

WHEN HYPOCRISY COMES TO CHURCH // Luke 13:10-17

Message from the series, The Gospel of Luke

This passage is an account of Jesus's fourth and final period of teaching in the synagogue—a pattern has been established with his previous visits: things are coming to a head and hypocrisy is going to be exposed.

A hypocrite is someone who is fake, a phony. It does not refer to someone who is merely struggling with sin—that's all of us. A hypocrite is someone living a lifestyle of fakeness.

What does it look like when hypocrisy is in the room? When has it invaded the church? We are all subject to the possibility of being hypocritical, so we should be wary of hypocrisy in our own lives and church.

1. Religious hypocrisy fails to see the true and deepest needs of people (v. 10-13)

The woman in this passage comes into the church and goes unnoticed—except by Jesus. Jesus took the initiative, and she was healed immediately and praised God. Similarly, people are bent over in their sin, and Jesus heals them so they stand right side up. There is both physical and spiritual healing. Religious hypocrites may focus on the physical and not see the true, deeper need of spiritual healing.

2. Religious hypocrisy responds with sinful anger to spiritual success (v. 14a)

The ruler of the synagogue is not necessarily mad that someone was healed, but that some came into "his" territory and usurped his authority. In the church, Jesus is the ruler and he gets the glory for the lives that are being healed—religious hypocrites are going to respond in anger because they aren't in control. These hypocrites don't want Jesus changing their church.

3. Religious hypocrisy keeps a human schedule for compassion ministry (v. 14b)

The ruler of the synagogue doesn't address Jesus because he is intimidated—instead, he scolds the people for not coming on the "right" days for healing. Woe be unto us if we try to fit God into our calendar. Instead, we should put him in charge of our calendar. We should see our compassion ministry as emergency room work—a need for compassion and spiritual healing is urgent and not to be put off.

4. Religious hypocrisy stands in shameful opposition to the work of the Lord (v. 15-17)

Every day is a good day to meet Jesus—especially Sunday. We ought to make it very easy for people to come into the church, to hear the gospel, to make it easy for Jesus to deal with people. Religious hypocrites should recognize that no matter how hard you try to stop the work of Jesus, he will always have his way—no opposition to his work will stand. This woman's loosening is irreversible as is the spiritual healing that Jesus offers.

We should pray: keep us from being numbered among the hypocrites, let us not respond with anger but with rejoicing over spiritual success, let us not hold God to our calendar but put it into his hands.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do we look for both spiritual and physical needs? Do we feel better equipped to think about one or the other?
2. Religious hypocrisy can lead to anger. Where are some other signs that we have gotten the wrong idea about "our" territory?
3. What practices would help us to relinquish control of our calendar and our ideas about how and when God ought to work?