

## THE TEACHING, TASSELS, AND TITLES OF THE PHARISEES

April 3, 2016 morning service

Matthew 23:1-12

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you. Now let's preach about hypocrites, alright? Amen. We're in the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Matthew, hypocrites in the church. We're going to be here for the next three, four, five weeks just according to how long it takes the pastor to get through this chapter. Do you know, when I began to study this, there's a lot in the Bible about us. Hypocrites. Yeah. I mean a lot. More than I had really even thought on before but the whole of chapter 23, Jesus gives eight woe, woe, woe, woe, woe, woe, woe, woe you scribes, you Pharisees, you hypocrites. Now in the first twelve verses as he introduces this chapter He does not use the word hypocrite but the teaching is there. So I want us to look this morning in Matthew 23. We'll begin reading in verse 1 and read through verse 12. Then I encourage you to be studying this 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter and those eight woes that come beginning in verse 13. Matthew 23, verse 1.

*Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples [Now don't miss that. He's talking to the masses and the twelve, to the masses and the leaders and the followers, these disciples, His disciples. Those that were just looking in and those that had left everything to follow Him and He was], saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. [That's where we get our phrase, he wouldn't lift a finger to help anybody.] But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."*<sup>1</sup>

I believe the case can be made that hypocrisy is the greatest abomination that the Lord Jesus spoke to. Outright sinners, thieves, crooks, liars, women and adultery, tax gatherers that stole, outright sinners, Jesus always confronted sinners and then showed grace. But for the religious hypocrite He gave scathing denouncements. Just keep your finger there at Matthew 23 and go back a few pages to Matthew 6. It's right in the middle of the greatest sermon ever preached. In Matthew 6 on the Sermon on the Mount, listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 6:2. "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the

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*streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.*” Look at verse 5. That was about giving. Verse 5 is about praying. *“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”* Verse 16. First He talked about giving, praying, now fasting. *“Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”* Those that give so everybody will see like a trumpet blast, those that pray so everyone will hear and know, those that fast, be careful. He says, “You hypocrites.”

Now the word hypocrite is in the Greek New Testament a word that means to pretend. It means to act like you're in a play. There's a literal transliteration for the word hypocrite, for the word mask. In the first century theater they would have a mask on a stick and they'd wear that mask. That's become popular again in our culture just for fun, photos with your phone. We do it here. You get a mustache on a stick and you hold it up to your face. Or you have glasses, goofy glasses on a stick and you put them up. You look like somebody else. You don't look like yourself. You're playing a role. You're pretending. Jesus said there are many in the religious circle, in the synagogue, in the Baptist church. If He were here today, they have a mask on a stick and what you see in public is really not what they are in Christ. The teachings, the tassels, and the titles of the Pharisees, of the hypocrites.

We're going to dig into that word Pharisee and scribe in weeks to come but they are some of the most religious that you'd ever see. They never miss. In our world they'd be here Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, Monday night, have a special meeting on Friday night. Many of these folks are there. It's not wrong to attend. It's wrong to attend for the wrong reasons. Hypocrites. Well let's dig in. What do the hypocrites look like? Well three things I want you to see here this morning.

First of all under this teaching, is that hypocrites talk but they don't act. They talk but they don't act. Look at verse 1 through 4 when you see what Jesus said in verse 2, the scribes and the Pharisees, they've seated themselves in the chair of Moses. Now the chair of Moses is like at Southwestern Seminary. There's the chair of fire. That's the Roy Fish chair of evangelism and if you occupy that teaching position, you have the symbolic chair of fire, the chair of evangelism where you are the professor teaching evangelism.

If you go to Oradea, Romania they have there the Ted Traylor chair of pastoral ministries. They put that on me. So people that come, they teach – it's not that you literally sit in a chair. It's symbolic. It's somebody that leads and helps us in that regard. It's not a bad thing. They had in the synagogue the chair of Moses and he's the great law giver. Moses was the greatest law giver in the world. When you go to Congress if you've ever been there, you look around and they've got all the great law givers all the way around the building. I've shared this with you before. All of those great law givers, their faces are around up on the wall but all of them are just one side.

You get just the face side with one eye but there's one law giver back in the back and he's looking right at the rostrum and it's not the side of his face. He's got both eyes looking at the well of the Congress and it's Moses, the great law giver, the one that gave The Ten Commandments, the greatest law giver in the world. He looks over the work of Congress. I sometimes think he must have a tear in his eye when we run from the laws of God.

These Pharisees, some of them sat in the seat above. They were great teachers. Look what Jesus said about them. Therefore, because they do everything they tell you to do and observe what they say but do not do according to their deeds because they're saying one thing and acting another. You see, Pharisees and hypocrites, they talk but they don't act. It's not that they talk out of both sides of their mouth. No, no, they just talk out of the front side of their mouth and lie straight up to you. They say, "You do this. You do this." Jesus said, "Listen to them. They're teaching the law but they're not acting so do what they are teaching but do not do what they do because it says they tie heavy burdens and lay them on the men's shoulders and they tell them what to do. You're to serve, you're to give, you're to go the second mile, you're to do all these things but they won't lift one finger. They're unwilling to move as much as a Pharisee. They're great preachers. They just don't practice much. They're great cast masters. They're just not burden bearers. Dear God, I'm telling you, we'd have revival if all it took was talking. Amen?

Lord, there's a lot of talk in the Baptist church. 400 words a minute and gusts up to 700. I mean we can talk. We talk about good stuff. Friend, don't just listen to what you hear at Olive Baptist Church. Look at what you see at Olive Baptist Church. It's not about what somebody says you ought to. It's somebody that does do. A hypocrite will talk to you. He just won't do much. Hypocrites love to talk. They just don't have action because your faith without works is dead. It's just not real. It's hypocrisy. Hypocrites. They talk but they don't act.

Secondly, Jesus said about these hypocrites, hypocrites are all show and no service. All show and no service. Look at it as found in verse 5. But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. Now what's He talking about? He's talking about the Jewish rabbis, the Jewish leaders, the phylacteries and the tassels, both biblical items. The phylactery was two-fold for the Jew. On his left arm he would put a little leather box and put it on the top of his hand.

If you go with to me to Israel sometime, you'll see these people at the Wailing Wall. They have the phylactery and it's there on their hand and then they have the leather bands wrapped around that arm. You can't help but see it. It's there. In that leather box there is written out on little pieces of paper four scriptures. Here's what they write and put in that box. Exodus 13:1-10, Exodus 13:11-16, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and Deuteronomy 11:13-21.

They take those four texts, write them down, and they put them in that box. Not only do they have them on their hand, then they'll put one on their head and they wrap that leather band and tie it around their head because one of those texts in Deuteronomy says that you are to keep the law in the frontal between your eyes so that you never lose sight. Always here at your hand you could see it and always in front of you so you can see it. Those were the phylacteries.

Then it said that they lengthened their tassels. What's He talking about? That's a direct quote out of Numbers 15:38 and 39 where Moses said to remember God's faithfulness coming out of Egypt to the promised land, that you are to have tassels on the four corners of your garment and tie them with a blue cord and that cord – you'll see those tassels if you see a Jewish rabbi. Many times they'll have the fringe that's there and this is what Jesus is talking about when they would have it. In Deuteronomy 15 it says, "Wear the tassel as a reminder of God's faithfulness of bringing you out."

So the law said it. Put it on your frontal between your eyes. So, Jesus, what's the problem? All show, no service. They'd make sure there was a lot of fringe. They'd make sure that the cords were hanging way down. They'd say, "Boy, there's a spiritual man. He's got the look." Symbols are very important. Why do we have a cross on the top of this building? It's a symbol. Why did last Sunday I wear a cross on my lapel? It was the weekend of Good Friday. Why do I have a pair of cuff links that are crosses that I wear from time to time? Great symbols.

Let me tell you, friend, you can wear a cross between your eyes, on your lapel, on your cuffs, on your pants, and be mean as hell. If your life is not stacked up to the symbol, you're a hypocrite because Jesus says – they just do these deeds, they wear these phylacteries, and they wear these tassels. Why? To be noticed by men. Look at me! I cannot tell you the times I have people I've only met for the first time. They'll say, "Pastor, can I come down to your church and give my testimony?" I don't even know their name and they think I'm going to stick them up here and let them talk to you. What is that about? Look at me! Hypocrites. All show, no service.

Now you need to pray for the people that grace this platform. You see, there's a choir full up there. They get a little limelight. Then there's a little group over here and they get a little more limelight. Then there's some that step out here and do some solo work. They get more limelight. Then there's a guy leading all this crowd. He gets a lot of limelight. Then there's this other guy that preaches every Sunday, television, radio, Internet. People say, "Pastor, I bet you can't go anywhere in this town that people don't know you." Let me tell you, when I get to where I go somewhere in Pensacola and people don't know me, I'm in trouble. Some of that's good, some of it's not so good. People will test you when they know you but you better be willing to serve if you're going to show.

Now that's not just up here on the platform. It moves out here to the pew. Who takes up the big old collection in that big old church down there? He's an usher. She

teaches a class. I saw her pastor call on her to pray one time at church. Look at me! All show, no service. Hypocrites.

Their teaching, their tassels, then thirdly, the hypocrites love honor but not humility. Oh my. Look what He says. They love, verse 6 says, the place of honor at the banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues. Respectful greetings in the marketplace. “Dr. Traylor, Pastor Traylor, come right up here to the front.” Let me tell you, if you get to believing that stuff, they’ll cut your head off as soon as they get an opportunity. That’s what He says in three words. Don’t use the word rabbi, father, or leader.

Now we’ve got to dig into this for a minute. You mean we shouldn’t ever call anybody rabbi? Well the word rabbi means teacher is what Jesus is saying here. I really do not believe – you see, I think you’re becoming a hypocrite if you’re straining so much to say you could never use these words. Underneath the teaching here is just remember now, no one, no one is your teacher save the Spirit of the Living God alone. He’s your teacher. Thank God for teachers. You should have teachers. Amen? I mean He tells us that we teach one another and the younger will be in submission to the older and let the older teach the younger. I mean He’s not saying that you don’t do it. It just means be careful that you don’t get to thinking you’re really somebody when you’re nobody. Ruined sinners, remember that’s who we are. Don’t use the word rabbi.

Then he says don’t use the word father. Now we like to run and get on our Catholic brothers here. Oh you can’t call the priest father. Well if you go there then you can’t call your daddy father but the Bible says to honor your father. Again, don’t strain out the gnat here. Don’t get so narrow and legalistic that you don’t see what He’s teaching us. There’s just One that is your father. That’s the One that’s in heaven. Make sure that you don’t let me replace God for you. Don’t ask me to pray your prayers. There’s a place for someone to be the pastor or the elder or the bishop or whatever title that we use the word pastor here. We don’t use the word senior pastor. Many churches do and that’s their business and we’ve not done it. I get that hung on me every now and then. People ask me, “Are you the senior pastor?” I’m hunting the junior pastor, I just don’t know who he is. I’m the sophomore pastor, that’s who I am. You can strain at that and I understand but now be careful that you don’t throw so much honor out there that they forget humility.

Be careful of rabbi. Be careful of father. Then he uses a word. It’s the only time it’s found in the Bible. The only time you find this word in the New Testament is right here. Do not be called leaders. The King James says masters because there’s only one that’s your leader. There’s only one that’s your master. It’s Christ, *kathégétés*. The only time you find it in the Bible is right here. I’m not your master, I’m not your leader, I’m not your daddy, and you’re not that to your class or others. What we try to do is move people unto the lordship of Christ. Hear me say this. You must deny yourself and follow Christ or you’re going to deny Christ and follow yourself. Hear that one more time. You must deny yourself and then follow Christ or you will deny Christ and follow yourself.

Be careful of titles. MVP, goat, greatest of all time, superstar, megachurch. Some of the greatest spiritual people in all the world, you'll never meet them until you get to heaven because they're somewhere in an unknown place pastoring a small group of people today going through the fires of persecutorial hell and we won't be able to carry their socks on that side. Just be careful of self-exaltation because that's what hypocrites love.

Jesus said, "The greatest among you, the greatest among you are the servants." Amen. For whoever tries to exalt himself he's going to be humbled and the one that humbles himself will be exalted. I've probably said this a dozen times to you from this pulpit out of this text because it's one of my favorite texts. I preach this a lot of places I go about humility. He that exalts himself is coming down. He that humbles himself will be exalted. Peacock today, feather duster tomorrow. Amen. You let a church exalt itself, get to thinking you're somebody. Half a generation will go by and you've got an empty building.

I was out here walking around on the property yesterday. I sat out in the prayer garden for awhile. I just had on a bunch of old, grubby clothes. I worked in the yard awhile and then I just came up here and walked around the ball fields. We're about to have ball season. It starts next week. Lord have mercy. I prayed. You see some of the mommas and daddies that sit out here and bring little boys and girls out there, they cuss like a sailor. Hypocrite. Hypocrite. Remember, nobody out there is trying out for a scholarship this year. None of the coaches are getting paid. They're all volunteers. The umpires, I think they get \$6 a game or something. So you can get on them. Hey, don't go out there and act a fool. Hypocrite. They ought to just drop kick you out of the league. I'm telling you that's what we ought to do. But then we'd be a hypocrite because we've got to go love you because Jesus told us to. My, my, my, my. Just try a little service because the hypocrites like honor, not humility. You want to learn humility, just put yourself before the Lord. The greatness of God and we're nothing.

I went to college on a basketball scholarship. I love this time of year, the final four. I worked hard yesterday so I could watch those games last night. Two of the sorriest games ever. At our house we do an NCAA bracket every year. There are seven of us in it this year: Liz, myself, Matt who plays in the orchestra, our nephew's in there, Bennett, Brad, and Rachel. This year Kathryn wanted to play so we gave her a bracket. She picked the 64 by animals she likes and colors that were pretty. She is 60 points ahead of anybody. We have a big trophy we give. You'll see. Watch Facebook. She'll be sitting there with her trophy. She's not even old enough to have a phone. You want a little humility? Just get in a 64-seat bracket with a 3-year-old. O God's got His ways, hasn't He? God's got His ways of humbling you.

I was in the Charlotte airport the other night. I'm going to get way out on a limb here. I probably ought to go back up there and get in my notes. We had waited forever. Canceled flights, it was late in the night, and the bathrooms were the nastiest mess. Finally we're getting on there so I went down to the restroom and came back. You

know, you go in there and you clean up everything. You have to wash the stall before you go to the bathroom. So I'm standing there in the Charlotte airport and a guy I never met, he walks up behind me. He says, "Pastor, I'm from Pensacola." He's whispering right here in my shoulder. He said, "I'm from Pensacola. I watch you on television sometimes." I said, "Yeah, that's good." He said, "You have toilet paper hanging out the back of your pants." Now my son and the minister of music wouldn't tell me that. He that exalts himself.

I'm telling you, God could humble this church that quick. God can humble you that quick. Don't exalt yourself. You're a ruined sinner. You're a zero. Sin has wrecked you and ruined you but hallelujah, what a Savior. Exalt Him. Exalt Him. If you will humble yourself and exalt Him, in due time He'll lift you to where you need to be. Amen.

Well I've got to hurry. I've got one more thing I've got to say here. I ran a rabbit. Take your Bible and hang a right and go to Mark 7:6, 7, and 8. You're in Matthew 23. Go to Mark 7. Look at this. Jesus is speaking. *And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'* Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."

You want to know what's killing churches today? The tradition of men that has let go of the precepts of God and grabbed the traditions of men. There are some great traditions and things we should keep and do but that's all they are. There are times when God evaporates them.

There are two hypocrites I want to speak to in the invitation time today. I'm going to give an invitation and Jamie's going to sit here and play and sing and we're going to give you an invitation and invite you to come today and say yes to Christ, yes to the church, yes to repentance. Who are the hypocrites who are here today? There are at least two. Number one. There is the hypocrite of the unsaved, unbeliever who is masquerading as a Christian. Sometimes their name is even on the church roll but they're playing a game. They know if they were to die they wouldn't know God. They know hell would be their home but they've got so much pride built up, they're lost. Many times on the church roll but they're masquerading as Christians when they're really not believers. They've never been saved. There's no fruit in their life. Oh there's a lot of tradition, a lot of religious things in their life but there's no spiritual fruit and the evidence of salvation. There's no love for the unlovely. There's no joy in the valley. There's no peace that passes understanding as the world gives it because you just do not know God. Hypocrites that masquerade as Christians when they're really unbelievers need to be saved.

There's a second hypocrite that comes to Olive Church. Those are true believers who live neck deep in sin yet pretend to be spiritual. They say all the right things and do all the right stuff but they're living neck deep in sin. They hate people. They're mean.

They have a foul mouth when nobody's really listening. They'd tear down the fellowship of a church rather than build it up until they come and then they'll look spiritual because they're masquerading as spiritual people but they're neck deep in sin. They're hypocrites coming and singing the old songs of Zion and the new songs of the church. Yet when they walk out of here they look just like the rest of the world. Not a bit of difference.

Dear friend, I share with you this morning with all the empathy of my heart, if that's you, repent in Jesus' name. Somebody said, "Pastor, you know, hypocrites, they just need to be real." No, no, they are real. They're real hypocrites. What they need to be is repentant and righteous, the righteousness of Jesus within them moving through them.

One man said to me one time, "You know, pastor, if you let a hypocrite stand between you and God the hypocrite's closer to the Lord than you are." A lot of people won't have anything to do with the church because the church has got hypocrites in it. Always has, always will. Friend, you don't judge what you do by what other people do. You judge yourself by what God says about you. Bring yourself in a right relationship and standard.

Oh my goodness. Whatever you are, don't be a hypocrite. Come in repentant righteousness before the Lord. I'm not talking about perfection. Goodness, gracious, there are no perfect people here. I'm talking about people that take off the mask.

Do you do it on Halloween? Do they come to your door? They wear the mask. You try to guess who they are. They're little children, sometimes big kids, sometimes adults dress up with them. It's a fun time. We do it here. We have Fall Festival. I dress up nearly every year. I was a clown this year with a big red nose, red hair, big suit my wife made. It had a little horn. I'd walk by people and hit that horn. Then people would stay and they'd say, "Pastor? I never." It's fun to dress up but it's not real. It's a mask. It's fake. You see, some people come to church like that. They do it once every week. They get up and they become a Baptist and they stay one for an hour and a half. Then they go home and take off their Baptist clothes, take off their Baptist actions, and they return to who they really are.

Repent. Repent is the order of the day. Take off the mask and say, "O God, I come clean before you."

Father, in Jesus' name, I pray for myself. O God, help me to rip away the mask. O God, help me to be repentant and righteous before You. Lord, I pray for people that today will respond to the gospel, that they'd be saved. I pray for people who want to be a part of Olive Church that today they'd join us and be a part. Have Your way in every heart here now. Do Your work in Jesus' name. Amen.

You're looking right here. In a moment Jamie starts to sing. Now I've thought long and hard about this. Should I even give an invitation? I mean, who's going to

come? Who's going to get up and come down here and say, "Hey, he's talking about me. I'm the hypocrite." Maybe you're here today and God's just reached into your heart and said, "You need to come clean." Maybe you came here today and you're where you ought to be with the Lord and you say, "We came ready to join Olive Baptist Church today but we're waiting. We're going to come tonight and do that."

Let me tell you what I said to a young girl this week. She was waiting a table. She had about as large as an apple, a tattoo here on her forearm. It was odd. I ask people about tattoos. They've become art in our world. So as she was waiting our table I said, "Can you tell me what that tattoo is?" She said this to me. She put her hand over it. She said, "I will but will you promise me you won't judge me?" I said, "Young lady, I may do a lot of things but judge you is not one of them. I'm not here to judge you. I'm just curious." She said, "It's the pendant that my mother always wore and it's what we buried her in." She said, "When I move right here it's like it's hanging around my neck." It was a little pendant hanging around her neck. That's how she remembered her mother.

Let me tell you, friend, this church is not here to judge you. I'm going to preach on that passage, Matthew 7. We all quote about judge not but when you get to verse 3 it talks about hypocrites. We're not here to judge you. We're here to help you. We're here to move you toward God, not away from Him. We're not here to get between you and God. We're here to move you toward Him. Some of you need to take a step toward God today. We invite you to come. You'll find friends here. You'll find other sinners. You'll find bigger sinners than you are in this place and so God's calling you. Then I want you to step out and come. We're on our feet all over this room. Jamie's singing, people coming, you step out and you come today.