

WJMU - Fake Faith

Matthew 23.23-33

Key Points:

- Jesus speaks against hypocrisy and 'fake faith' in this passage in the strongest terms. Anyone who presents themselves as better than they really are needs to know that it's a dangerous game to play.
- There are lots of reasons why we might get used to hiding how we are: in society in general because it doesn't always help to be too honest, and in church because we're really conscious of the gap between what we are and what Jesus is calling us to be.
- We are called to prioritise our inner life rather than what we look like on the outside: other people might see just the outside, but God sees both, and a life lived closely with God needs to look surrendered to him on the inside too.
- The best ways to guard against and break away from hypocrisy?: worship, spending time with Jesus and accountability to and with others.

Questions:

Conversation Starter - Get the group involved with a question everyone can answer

1. We're thinking a lot today about pretending to be people we're not: if you had to choose an actor to play you in a film about your life, who would you choose and why?

Start thinking - Get the group thinking around the subject,

2. Is your own hypocrisy (or danger of hypocrisy) something you give much thought to?
3. Why do you think Jesus takes it so seriously?

Start sharing - Choose a question to create openness

4. Why might we slip into habits of hypocrisy? Are there particular danger points in the communities we are part of? (ie most probably things that are valued highly?)
5. How can we be better at noticing when we are going through the motions spiritually? What can we do about it?

Start praying

6. God, help us be aware in our lives of where we're slipping towards hypocrisy or 'fake faith'. Help us to seek you in the private moments as well as the public ones.
7. [God, in the midst of the coronavirus crisis: give us peace, patience and good health. We pray for the sick, vulnerable and lonely. Please help us to know how we can support others at this time, in Jesus' name.]

Start doing

8. How might we prioritise our inner life and our time with Jesus in a new way?
9. One of the best antidotes to 'fake faith' (recognising it, for a start!) is to take risks in faith. How might you take a step out in faith in the next week?