

Lent #1 - Appearances

Icebreaker Question

Typically, what do people usually want others to think about them? (Josh mentioned being a good person, having a strong faith)

Has there been a time in your life when you cared a lot about what people thought about you? When was that, and why do you think that was important to you? Do you think much about it now?

Sermon Discussion

Big Idea: a life giving faith is a result of inward transformation not outward piety. Is there a relationship between these two approaches? What leads to inward transformation? Is there any value to more visible practices of faith?

Read Matthew 23:1-4. What do you think of Jesus instruction to “be careful to do everything they (the Pharisees) tell you.” Pastor Josh mentioned that some scholars think he was saying this ‘tongue in cheek’ - why might they say that? Is Jesus advocating a faith made up of following rules?

Josh spoke of a faith that lifts us up, not weighs us down. What are some things in your journey of following Jesus that have been life-giving? (for example can recall times when reading your Bible, or praying, or meeting with other Christians have been particularly positive influences in your faith? how about now?)

Read Matthew 23:5-7. Can you imagine that wearing these leather scripture boxes or tassels may have initially been a sincere act of devotion? Is the motivation behind some of these kinds of practices (ancient and modern) the more important thing? How is sitting in places of honour different from the others?

What are some modern behaviours that people might use to “show off” their faith like the Pharisees did back in Jesus’ day? Can you give an example from your own life when you fell into that temptation to make yourself look good in something related to your faith?

Read Matthew 23:8-12. Pastor Josh reminded us of the context for these verses - mere days before Jesus’ crucifixion. How is that helpful? How do you interpret verse 9?

Josh contrasted how the Pharisees drew attention to themselves with Jesus’ instruction in Matt. 5:16 to let our light shine so others would give glory to God. What are some practical examples of how that might happen? How does the word servanthood apply here?

Read Woe #1 in Matthew 23:13. What do you feel about Josh’s explanation that Jesus is angry here? How did Josh explain that it was also an expression of love? (love for the crowds who are being deceived and for the leaders who are lost in these rules) Contrast the ‘kingdom of heaven’ that Jesus is speaking of with the system the Pharisees promote.

Pastor Josh made a comment about a tendency we sometimes have to “shy away from new experiences, new insights, new expressions of faith all because we have our routines, our practices and our way of understanding faith in a way that is comfortable to us.” What are some examples of new ways that you or others may consider which would enhance your following of Jesus?

Have you considered some way that you can observe this Lenten season that might enhance or deepen your faith?