Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 74: Some Woes

Day 511: Hypocrisy versus Integrity

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, "The experts in the law and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat. Therefore pay attention to what they tell you and do it. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy loads, hard to carry, and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing even to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by people, for they make their phylacteries wide and their tassels long. They love the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues and elaborate greetings in the marketplaces and to have people call them 'Rabbi.' But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher and you are all brothers. And call no one your 'father' on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:1-12)

Don't just act out your faith – live it. Embrace integrity, not hypocrisy. Do not do things just for show, but for reality. Be pure in heart, not seeking adulation of others. Do not strive to put yourself above others, but serve, as Christ Himself came to serve. If others are being hypocrites, don't follow them.

Are there ways you have been hypocritical (doing something just for show, or against what you truly believe)? If so, describe some of them, and see how you can act with integrity instead.

Share as you feel led.

Day 512: Gatekeeping

"But woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You keep locking people out of the kingdom of heaven! For you neither enter nor permit those trying to enter to go in." (Matthew 23:13-14)

How can I lock someone out of the kingdom of heaven? How can I gain them entry?

What great questions.

What is the kingdom of heaven?

Where relationship with God is joined, and the love of God is experienced. Where we live in shalom – with God, with ourselves, with each other.

What a wonderful definition. To lock someone out of the kingdom of heaven by your definition, I would have to

a.) Prevent relationship with God
b.) Prevent experiencing the love of God
c.) Prevent shalom.

Likewise, to gain entry to the kingdom of God, I need to

a.) Present a relationship with God
b.) Share the experience of the love of God
c.) Facilitate shalom.

The second is the task of the people of God.

How do you present a relationship with God? How do you share the experience of the love of God? How do you facilitate shalom? Such is the task of a disciple of Christ. You are a gatekeeper for the Kingdom of God.

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 513: A child of hell.

"Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You cross land and sea to make one convert, and when you get one, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves!" (Matthew 23:15)

How do you make someone a child of hell? That sounds hideous!

It is very, very sad. First,

a.) Prevent them having a relationship with God
b.) Prevent them experiencing the love of God
c.) Prevent them even knowing about shalom.

Then, teach them how to do the same to others. They will soon become a child of despair and death, delighting in seeing it in others.

How do you counter-act them?

By being a child of Christ, as per day 512.

Being a child of Christ, a child of heaven, takes perseverance and steadfastness. It takes insistence that a relationship with God is not only possible, but tangible and life-affecting. That the love of God is directly impactful on ones' life. That shalom is real and can be pursued for the benefit of all. That the three are bound together, for the benefit of all humanity.

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 514: Godly eyes

"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple is bound by nothing. But whoever swears by the gold of the temple is bound by the oath.' Blind fools! Which is greater, the gold or the temple that makes the gold sacred? And, 'Whoever swears by the altar is bound by nothing. But if anyone swears by the gift on it he is bound by the oath.' You are blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and the one who dwells in it. And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and the one who sits on it." (Matthew 23:16-22)

"Keep the main thing the main thing." Do not judge by worldly eyes (gold is more valuable than stone, therefore an oath on gold is more binding than an oath on a temple of stone, the gift is more costly than the altar, etc.). Rather, look with Godly eyes – be bound by your commitment to God, and live accordingly. Do not swear by anything else but let your 'yes' be 'yes', and your 'no' be 'no' – anything else is hypocritical and an act of a child of hell. Live with integrity as a child of Christ.

Live with integrity as a child of Christ, a gatekeeper of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is giving us a very challenging yet very loving and kind path of life. What challenges do you face in living this way? What joys?

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 515: Appropriate Focus

"Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You give a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, yet you neglect what is more important in the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness! You should have done these things without neglecting the others. Blind guides! You strain out a gnat yet swallow a camel!" (Matthew 23:23-24)

It can be so easy to get focused on the minutia, the ends of the roots of the tree, and forget that there is a forest, yet alone a tree. While it is ok (and can be a Godly blessing) to focus on how the tips of the roots interact with the various organisms in the dirt around it, to get a full understanding you must keep in mind that the functioning of the root is to give health to the tree, and the tree to create a healthy forest.

In the same way, all the small and intricate ways of following perceived commands of God (such as, in this case, tithing), must be done in alignment with the larger desires of God – justice, mercy, faithfulness, love. If they are not in alignment, then they become perverted and work against God's actual desires. If they are in alignment, then they become more and more powerful expressions of those larger themes, becoming, ultimately, intimate and individualized expressions of the love of God.

Everything you do reflects who you are – and if you are an Image of Christ, a baptized disciple, it reflects how you show Christ. Reflect on all the small things you do, all the little things you say, your 'trivial' words and actions. Reflect on what you focus on, what you obsess over, what is important to you. How do your words and actions reflect the love of God?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 516: The Christ

"Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside may become clean too!

"Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs that look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of the bones of the dead and of everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you look righteous to people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Matthew 23:25-28)

Don't focus on outward appearances – focus on your inward self; focus on living with integrity. Order your life as one pursuing facilitating as many people as possible to find the Kingdom of God (day 512). Be brave, trust God, walk in love.

Then the light of Christ will shine from you, and others will see it and give glory to your Father in Heaven.

Reflect on the above. Does it require any changes to how you approach life? What is needed to make such changes?

Share with your fellow explorers as you feel appropriate.

Day 517: Rest

Rest, receive nourishment, feed both body and soul. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. Dedicate this day to God. Worship! Fill yourself with Light. In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you. Celebrate, Rejoice, Give thanks, talk and walk with God. Be in shalom. Love. Pursue what is healthiest. Order your life as one pursuing facilitating as many people as possible to find the Kingdom of God. Be brave, trust God, walk in love.