that. There won't be any reward in heaven for you. You have cheated yourself.

Did you know that the things you're going to be rewarded for in heaven are the things that you probably don't even remember doing here? Did you know that? Did you know, if we remember what we do, God forgets it? If we forget it, God remembers it. It's a strange thing.

Go back to Matthew 25. Look, let me show you something. This theme runs throughout the book of Matthew. Matthew 25, verse 34—our Lord is talking about that time when some people are going to receive a very wonderful reward. And look, if you will, in verse 34: "*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*" "Lord, I don't remember that. When did all of this happen, God—these things that you're rewarding me for? I don't remember it." "*And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*" (Matthew 25:34–40)

The things that they forget, God remembered. The things that we remember, God forgets. They said, "Lord, I don't remember doing that." And I dare say the best good that you do for the Lord Jesus is when you do that unconscious good: you don't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. You're not praying to be seen of men, but you're

not ashamed that men will see you pray. You just simply do it because it is real. It's in your heart. That's what the world yearns for, and that's what the world longs for.

C. It Destroys

My dear friend, what does this hypocrisy do? It deceives. It defrauds. And it destroys. Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 7, verse 21—oh, one of the most terrifying passages of Scripture in all of the Bible! Look at it: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (Matthew 7:21–23)

These play actors thought they were doing something good. God says it is iniquity. Now I want to remind you—listen to me, because I dare say there are many people that I'm preaching to today who've never really been saved; you are religious; you say, “Lord, Lord”; you give your money; you go to Sunday School—but Jesus calls it iniquity, because you have never been saved; you've never been born again.

You say “Well, I'm not a drunkard. I'm not a thief. I'm not a harlot.” My friend, *the devil had rather send you to hell from the pew than from the gutter.* And these people in Matthew chapter 7, verse 22, they were hypocrites. They had religion, but they did not have reality. They had form, but they did not have force. They had plenty on the shelves, but they had nothing in the warehouse. They were not saved.

What is the danger of hypocrisy? My dear friend, it deceives. It defrauds. It destroys. That's why Jesus said so much about it.

III. The Serious Discernment of Hypocrisy

Now, one last thing, and I'll be finished. Let me talk to you about the serious discernment of hypocrisy. If it's such a dangerous thing, we'd better look at it very carefully. Go back to chapter 6, and look in verse 1. Jesus said, *“Take heed.”* (Matthew 6:1) Do you see that? Jesus said, *“Take heed.”* Now you'd better be very careful.

You know, when I prepared this sermon, I had to do some real hard searching. I had to do some hard searching on my knees this morning before I came out here to preach. I had to ask myself, “Adrian, is there some Pharisee in you?” And, very frankly, I had to do some business with God.

I want to give you some questions I want you to ask yourself. I've tried to ask these questions to myself:

Have I ever failed to obey God because I feared rejection by other people? You see, the play actors are always concerned about what they will think rather than what He will think.

Question number two: Am I willing, and do I often do service for God, and service for others, that I never tell anybody about—I never let anyone know it?

Number three: Is my private life consistent with my public life? I had to ask myself this morning on my knees, “Adrian, are you what the people of Bellevue think you are?”

All of these are just questions that ask this: Do we love the praise of men more than we love the praise of God? Are we really serving God from our hearts? If so, we have a reward in heaven.

I’m not going to let some hypocrite keep me from serving God, dear friend. I’m just not going to do it. There are some people who say, “Well, they’re hypocrites—they’re hypocrites. I’m not going to be a Christian because of the hypocrites.” Well, I’ve got news for you, my dear friend. *If you’re hiding behind a hypocrite, you’re smaller than he is—or you couldn’t hide behind him.* I’m going to tell you something else. If you’re hiding behind him, he’s closer to God than you are—or you couldn’t be hiding behind him. You say, “Well, there are hypocrites in the church.” Well, do tell. Do tell. One of Jesus’ twelve disciples was a hypocrite. Thank God the eleven didn’t up and quit.

Every now and then, somebody picks up the paper and reads about some charlatan in the ministry, maybe some television preacher or something like that. They say, “Ha, ha, ha! See what they all are?” That’s a lie, and you know it. It’s not what they all are. And you know it’s a lie.

Conclusion

Do you know why it doesn’t shake me when I learn of some hypocrite? Do you know why it doesn’t shake me? I’ll tell you why it doesn’t shake me: because I know one person who’s not a hypocrite. Do you know who He is? And you ought to know one who’s not. You see, no hypocrite on earth is going to shake you, if you know what you have is real. It will cause you grief. It will cause you heartache. It will cause you pity. It will cause you righteous indignation. But it will not shake your faith—because you know God personally. You say, “Well, I don’t want to go to church because of all those hypocrites down there.” Well, my dear friend, it would be better to come to church and spend a few years with some of them than to go to hell and spend eternity with all of them.

Let me tell you something. There always have been hypocrites. There always will be. The Lord Jesus Christ devoted the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew to the problem of hypocrites. But oh, how wonderful it is to know Jesus Christ: to know Him, to serve Him, and love Him, with reality in your heart and in your life!