

Don't Settle For A Pseudo-Transformation Matthew 23:1-12

Intro: Two weeks ago we talked about transformation from the idea of morphing. How a creeping caterpillar becomes a butterfly; how a sinner becomes a saint.

Today in Matthew 23 Jesus gives three warning signs that indicate if our transformation; our metamorphosis is authentic or not, if we are displaying authentic transformation or **Pseudo-Transformation**. Pseudo-Transformation is transformation this is the result of our trying to be like Christ in our own power rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to change us from the inside. It isn't necessarily a bad thing to "try to be like Christ" but when we do it always results in problems – problems in our own life and problems in the lives of those around us.

Jesus uses the scribes and Pharisees to point out three warning signs that you are living Pseudo-Transformation. The scribes and the Pharisees had assumed authority that was never given to them. They had seated themselves in Moses' seat but no place in Scripture was this group ever given the authority to rule the way they did. However, since they based their rule in the Word of God the people were obliged to obey their teaching but not their man made traditions.

Today we are going to look at those **Three Warning Signs**.

[Ready Matt 23:1-12/pray/Dismiss Jr. Church]

Hank was a cranky guy. He didn't smile easily, and when he did, the smile often had a cruel edge to it, coming at someone's expense. He had knack for discovering island of bad news in

oceans of happiness. He could always find a cloud where others saw a silver lining.

Hank rarely affirmed anyone. He operated on the assumption that if you compliment someone, it might lead to a swelled head, so he worked to make sure everyone stayed humble...his ministry – he thought – was cranial downsizing.

His native tongue was complaint. He had mastered the fine art of judgment and disapproval to perfection. Although he was a faithful member of a Baptist church his entire life, he was never satisfied.

A deacon once asked him, “Hank, are you happy?”

Hank paused to think about the question for a moment and then replied, “Yeah!”

“Well, tell your face,” the deacon said. But so far as anybody knew, Hank’s face never did find out about his hidden happiness.

Sometimes Hank’s joylessness produced unintended joy for others, but most of the time it was simply annoying.

There was a time when his primary complaints centered on the music in the church. “It’s too loud!” Hank protested – to the staff, the pastor, the deacons, even the ushers and eventually he would complain to innocent visitors to the church.

When that began to take place the pastor and head deacon had to step in and tell Hank that complaining to strangers was inappropriate and he would have to restrict his complaints to a very small circle of church leaders. That thought the pastor and deacon would be the end of it.

Until one day a few weeks later the church secretary poked her head into the pastor's office and said that OSHA – the Occupational Safety and Health Administration – was on there to see him. The man from OSHA said "I'm here to check out a complaint." The pastor tried to figure out who on the staff would have called OSHA over a church problem. When the man began to talk about decibel levels at airports and rock concerts the pastor began to figure out just what had happened.

The pastor began to tell the man about Hank and that he didn't actually work at the church, but was stopped, "If anyone calls – whether or not they work here – we're obligated to investigate," said the man.

Sometimes Hank's joylessness ended in comedy, but more often than not it produced sadness. His children didn't know him. His son had a wonderful story about how he met his wife at a dance, but he never told his father because Hank didn't approve of dancing.

Hank could not effectively love his wife or his children or people outside his family. He was easily irritated. He had little use for the poor and a casual contempt for those who were different than he was. Whatever capacity he once might have had for joy, wonder or gratitude withered. As he critiqued and judged and complained, the more his soul got a little smaller each year.

Though Hank claimed to be born again – and many in the church said they remember the day he came forward and received Christ as is Savior – Hank had not changed. He was once a cranky young guy and he grew up to be a cranky old guy. What was even more troubling was that no one was surprised that he hadn't. It

was as if everyone just accepted that fact that saved or not Hank was just always going to be cranky.

Most of us want to be changed, to become more like Christ. The question is, “Is it happening?” According to Gallup 84 million American – almost 1/3 the population – say they have made a personal commitment to Christ as their Savior. But, as William Iverson writes, “*A pound of meat would surely be affected by a quarter pound of salt. If this is real Christianity, the ‘salt of the earth,’ where is the effect of which Jesus spoke?*”

Even though the Bible clearly teaches that “**...if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new**” (2 Cor 5:17) there is all too often very little “new” visible in the church. Why is that? Well, according to John Ortberg, in his book “*The Life You Always Wanted*” it is because to many Christians don’t really expect authentic transformation to take place. Instead they have settled for what he calls “Pseudo-Transformation.” That means once a person gets saved they know how they think Christians should act and behave so they try in their own power to be Christian rather than let the Holy Spirit transform them from the inside out into Christ’s image.

Jesus gives us three signs that we have settled for **Pseudo-Transformation**.

What are the **Warning Signs That You Have Settled For Pseudo-Transformation?**

The First Warning Sign Is That You Have A...

I. Faulty Concept Of Righteousness Vv. 1-3

- A. To the Pharisee, righteousness meant outward conformity to the Law of God
 - 1. They ignored the inward condition of the heart.
 - 2. Religion consisted in obeying numerous rules that governed every detail of life, including what you did with the spices in your cupboard (Matt. 23:23-24).
 - 3. The Pharisees were careful to say the right words and follow the right ceremonies, but they did not *inwardly* obey the Law.
 - 4. God desired truth in the inward parts (Ps. 51:6).
 - 5. To preach or teach or even say you believe one thing and practice another is only hypocrisy.
- B. What God desired from those who profess to be his then and still desires today of those who claim him as their father is obedience
 - 1. Obedience to the teachings of the entire Bible
 - 2. You might say that isn't possible – and you are correct if you are trying to be righteous in your own power
 - 3. But if you have received Christ as your savior then you have the Holy Spirit of God living inside you who, if you will only follow you can overcome the flesh that controls us.
 - 4. Paul said to the Galatians that they ***“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”*** (Gal 5:16)
- C. But obedience requires us to do what the Word of God tells us to do
 - 1. James said ***“be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”***(Jam 1:22).
 - 2. John tells us that ***“this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That,***

as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it” (2 John1:6).

- D. There is one good way to know for sure that you may have fallen for **Pseudo-Transformation**
 - 1. Paul tells the church In Philippi that if they will only do ***“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you”*** (Phil. 4:9).
 - 2. If you don’t have a peace in your life and you feel like you are always “Trying” to live the righteous life but always failing
- E. There is a way to overcome this sign; it happens when you first receive Christ as your savior
 - 1. Romans 10:9-10 says, ***“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”***
 - 2. Paul warns the Corinthians to ***“Awake to righteousness, and sin not...”*** (1 Cor15:34).
- F. You can avoid this warning sign by simply trusting Christ as your savior and then begin Walking in the Spirit rather than trying to live a life that appears to be righteous.

The First Warning Sign is a Faulty Concept of Righteousness, the Second Warning Sign of Pseudo-Transformation is a...

II. Faulty Concept Of Service V. 4

- A. To scribes and the Pharisees, ministry meant handing down laws to the people and adding to their burdens.
 - 1. In other words, the Pharisees were harder on others than they were on themselves.
 - 2. The Pharisees were quick to point out what needed to be done, but they did not participate.

3. They weren't helpful; they were indifferent.
 - a) When someone is indifferent it means they are uncaring, unresponsive to the needs of others, apathetic, uninterested, and unconcerned
- B. This warning sign may be showing up in your life if you...
 1. Have grown indifferent to the sin in your life,
 2. Or to the lost condition of your family, your friends, your neighbors and the world.
 3. Take our one cent for one sent campaign going on to raise a little money for the missions trip – you give all kind of earthly reason why you won't take part but not one of them has anything to do with the lost souls that just might be touched because we are going.
- C. How is this Warning Sign recognized? Here are a couple of ways:
 1. From time to time you will volunteer to do something and when no one volunteers to help you complain about the peoples lack of interest but the next time someone else sets up some program you don't even consider helping them
 2. Or, like Hank, you find yourself complaining about everything in the church but won't make an effort to step in and try to be part of the solution – you would rather set and soak in the chair finding fault with everyone else's service but can't see you lack of service is causing more harm.
- D. Let me make it more personal
 1. You help with the annual consignment sale each year.
 - a) We ask for help and a few – the same few every year – come an help
 - b) But for the most part the better part of the work is done by those who organize it.
 2. Then the craft bazaar.

- a) Those who organize it seem to do all much of the work and a few – normally the same few who helped with the consignment sale – come and help the organizers
- b) But in both cases if you aren’t working that particular event you are not seen, you won’t even support those in your church by being a shopper
3. Upward basketball is another one – it is the same few who work their tails off for 10 or 12 weeks trying to reach the community for Christ
 - a) Even if you aren’t involved it would be a great improvement to the program if others of you showed up on game days just to visit with the families sitting in the chairs watching
 - b) After all we are trying to win our neighbor’s to Christ which every one of us ought to have a part in
4. Take tonight’s spaghetti diner as another example – what message are you sending the teens if you don’t come back to support their efforts?
 - a) You see the diner isn’t about spaghetti or fund-raising it is about Your Teens – the youth department of your church having an activity that you can be part of.
 - b) Time and time again our teens do something like this and few if any of the rest of the church show their support by taking part and what question do the teens ask Pastor Rob?
 - c) ***“Why doesn’t the church care?”***
 - d) That is sad when our youth pastor has to answer that kind of question about professing Christians in their own church

5. They will be having a car wash in a few weeks – the last time they had one only a couple of you came and showed your support – I hope this time all of you will.
- E. The problem is this; some people believe that because they come to church on Sunday morning and put their tithe in the plate they have served God – all they really have done is try to bribe God in to giving them a pass for not serving.

The First Warning Sign is a Faulty Concept of Righteousness, the Second Warning Sign of Pseudo-Transformation is a Faulty Concept Of Service and the final Warning Sign of Pseudo-Transformation is a...

III. Faulty Concept Of Spirituality Vv. 5-12

- A. The Pharisees served and held their Spirituality up in front of people just to be noticed (v. 5a).
 1. The Pharisees proudly and arrogantly displayed their "spirituality" (v. 5b-7).
 2. The Pharisees used their position to get praise for themselves.
 3. They were prideful.
 4. Humbly serving is not thinking less of yourself; It is thinking of yourself less.
 5. A true servant of God seeks God first, then seeks the goodwill of others, and thinks of self last.
 6. We must be humble servants because we are all students (v. 8); we are all siblings (v. 9); we are all servants (v. 10-12).
 7. Paul told the Philippians to, ***“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”*** (Phil 2:3).
- B. I know this sounds like I am talking about humility but it really has to do with Spirituality.

1. These scribes and Pharisees were characterized by a lack of spirituality, by the absence of a genuine desire to please God.
 - a) The motivation for all their showy religious activities and **deeds** was **to be noticed by men**.
 - b) Everything is done for outward show rather than from the heart, for fleshly gratification of ego rather than selfless service to God and to others in His name.
 - c) Their purpose is to glorify themselves, not God.
2. People like this, Jude says, are “**sensual [worldly-minded], having not the Spirit**” (Jude 19).
 - a) They follow their natural appetites and ambitions without restraint or shame,
 - b) considering themselves to be the spiritually elite with a favored status before God
3. To flaunt their religiosity the scribes and Pharisees would **broaden their phylacteries [fa-lac-ta-ries], and lengthen the tassels of their garments**.
 - a) **These Phylacteries** were small square boxes made of leather from a ceremonially clean animal.
 - b) After being dyed black, the leather was sewn into a box using twelve stitches, each stitch representing one of the twelve tribes of Israel.
 - c) Placed into each phylactery were copies of Exodus 13:1-10 and 13:11-16 and of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21.
 - d) The phylactery worn on the head or on the left arm next to their heart had four compartments, each containing one of the texts on a small piece of parchment.
4. It came to be a symbol of the Jew’s spirituality

- a) Rather than wearing their phylacteries only at prayer time, as the custom was for most Jewish men, the many, especially the scribes and Pharisees, wore them continually as a sign of superior spirituality.
- b) They also would **broaden their phylacteries**, making them larger than normal to signify supposed greater devotion to God.
- c) There once were two deacons who were always in disagreement on who was the most spiritual. Each normally carried a thin line Bible to church every service. One Sunday, however, one deacon carried in his Ryrie Study Bible he used at home for his personal study. The following Sunday the other deacon, wanting to demonstrate that he was more Spiritual, brought his Scofield Study Bible with the expanded notes. Not wanting to be out done the other deacon the next Sunday carried in his family Bible that normally laid on their coffee table.

The following Sunday the other deacon was absent from service. The pastor got up at the beginning of the service and said "Folks we need to pray for Deacon Jim, he was arrested last night for defacing the marble statue in front of St Paul's Catholic Church down the street. Seems he was trying to chisel the marble Bible out of St Paul's hands.

- d) This was the way it was in Jesus day the size of their phylactery determined their Spirituality
5. In a similar way and for the same purpose, they would **lengthen the tassels of their garments.**

- a) As with phylacteries, the use of **tassels** had its origin in Scripture.
- b) The purpose of both the **phylacteries** and the **tassels** was supposedly to remind the people of God and His Word and to set them apart as His people (cf. Zech. 8:23).
- c) Both of those outward symbols were intended to be inward reminders and motivators.
- d) Because of their misuse, the broadened phylacteries and lengthened tassels became marks of carnality rather than spirituality

Conclusion: Like Hank there are Christians in every church who say they have received Christ but there is no observable transformation to be seen in their lives.