**Mike Hipes – Facebook Lesson, September 4, 2020**

Good afternoon!

While cutting my lawn one day I happen to hit an anthill causing a panic in the ant community. I also noticed different bugs from time to time in the tall grass moving as I approached their area. Some made it to freedom and others didn’t. At one point I came upon a praying mantis, so I stopped moving forward. It just remained sitting on the grass in front of the running mower, unintimidated. Insect or not, who could run over something that was in prayer. The more I pondered it, I thought, does this bug pray more than I do? After all, it's praying all the time, even when its life is on the line! I tell people that they ought to be praying all the time in every circumstance. Do I? Do we as Christians tend to say, “do as we say but not as we do?” You know, I believe that one of the biggest deterrents of the Christian life to the outside world is hypocrisy! We certainly see it in the political world, as well as in life in general. People say one thing that we should be doing, only to turn around and say and do the opposite. For Christians, this attitude devalues the message of Christ!

Jesus address this in Matthew 23:1-13

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“Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, 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. 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. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites...”

Did you catch it? When it came to these leaders, what was truly driving them to be seated in the place of Moses? They love the place of honor! They were in love with power. They were intoxicated with words of praise and respect from others. There were attracted to those who were telling them how awesome they were! They wanted to be placed apart from the rest, exalted above the others. But Jesus begins to drive home the point by saying “you are all brothers.” You see the ground is level at the foot of the cross! Only Christ is above all! He goes on to say, “the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” They paraded themselves saying all the right things to do, but would not lift a finger to do it. Hypocrisy!

The Pharisees were all about presenting themselves better than others around them, while inwardly and privately they were very different. You may have heard about the bleeding Pharisees. These were the ones who would close their eyes when a woman came into view on the street for the reason of wanting to remain pure in heart at all costs. Because of this practice, they would at times walk onto a wall, and cut their heads. Of course, they would then leave the dried blood in their forehead for all to see. They loved to be seen as holier than others, and therefore honored above others! They said they were being humble but in reality, they wanted to be honored! Hypocrisy!

As Christians, do we practice what we preach? Paul the apostle, many times preached what he practiced! How would that go if we did that? Do we have the same standard for ourselves as we do for our kids? Do we expect the same of ourselves as we do our leaders? If we are seeking honor it begins with becoming a servant. If we seek to be exalted it starts with being humble. If we are seeking to be people of integrity, we must stop the hypocrisy and be honest with ourselves, others, and God! Remember the song “Humble Yourself In The Sight Of The Lord” based off of James 4:10. Let’s be humble and transparent in Christ and He will lift us up!

Have a great weekend,

Mike