

Mark 6:52—7:12

June 24, 2018

Sermon—

The CBS show 60 minutes said this when promoting a show about a famous art forger—

“He could paint with the best of them. He could lie even better. Wolfgang Beltracchi fooled the experts for decades in an art scam that netted him and his partners millions of dollars. Those experts hate him, he says, because he was too good for them to catch. Yet many art experts acknowledge he is the most successful art forger in this and, perhaps, any other time in history. Beltracchi talks to Bob Simon and shows him how he created the works...that conned the (art) connoisseurs for a 60 Minutes (episode).

Beltracchi, schooled and talented, painted works supposedly by artists like Max Ernst, Raoul Dufy and Fernand Leger. But he didn't copy the artists' known works; he painted originals -- what he thought they might have painted if inclined. Thus, he created new, previously undiscovered works by old artists, aping the strokes of the artists so perfectly no one could tell they were fakes. He also forged works that had once existed but had disappeared for years. He fooled even the best experts by carefully using the canvasses and paint available in the period and creating authentic-looking, aged dealer labels. Beltracchi also had a good story: his wife's grandfather had hidden his art collection away before WWII, after the war, she inherited it and that is where all these unknown works by famous artists suddenly appeared from.

His fakes wound up in catalogs, in museums and on the walls of the rich; he eventually wound up in jail.

Jamie Martin, a top forensic art analyst, says of Beltracchi: "His fakes are among the best fakes I've seen in my career. Very convincing. Very well done." Martin says if forensic experts had examined the works more closely, perhaps he would have been unmasked earlier.

That doesn't make the galleries, auction houses and their experts, some of whom have been sued by those who bought Beltracchi fakes, feel any better."

His fakes were the best fakes—but even the best fake is still a fake. What make Beltracchi's fakes look so authentic is that he did not just copy the masters he copied the way the masters painted right down to the direction of the brushstrokes.

And he swindled people and museums out of millions of dollars. Because even the best fakes are still fakes.

Fake art only costs money—fake religion costs souls. That is what is at issue today. Jesus confronts hypocrites and hypocrisy.

As we continue to travel across northern Judea with Jesus, he exposes some religious fakes. These are some good fakes. These are some respected fakes, but they are still just fakes.

Good fakes are still fakes. Jesus is not fooled by a fake.

PROP: Jesus is not fooled by religious hypocrisy.

“When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. ⁵⁴ And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him ⁵⁵ and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶ And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

7 Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, ² they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. ³ (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, ⁴ and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) ⁵ And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” ⁶ And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

“ ‘This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
⁷ in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’

⁸ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

⁹ And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to

establish your tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ ¹¹ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban” ’ (that is, given to God)— ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.” Mark 6:53—7:13

PRAY

Jesus is causing quite a stir. All over northern Judea his very presence creates a crowd. Wherever he goes, people throng to him. They swarm to him because they are without hope and needs heaps of help. The ill and infirmed from all over the land come to him, meet him and leave healed.

His actions, though they be in an insignificant corner of Israel is starting to gain attention the capital. The word about this young itinerant Galilean preacher was starting to get around.

So much so that the Jerusalem—HQ—the seat of all religious authority are taking note. A delegation from Jerusalem traveled the 90 miles to come and confront Jesus. Instead of congratulating him for helping so many people they that they could not, scribes and Pharisees come to oppose him and to put him back in his place.

But they are religious fakes.

As Mark continues to unfold we are going to find that the Pharisees come to him and regularly challenge him—especially when he gets to Jerusalem. But that is later.

I don't want you to think that the Pharisees were fools—at this point in time, their tradition dates back more than 300 years. The Pharisees existed to keep the nation from the past holocaust of exile. They knew that the nation almost didn't make it back from exile and they were sent into exile because the nation wandered off into idolatry.

But over centuries, the Pharisees elevated human tradition over the word of God.

That is why they were fake. Good fakes, but fakes just the same. And Jesus is not fooled.

As they come and talk to Jesus we get from Jesus two signs of religious hypocrisy. We are going to find that hypocrisy grows best in the soil of religious tradition.

1. Hypocrisy: Right Words are NOT Enough (7:1-8)

You will have noticed when we read the section together that the issue here seems to be washing before a meal. If you have kids that is the perpetual challenge. Wash your hands!

But the Pharisees are not interested hand washing for cleanliness but religious ceremony.

Vs. 2,

“they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. ³ (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, ⁴ and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.)”

The washings had ceremonial significance. And according to tradition, if someone did not wash before eating—they were defiled. A defilement that doesn't rest in the dirt on the hands but a religious defilement making someone unworthy.

A defiled person was not worthy before God.

But the time of Jesus the traditions of washing went on to 186 pages that is what Mark is talking about when he talks about the washings from the marketplace, cups, pots, copper vessels, and dining couches.

You see, the Pharisees are saying—your followers are ritually unclean! And since you are their leader, so are you.

Here is the catch.

Nowhere in the OT are the people required to wash like the Pharisees are talking about. The priests are before entering the temple. But not the people before they eat.

That is what is going on—why don't your disciples observe the traditions of the elders? What is wrong with them?

Jesus doesn't answer their questions. They would have been shocked by his answer. These people were the most respected people in all the land. In this region 95% of the folk were illiterate, these were among the few who were educated, and told the unwashed masses what to do.

But not Jesus.

Vs, 6:

And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

“ ‘This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
7 in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’

Jesus goes chapter and verse and says—you are hypocrites—religious actors playing a part. You know nothing of what it means to please God. You know all the right words but your heart and your life is far, far from me.

Bam. He calls them right out.

He knew they were fake even though they seemed real.

You see, they honored God with their words but dishonored him with their lives. They said all the

right things, taught many good things but did not really love God.

Whenever you see the word 'heart' in the Bible the idea is not what is beating in your chest right now, but who your identity. You can harbor secret desires, live double lives, hide bitterness inside and no one knows.

You hide those in your heart.

These Pharisees had all the trappings of religion but none of the substance. They were religious hypocrites. They were not insincere they were blind and sincere.

A good fake even to themselves.

Oh, that is a frightening place to be.

They could fool others, but not Jesus.

This is not just a first century problem. This is a problem that has plagued the church from that time until now.

Religious hypocrisy is especially apt to strike at leaders. How easy it is to call for others to do things that you won't do.

In fact, in the economy of things, church leaders are the ones most apt to be spiritual hypocrites. The Pharisees were the leaders of the people but they did not serve but expected to be served.

How easy it is to preach all the right things have a heart that is far from God. It is the not so subtle challenge that every church leader faces.

Religious hypocrisy is deadly—but Jesus is not fooled. It is easy to:

- To point people toward the goodness of God but to meditate but little on that goodness.
- To extol the grandeurs of his grace but have little experience of real grace.
- To preach the Word in public but not go to the Word in private.
- To speak of trusting God and not trust God yourself.
- To say to others that following Jesus is worth it and not really believe it yourself.
- To voice the necessity of the confession of sins and steadfastly refuse to confess yourself.
- To preach of the love of God but not have much love for God.

Religious hypocrisy is a great temptation for church leaders of every kind. The great preacher from the last century, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said much the same thing in watershed book *Preachers and Preaching*,

“Professionalism is the greatest of all dangers in the ministry. It is something preachers have to fight as long as they live. Professionalism is, to me, hateful anywhere, everywhere. I abominated it as much when I was practicing medicine as I do now. There is a type of medical practitioner who is more professional than able. He has all the airs and graces, and knows all ‘the things to do’ and ‘the things to

say', but is often a bad doctor. The greater the doctor the less evidence there will be of this mere professionalism. The same thing is infinitely more true in the realm of the Christian ministry.

Let me explain more explicitly what I mean. Nothing worse can happen to a preacher than that he should reach a stage in which his main reason for preaching on Sunday morning is that he has been announced to do so. That means that preaching to him has just become his job. He has lost contact with what originally moved him and urged him; it is now a matter of routine. If such a man really asked himself honestly as he walked up the pulpit steps: 'Why am I doing this?' he would have to give as his answer, 'I have been announced to do this, therefore I must do it.'" D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

The worst reason to preach is that you were merely on the schedule. If the word of God is not alive to a preacher and grace is not amazing and Jesus is not wonderful, it would be better that he stay home and not climb the pulpit steps.

No one might be able to tell but the Lord is not fooled. A good fake is still a fake.

Your leaders are aware of the temptation toward religious hypocrisy—please pray for us.

Pastors and preachers are not the only ones who are susceptible to religious hypocrisy.

How easy it is to dole out good advice but—

- Read the Word
- Pray to God
- Trust in Jesus
- Grace is Amazing
- Forgive others

And as those words tumble out of your mouth you know that they are just words. When we are willing to say the right words so that others might think we are something we are not is deadly.

No one might be able to tell but the Lord is not fooled. A good fake is still a fake.

The Pharisees were hypocrites not because they were insincere—but because they were blind and sincere. A fake even to themselves.

But A good fake is still just a fake.

Say the right words without the right heart behind them and you are a hypocrite.

A good fake is still just a fake. The Lord is not fooled.

Not only are the right words not enough but another sign of hypocrisy is when you use religion as an excuse for disobedience.

2. Hypocrisy #2: Using religion as an excuse for disobedience

This is what Jesus says the Pharisees do,

Vs. 9,

⁹ And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!”

Jesus comes right at them telling them specifically how they reject truth to do their own thing. This is just one example. He could have chosen many others.

The charge from Christ is like this—

You know that the 5th commandment is to honor your father and mother. You hold that up as truth but you contradict and contravene the truth. How?

Vs. 11,

¹¹ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban” ’ (that is, given to God)— ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

What is he saying?

Corban means offering in Hebrew. Here is what the Pharisees did—if they declared all their money to be an offering (Corban) then when they died all of their funds would go to the temple. But in the meantime they could use it as they please.

Do you see what they are doing?

If their parents are in need of help and financially destitute the Pharisees would say, "I'd really love to help you but all of what I have is Corban. Sorry. Far be it from me to disobey the teaching of the Lord. You wouldn't want me to do that would you?"

And all the while they are able to spend money on themselves for their own wants and needs. They used the Word of God as an excuse for disobedience.

Vs. 13,

"thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do."

Frightening. Their teaching and tradition makes void the word of God. The commands of God are set aside for the commands of men.

A good fake is still just a fake.

All of us to some degree or another is fake. None of us in this room are exactly who we should be. True—but that is not hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy is putting on an outward show to hide private rottenness. This is what these Pharisees did. They made a show of obedience but at their core they were rotten. They were saying 'Corban' to serve themselves and not the Lord.

Hypocrisy is playing the role of knowing God but not really knowing him at all.

How might we put on an outward show to hide private rottenness?

There are a great many ways—

- We can talk a lot about wanting to be a good steward with our money and really use that as an excuse for being stingy.
- We can talk to other people a lot about what God is teaching us through his word and it really be just talk.
- We can hold others to a standard that we ourselves don't keep.
- We can hide disobedience behind words like, "I don't have grace for that." OR "You don't really understand my situation." OR "I'm not sure I really understand."

- We can talk about the truth of the scripture without applying it much to our lives.

- We can judge others quickly and jump to conclusions and give grace to ourselves.

You might be able to fool others, but the Lord is not fooled because even the best fake is just a fake.

That is what is so refreshing about Jesus—he is no fake. He came to look for those who need help and confront those who think they don't.

He does not put on airs.

Jesus has no time for those who think they don't need any help—and loads of time for those who know they do need help. Following Jesus is for those who admit they need help.

That is one definition of what it means to be a Christian—a follower of Jesus—we know we need help.

In the past—we have come to him and said, “I don’t want to religious games—even my best efforts are no good. Even my best religious efforts will be fake. I need you.”

In the present—we know we continue to need help from Jesus. Where would we be without him.

The reason we are tempted toward hypocrisy is because it feels safe. We can trick people into thinking a certain way about us—it seems safe. But it is not.

Why?

Because even the best fakes are still fakes and the Lord is not fooled.

Here is the good news—Jesus came to save us from the power of empty religion—you don’t have to play the game. We all know it is fake.

Some of you are so used to being fake because that is what you think it takes for people to like and accept you. That may be your background.

But that is not who Jesus is. He is not fooled, he knows who you really are—and welcomes you to himself just the same.

You don’t have to be fake with him.

PRAY

[24] Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, [25] to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. Jude 24–25