

# ChristReformationChurch

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## *The Gospel According to Matthew*

### *Where is the Real Church?*

*June 10, 2018*

**Sermon Text:** Matthew 6

**Scripture Reading:** Hebrews 11:13-40

Listen once again to the opening words of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount:

Mat 5:1-20 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. (2) And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

(3) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(4) "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

(5) "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

(6) "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

(7) "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

(8) "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

(9) "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

(10) "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(11) "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (12) Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(13) "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

(14) "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. (15) Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it

gives light to all in the house. (16) In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

(17) "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (18) For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (19) Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (20) For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

In the past few weeks we have been hearing the Lord contrast the true from the false – the true church from the counterfeit. He began with these pronouncement of blessings which we call the beatitudes. Nine of them, ending with the fact that in this world these blessed ones, true Christians, true citizens of His kingdom, will be persecuted.

He then made it clear that He has come to fulfill the Law of God, not to dismiss it. In fact, He said, anyone

who even “relaxes” one single commandment will see serious consequences on that Day and if our righteousness is that of the external “church” of Jesus’ day, that of the scribes and Pharisees, well – we will never see the inside of the kingdom of heaven.

The true church, and the false church, you see. This is the subject Jesus chose for this important sermon very, very early in His ministry. It must, therefore, be a subject we are to take very careful note of, realizing it is incredibly important.

### There is a True Church

In all of the warnings in the Bible about wolves, counterfeits, false churches, and so on, we must not only become wise regarding these evils, but we must also remember that the genuine, true body of Christ *exists and can never be destroyed*. Jesus, after all, described it in the beatitudes. There are true Christians. There is a true church. The gates of hell will never overwhelm it. Christ’s kingdom continues to grow like that seed:

Luk 13:18-21 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? (19) It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the

air made nests in its branches." (20) And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? (21) It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."

There is always the true remnant, Christ's true people. Always.

But let me suggest to you this morning that we have, for the most part, been taught a wrong notion of what the church looks like. As a result, we can find ourselves looking in the wrong places and even being in the middle of the counterfeit. That is to say, we desperately need to re-boot our thinking about "church." Because if we think it is something that it is not, if we have a picture of it in our minds that is wrong, then we are going to have great difficulty finding it and we will be setting ourselves up for real discouragement and disillusion.

### What Does Christ's Church Look Like?

Listen now to Jesus as He continues to warn us about false religion, the false church, and false religious leaders:

Mat 6:1-18 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

(2) "Thus, **when you give to the needy**, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. (3) But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, (4) so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

(5) "**And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites.** For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. (6) But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

(7) "And when you pray, **do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do**, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. (8) Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

(9) Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. (10) Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (11) Give us this day our daily bread, (12) and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (13) And

lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (14) For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, (15) but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

(16) **"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites,** for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. (17) But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, (18) that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Alright then, let's slow down now and look at this very carefully. Jesus begins with a concise statement of His subject:

*Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.*

This is huge! Here we have the essential motive of false religion. Self-exaltation (and the control and power that go along with it) which comes from "doing" religion in view of others. The goal is the show. To be

seen. To be praised. To be worshipped. To replace Christ in other words.

Is this common in the local church today? I don't even need to tell you the answer to that one. I could give you lots of examples, but you can think of them yourself and besides, Jesus gives us specifics from his own day here:

- Giving

Pomp and circumstance. Hear the trumpets. The top dogs are soooo holy. They are giving to the poor. Here they come with the treasury box so the poor can come groveling up to them and be "blessed" with their generosity. Their goal? To be praised. They are antichrists seeking the worship due to God. This is a certain mark of false religion.

True religion, true Christians, give with no self-seeking motive. They give out of a pure heart for the love of the needy and they don't boast about it. They don't need to be "pushed" to give or bribed with some promise of return. They know that the Lord sees them and their reward is from Him.

You can identify the counterfeit church then from its approach to how money and goods and property are handled.

- Prayer

*For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.*

This very same self-seeking, self-praising, glory-seeking motive is also seen in the prayers of false religion. Putting on a disguise of great holiness and piety for all to see. Where you see this spirit and motive, you can know that you are looking at evil. And yet it attracts soooo many people. Man in his sin craves this very kind of religion.

Do not imitate them. Do not be like them. This kind of righteousness will only lead to hell.

Here is more on the prayers of the hypocrites:

*And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.*

Heaping up empty phrases. All you need do to see examples of this is to listen for the “empty phrases.” Over-used, flowery statements that sound so pious and yet are empty because really, they mean nothing. They are not meant as some truth or petition presented to God, but simply as another means for a hypocrite to be seen and heard by men for their praise.

You can find many examples of this not only in prayers but in sermons and in other public conversation. And most people are so naïve that they love it! This is where we all MUST carefully listen to the Holy Spirit in us and compare what we are seeing and hearing with Scripture. If you are a Christian then YOU have the ability to discern:

1Jn 4:4-6 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (5) They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. (6) We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Did you hear that? The world listens to and follows these phony hypocrites. Loves what they say and do. This is really the fundamental reason why fake churches are growing today. But YOU, Christian, YOU listen to God’s real truth as given to us in the Word.

YOU must listen! You must not allow yourself to be convinced that you are wrong and the hypocrites are right. God’s Word will ring true with you and “something” in you will warn you that all is not well when you are

hearing lies from hypocrites. This is what Paul meant when he wrote:

1Th 5:19-22 Do not quench the Spirit. (20) Do not despise prophecies, (21) but test everything; hold fast what is good. (22) Abstain from every form of evil.

Do you realize that this is what Paul meant? You have probably been told that he was insisting that we all believe in all spiritual gifts for today, or that we have to watch out for our unholy selves that we don't sin and thus quench the Spirit. No! The context makes the meaning plain. He is telling us to rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit in us as we test everything by Scripture, rejecting what is evil and holding to the good. YOU have the resources in you to do this, Christian.

- Fasting

*And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others.*

Here it is again, the fundamental motive of the religious hypocrite – self-glorying, being “seen and praised by others.”

The history of the visible church is filled with examples of people like this. Here is some guy in the

Philippines who nails himself to a cross in front of a crowd. There is the guy who shows off his self-imposed poverty. Today we probably have here in our part of the world far more subtle examples of this thing:

- Manner of dress. “Plainness.”
- Not touching alcohol (and being sure everyone knows about it)
- Wearing a downcast, serious look on your face with the purpose of letting others know how much you “suffer for Christ.”

None of these hypocrites, you see, are blessed for being “pure in heart.” Their hearts are anything but pure, their motives are duplicitous. Listen to these adjectives that describe them:

- Double-dealing
- Two-faced
- Tricky
- Deceitful
- Dishonest
- Treacherous
- Fraudulent

Exactly the opposite of those qualities Jesus pronounced blessed in the Beatitudes.

So What Does the True Church Look Like?

The true church, then, *does not look like what we have been told it looks like!* We have been taught that it largely looks like the institutions of the scribes and Pharisees. But as we close today, let me simply read to you some of the descriptions of the true church found in Hebrews 11 that we read earlier. Hear it again and then seriously consider just what your idea of the true church looks like. Is it possible that our thinking has been quite turned around on all this and that therefore many of our discouragements and troubles are due to being duped by hypocrites:

afflicted, mistreated-- (38) of whom the world was not worthy--wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (39) And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, (40) since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Heb 11:32-40 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets-- (33) who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, (34) quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. (35) Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. (36) Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute,