Sermon Notes for September 24, 2017

Misguided Religion
Luke 11:37-54

Introduction

One of the unique things about Christianity is its emphasis on the mind.

Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” Matthew 22:37

“All truth is God’s truth.” Augustine

“Every person needs to be able to read and write so they can study the Scriptures for themselves.” Martin Luther

“Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life. (John 17:3) Harvard University

Somewhere along the way, the Word of God was replaced by the lamp of human wisdom.

I. The danger of legalism and hypocrisy. Verses 37-41

Who were the Pharisees?

• Originally, they were laymen who were concerned about the moral decline in Judaism.
• They wanted to separate themselves from impure things by following the Mosaic Law.

What started out as a good thing, a concern for God and his word, became cold and deadly by the time of Jesus.

They had rules about everything, including how you washed your hands, and it had to be done perfectly or you were not clean.

They were hypocrites. They focused on externals and neglected the heart.

II. Six signs of legalism and hypocrisy.

1. A focus on externals and not on the heart. Verse 42

• Legalism is deadly because it majors on minors and minors on majors.
• Legalists are quick to criticize.
• Outwardly, they wanted to appear holy, but inwardly, they were full of greed and wickedness.
2. Pride and Ostentation. Verse 43
   • They love to be seen as holy men.
   • They love to be greeted on the street and in the marketplace.
   • But it was all for show.

3. Defilement. Verse 44
   • They are like unmarked graves.
   • By their teaching and example, they defiled others rather than helped them.
   • In contrast, the New Testament instructs those who are elders in the church to be an example to the flock. I Peter 5:3
   • “Watch your life and doctrine closely.” I Timothy 4:16

4. Impossible Demands. Verse 46
   • They thought the best way to keep the law was to build a fence around it.
   • As a result, 600 commands in the Torah became 6,000 commands by the scribes.
   • Life became impossible for the average Jew.
   • No wonder Jesus would say, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

5. Intolerance. Verses 47-51
   • “You build tombs for the prophets and it was your forefathers who killed them.”
   • Their rejection of Jesus would be the final blow. They killed the prophets and now they would kill the Son.
   • They rejected the authority of the Word of God.

6. Deny the way of salvation. Verse 52
   • They had been given the key of salvation in the Word of God.
   • They refused to enter and shut the door to others.
   • This is the ultimate danger of false and misguided religion.
   • That is why Jesus was so inviting to sinners and so condemning of the Pharisees.

Conclusion
Pilgrim’s Progress by John Bunyan. Two of the characters that Christian meets on his way to the Celestial City are Formalist and Hypocrisy.

The danger of legalism and hypocrisy is real in every generation.

The only way to prevent it is to keep our eyes on Jesus and walk humbly and obediently with God.