

Outcasts Part 7

The Faith of the Pharisees

Matthew 23:1-36

Memory Verses: Matthew 23:3

MANUSCRIPTS

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Let's play a game. I'm going to put on a mask and you are going to shout out to me who it is okay. **Puts on different masks.** So, with all of those masks, did you notice a theme? What was it? Villains right? Bad Guys. I mean especially that last one right? Come on guys, I'm joking. Joe's a good guy and in all honesty we should be praying for him. I just thought that it would be funny.

So let me ask you a question; if the Gospels were were seen as a movie or a comic book, who would the bad guys be? Some may say the Romans, but nah. It's clearly the pharisees, and the scribes right? It was the religious leaders of Israel who saw Jesus and his followers as a threat to their power and traditions.

If there was any doubt I want us to look at **Matthew 23:1-36.** These guys were so bad that Jesus dedicates a whole chapter of the Gospels just to ream them out. **And look at the names he calls them. He calls them children of hell, blind guides, blind fools, blind men, hypocrites, whitewashed tombs, serpents, vipers, and murderers.** Jesus isn't pulling punches with these guys. He's giving them both barrels and then some. **Though they presented themselves as pure, righteous, and faithful, Jesus calls them the enemies of the kingdom.** So... if any one was truly an outcast, they were.

So far we've been using the term outcast to represent people who were outcasts of society but accepted by Christ. People like John the Baptist or the Twelve Disciples or Peter or Mary Magdalene or the woman at the well, or Zacchaeus. But, here we find a group of people, the pharisees, who were accepted by society but were outcasts of the kingdom.

In reality, these were the true outcasts, because in essence they had chosen it. An even greater miracle than saving those who knew they were weak, would be saving those who thought they were strong. **The hardest to reach people are those who think they are already good to go.**

Today I want us to see what made the Pharisees enemies of Christ and then look at two examples of Pharisees who in the end chose to follow Him. You see, **no matter how wrong you may be, no matter how twisted your worldview may seem, Jesus accepts all who are willing to change.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

So, the first thing I want us to see is that... **The Pharisees Were Outcasts of the Kingdom Because They Were Hypocrites.** Look with me at **Luke 20:45-47 & Mark 12:38-40.** Here Jesus gets the Pharisees for a couple of things. First, they love to be served and honored by others but they won't lift a finger to honor or serve others. Instead of helping widows, they take advantage of them. Secondly, they love to make long prayers to be seen by men but it's all pretense and show.

Jesus says it best in **Matthew 23:3-4.** Jesus makes it clear that we are not to be influenced by the hypocritical ways of the pharisees for they... get this... preach, but do not practice. **How often do we talk a good game but fail to back it up with anything of substance? We talk about how important to give to the poor and needy, but do we? We talk about the importance of a relationship with God and how we should read our Bibles and pray, but do we? We look down our noses at the sins of others but how often do we fail to see our own sin. As Jesus puts it, we are straining out gnats but eating a camel. Or as he puts it in the sermon on the mount, we are worried about the specks in other people's eyes while we have planks in our own. It's not good is it... to be a hypocrite?**

What is the biggest excuse given for why people won't attend church or don't like Christians? Do you know? You know. Let's say it together... Hypocrites. Hypocrites are the number one most destructive for to the Gospel and for good reason. How can people believe that what you say is real when they see you saying one thing and doing another. Listen, **If what we say we believe is real then we should be real - we should practice what we preach!** Those who are hypocrites stand on the fringes of the kingdom. The pharisees were hypocrites... are you? **No matter how wrong you may be, no matter how twisted your worldview may seem, Jesus accepts all who are willing to change.**

The second thing we need to know this morning is that... **The Pharisees Were Outcasts of the Kingdom Because They Were Legalists.** The Pharisees thought that they would be saved by their works. Look with me at **Luke 11:37-44.** Jesus goes to the house of a Pharisee and dines with him. By now you would think the Pharisees would have learned their lesson right? Don't invite this guy over for dinner unless you want to get your rear handed to you. This Pharisee does anyway, and notices that Jesus doesn't wash his hands and gives Him a disapproving look.

Why? Because, on top of their 600 plus laws which they demanded everyone live by to be holy, they also added plenty of their own. This is one of the ones they added on top. Not by decree of God, but by their own tradition. They demanded people to wash their hands in order to be right before God. So, of course Jesus ignores their rules. He doesn't live according to their rules. But, he knows exactly what is in their hearts, so he

says to them this; “you clean the outside of the cup but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.” What does this mean? It's simple; they do works but their hearts are not in it. One can easily look the part for a time, but what's on the inside will always shine through. They thought they would be saved by their many rules, traditions, and works, but their hearts were never transformed. The point is obvious; **the kingdom of Jesus can only be accessed by faith in the grace and mercy of God. Next to Him, your works mean nothing.** Those who think they will be saved by their own works stand on the fringes of the kingdom. The pharisees were legalists, are you? **No matter how wrong you may be, no matter how twisted your worldview may seem, Jesus accepts all who are willing to change.**

The third thing we need to see here is that... **The Pharisees Were Outcasts of the Kingdom Because They Were Murderers.** Let's continue in **Luke 11:45-54.** The lawyers and scribes jump up and say, “hey Jesus you are hurting our feelings.” So what does Jesus do? Does he step back and take it easy? Does He say sorry, my bad? Nope. He leans in even further. And he begins to call them out for their culpability for the murders of the prophets of old. He tells them that they are the same groups of people who for the last thousand years had killed the men who God had sent to bring Israel to repentance. And how do we know they were the same? Because they killed Jesus.

And.... not only were they murdering those who challenged their hypocrisy and legalism, but they were also hindering people from coming to true faith in Christ. Look at **verse 52.** They have not entered the kingdom themselves and now they are keeping others from entering. They not only murder the body but they try to murder the soul.

Clearly these men were outcasts by their own wickedness... and yet still **No matter how wrong you may be, no matter how twisted your worldview may seem, Jesus accepts all who are willing to change.**

Lastly, we see that **Some Pharisees Were Accepted By Christ Because They Were Transformed.** So yes, these guys were bad and they deserved to be cast out of the kingdom; they deserved to be outcasts. But that's the point of this whole series isn't it, we all deserve to be cast out of the kingdom; we all deserve to be outcasts. And yet Jesus has taken us and transformed us through His sacrifice for us on the cross.

Which brings up a question; did Jesus add any of these outcast pharisees to his cast of delinquent disciples? I believe he did. Look with me at two examples of Pharisees who I believe became disciples. The first is of course Nicodemus. In John 3, as we saw earlier this year,

Nicodemus meets with Jesus at night because he is truly on the fence about who He is. Is he just a good teacher who heals or is he truly the Messiah. In that conversation, I believe that Nicodemus' mind is truly transformed and that comes to a reasoned conclusion that Jesus is who he says he is. Now does he get saved at this point? That we don't know. But what we do know is that in **John 7:50-51** Nicodemus uses his status as a pharisee to advocate on behalf of Christ. And, then in **John 19:39** we see that this same Nicodemus is there in full view of everyone anointing the body of Jesus for burial. At the very least, it is clear that Jesus made a serious impact on him.

The second is Joseph of Arimathea. In **Mark 15:43** we see that Joseph was a respected member of the council known as the Sanhedrin which was made up of Pharisees. **Luke 23:50-56** lets us know that he was against the council on the crucifixion of Christ. And if there was any doubt, **Matthew 27:57** let's us know that he was most certainly a disciple of Christ.

Now look at John **19:38-40** which gives us the whole picture. Nicodemus and Joseph, both pharisees who were disciples of Jesus were the ones who assumed his body and entombed him. It would appear to me that **Nicodemus and Joseph accepted the body of Jesus only after having accepted the salvation of Jesus.** It just goes to prove that... **No matter how wrong you may be, no matter how twisted your worldview may seem, Jesus accepts all who are willing to change.** Even the evil, villainous Pharisees!

Application

So here we are at the end of this series. Outcasts saved by Jesus. In him we all find a home. In him we all find a place to belong. No matter how bad you've been, no matter how much you've failed, all are welcome at the foot of the cross of Christ. If the pharisees were, so are you!

Conclusion

All that's left is to simply come to him. If you are here this morning and you are like the Pharisees; hypocrites, legalists, working for your own salvation, or even murderers – perhaps not in the physical sense but in the spiritual sense, then today is the day of salvation. Come, repent of your sins, place your faith in Jesus, and find a place to belong. Come home. **No matter how wrong you may be, no matter how twisted your worldview may seem, Jesus accepts all who are willing to change**