

## JESUS AND RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

(Matthew 23:1-33)

### Jesus' harshest words were directed at people who were OUTWARDLY RELIGIOUS but not INWARDLY RIGHTEOUS

- They live by “do as I say, not as I do” (3)
- They demand things of others they don't demand of themselves (4)
- They are motivated to action by the applause of others (5-7)
- They have a strong negative influence on others (15)
- They make up rules to impose on others (16-22)
- They major in the minors (23-24)
- They are big on appearances and short on character (25-28)

#### Jesus' harsh words

- Fools (1x)
- Snakes (2x)
- Blind (5x)
- Hypocrites (6x)
- Woe (7x)

#### Responses for the wee bit of Pharisee in us all...

- *Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted*
- *You have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former*
- *You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel*
- *First clean the inside of the cup and dish, then the outside also will be clean*

Of all bad men, religious bad men are the worst. (C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*)

It is an occupational hazard of religious people to take life (and themselves) far too seriously. (Richard Foster, *Spiritual Classics*)

I think what people really mean when they say they are against organized religion is that they're against hypocritical religion, misguided religion, blind or unthinking religion, religion of rules and laws rather than love, religion that comes diced and preprocessed and shrink-wrapped like ground beef. (Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*)

Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction. (Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*)

#### Matt 23:13-33

<sup>13</sup>“**Woe** to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you **hypocrites!** You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. <sup>15</sup>**Woe** to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you **hypocrites!** You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. <sup>16</sup>**Woe** to you, **blind** guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ <sup>17</sup>You **blind fools!** Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? <sup>18</sup>You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.’ <sup>19</sup>You **blind** men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? <sup>20</sup>Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. <sup>21</sup>And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. <sup>22</sup>And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it. <sup>23</sup>**Woe** to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you **hypocrites!** You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. <sup>24</sup>You **blind** guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. <sup>25</sup>**Woe** to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you **hypocrites!** You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup>**Blind** Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. <sup>27</sup>**Woe** to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you **hypocrites!** You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. <sup>28</sup>In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. <sup>29</sup>**Woe** to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you **hypocrites!** You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. <sup>30</sup>And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ <sup>31</sup>So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. <sup>32</sup>Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers! <sup>33</sup>You **snakes!** You brood of **vipers!** How will you escape being condemned to hell?”