

Hey, how are we? Are we good? If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. Matthew 6 is where we're going to hang out tonight. If you don't have a Bible, don't own a Bible, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. Again, if you literally don't own one, that's our gift to you, or I always want to encourage you to go to the lost and found and get yourself a nice leather one. If you want to find one in there, that would be fine with me also.

Of all the accusations made against people of faith in the news, whether that be about our view of this or our view of that, or we're unloving, or we're judgmental, honestly, the one that's most consistent on the ground... As I meet with people, as I interact with people in the Metroplex and even on airplanes, the most consistent accusation made against those who profess a belief and love in Jesus Christ and call themselves Christians, the argument against church folk is they are hypocrites. That's the refrain. Whatever the intellectual arguments are at a high level, on the ground the accusation against you and against me in regards to our faith concerning people who are *not* of our faith is we do not practice what we preach. In essence, we are hypocrites. We don't live out what we say we live out.

Now two things. Number one, I think that's an excuse to not submit to your Creator. Number two, kind of hard to argue against, huh? Right? One, I think it's an excuse. I always want to give the person that. "Yes, you're right." Number two, hard to argue against, isn't it? You and I as believers in Jesus Christ, we're in this kind of weird tension. Depending on how you look at that tension, you're going to either call us hypocrites or not yet perfect. You and I, saved by grace alone through faith alone by Jesus Christ, are being conformed into the image of Jesus, which means we are more godly now than we were when he saved us, but we still might be a billion years away, right? Well, maybe a billion's too far. Death away, right?

That means at any given moment, depending on how you're looking at an individual, they are at some level of perfection or hypocrisy. If you're a believer, and you understand our faith, and you understand, like the little bumper sticker says, we're not perfect; we're just forgiven, if you get the gospel message, then you look at a brother or sister who walks, in what is a bit of inconsistency, and you go, "Okay, Jesus is growing them. They're just not where we would all like them to be. Probably not where they would want to be themselves." But if you're cynical and you don't want to submit to your Creator, then you go, "See, they're a bunch of hypocrites."

Now a couple of things. If you're not a believer in Christ, I think what I just said is the best news in the universe, because here's what that means: It just means we should be a really good home for you. Doesn't it? Here's what I mean by that: All the weight of having to be perfect in order to be made right before God has vanished in a second under the weight of the gospel. It's been my experience this is kind of how we operate. We want to be right with God, we want to grow in our faith, and so what we try to do is instead of running to God, we kind of pull out our little moral check sheet, and we're just trying to grow in that.

Some of you are even here tonight as a step to try to get right with God. Maybe it has been one of those weeks. You don't even remember Monday through Wednesday. Maybe it has been one of those things where something happened last night and your gut is just rotting out with guilt, and so your solution to that is to try to be better. Your trying to be better has led you here tonight. Well here's what you need to hear me say: You are never going to be able to get clean enough for God. I'm not. No one you know is. It is by grace alone, or it doesn't happen.

The good news of the gospel is hypocrites are welcome. That's the good news, because there's no one in this room who's not hypocritical. No one. Whether you're completely secular and humanistic or whether you've been a person of faith since... I mean, Mama shot you out on the altar. You don't remember a day you weren't in church. You are inconsistent and you are hypocritical. No one is clean on that. No one.

The difference between those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ is Christ's perfection carries our imperfection so between the tension of perfection and hypocrisy we have a perfect God who says, "I paid the bill for that stumbling and bumbling. Yeah, he's an idiot. Doesn't that make me spectacular if I can save that dude, if I can save that woman? How inconsistent and foolish they are, and yet I can still rescue them." Isn't that where God is most glorified, not in saving the pretty people? So now you have this idea of hypocrisy.

Here's what, unfortunately, Christians want to do: Christians need to know that and walk in a lot more grace and a lot more compassion with a lot more lack of "judgmentalness" on people than they walk in now, because you're not there. Even though you might act like you're there or think you're there, your response to the fallings and failings of others should be patience, grace, compassion, empathy, prayerfulness, and a steadfast friendship that says, "I love you and I'm walking with you until God opens up your eyes and opens up your heart." So what hypocrisy or lack of perfection on our way to should create in the unbeliever is a hope that God can work in them, and for the believer, it should increase compassion, grace, and empathy.

Now when it comes to addressing the hypocrisy in our lives, the way *not* to do it is to look at your behaviors and try to make them more consistent. Has anybody ever fallen in that trap? You start spotting places

you're not quite consistent, and so what you begin to do is you begin to work at being *more* consistent at behavior, language, you can fill in the blank there, but you have this area of your life. You're going, "I need to be more consistent so I'm not a hypocrite," and you start to kind of pour into those behaviors, pour into those modifications, pour into those kinds of things, but in reality, the battle over hypocrisy does not take place on an external behavioral level; it takes place in the heart.

The heart is a hard place to fight because it's deceptive, because we don't see clearly when we look inside of our own hearts. Can we be honest with one another? We don't know what motivates us at times. I don't know what motivates me sometimes. Sometimes, I know I'm *doing* what God would ask me to do, but I'm not quite sure if I'm doing it because people like it when I do it, or because maybe God likes it when I do it. Right? I get confused about my own motives, and what I've found is (I've asked a lot of questions) people, when all is said and done, don't quite understand the deepest motives of their heart.

We have all thought we were doing something out of innocence, and it came to light later it was not innocent at all. We all just tried to lovingly say something because it was for their good. "No, I just love them. That's why I said that." We all can be deceived by our hearts. We don't know where a lot of our emotions spring from. Has anybody had a bad day and not know why? Has anybody just woke up angry? We can do the reciprocal. Has anybody just woke up and it's just an awesome day and no idea why? Just for whatever reason, you woke up, and that day was legit. Like three minutes before the alarm, just energy without that quad macchiato, just ready to roll.

Then there are other days that's not true, and nobody has a bead on that. Nobody quite understands how to do that. In fact, we'll even try to duplicate it and go, "Okay, I went to bed at 10:00 instead of midnight. Let me try that again." So we try to kind of figure out how to unlock that, and we're really bad at it. It doesn't work. The battleground toward perfection and away from hypocrisy actually occurs in our hearts at the level of motivation, and so it's going to take all the tools of God's grace in order to look cleanly, clearly, and accurately at our hearts. To be straight with you, it's going to cause a lot of us to cry out for God's help and the Holy Spirit's work of illumination.

Now as we continue through Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is going to teach us out of this text today about prayer and fasting. This is Matthew 6. We're going to pick it up in verses 5-18, but 5-18 all hinge on 6:1. So we need to look at chapter 6, verse 1, and then from there, we'll get into what Jesus says about prayer and fasting. If you have your Bibles, Matthew 6, starting in verse 1. What's the first word?

"Beware..." Be careful. There is a danger. **"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."** Look right at me. A legitimate danger for men and women of faith is to do things God commands

for them to do, but not do them because they love God, delight in God, or want to know God, but rather to do those things in order to be praised by men, in order to get the attention of men.

To me, this idea, this kind of hypocrisy is insane. It is pretending to have a relationship with God when you don't. For all the conversations I've had and as long as I've been in the Bible Belt, I cannot figure out what you think you're gaining. You are getting people to believe you're godly when you're not? What does that get you? Think about how broken the heart is that someone *thinking* you're godly actually makes you feel better about your relationship with God than actually being godly. That's insane.

Now look at the kind of pressure you put on yourself if you're that kind of hypocrite. "I'm just going to do the religious acts I know are right even though I have no real relationship with God." You then put the weight of performance on yourself and you can't carry it. That means you can't struggle. It means you always have to outdo everybody else's godliness. It means you can't celebrate other people's victories. It means other people become competition to you in the faith. Think of how exhausting that is. Varsity Professional Christianity; except when the game's over, bro, you lose.

Matthew 7: "Many will say to me, 'My Lord; my Lord,' but I'll say, 'Depart from me, you cursed for I do not know you.'" That verse should scare more of us than it does. Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be seen by them. In light of this (and just so I can keep steady pressure on this idea), Jesus, who extended such grace and such love to those caught in adultery, to tax collectors... Do you know historically what we're talking about on tax collecting?

You have to get rid of Zacchaeus was a little man. You have to get that out of your head. You need to historically look at the fact that these were Jews who had purchased the right from Rome, an occupying force, to raise taxes from among indigenous people to pay for this oppressive, conquering force. It'd be the equivalent of your neighbor raising taxes, taking money from you, to pay for an occupying force that was responsible for the murder, rape, and pillaging of our country. That's who the tax collectors were. Do you know whom Jesus was kind to, whom Jesus had meals with, whom Jesus went to the house of? The adulterer, the tax collector, the sinner. This is who Jesus extended an unreal amount of grace to.

Do you know who he had his most disparaging language towards? The religious hypocrite. In Matthew 23 alone (this is just one text), he calls them children of hell, blind guides, that they are full of greed and self-indulgent. He calls them whitewashed tombs. Are you tracking with me? Clean graves! Then in Luke 12, he actually tells the crowd to beware the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Are you tracking with Jesus? Here's what he just said: Hypocrisy is contagious! Beware the leaven of the Pharisees. It's this hypocrisy. It's contagious.

Now we know this. When you're around people who are really, really serious about Jesus, don't you tend to be a little bit more serious about Jesus, and when you're around people who aren't very serious about the things of God, don't you become a little less serious about the things of God? Can we not be honest in here? Do I need to ask a less hard question? A less honest one? Is this accurate?

If somebody is really all-in to the Lord, into the Word of God, pursuing God, loving the Lord, and you're around them, it kind of rubs off on you. You kind of like that. You kind of find yourself doing it. You kind of start feeling the press of, "Man, I want to know the Lord like this person knows the Lord." You might even have an opposite reaction. You might be like, "I don't need to hang out with this guy. Just is making me feel convicted all the time."

But then if you hang out with people who are just kind of lax and ho hum and just are kind of cultural believers (do you know what I'm saying? Southerners, right?), how easy is it to downshift into that? Since you won't be honest; it's *easy*. I'll just carry it tonight. It's easy to play that game, which is why as believers in Christ, we need to be really serious about surrounding ourselves with brothers and sisters in Christ who are very serious about knowing God, pursuing God, loving God, and chasing hard after the Lord, because the more we're around that, the more it'll rub off on us.

"So you're saying we should avoid sinners?" No, absolutely I'm not. I'm saying you should have sinners in your house. I'm saying even people around you who know you don't believe like they believe should say of you, "That guy doesn't like how I live, but he loves me. He's always trying to have me over for dinner. He's buying us gifts at Christmas. He knows what's going on in my house. He's praying for me all the time." I'm not trying to draw some, "Get out of the world." I'm saying you're *in* the world, but don't be *of* the world.

Now that you have this warning and you have Jesus' seriousness about hypocrisy, particularly a knowing religious hypocrisy...you know you don't know Jesus, you know you don't have a relationship with him, you know you're not serious about the things of God, but you put on a show...in light of that, let's look at what he says, picking it up in verse 5. **"And when you pray..."** Notice that prayer is not... He's assuming his people pray. He's not going, "You need to be praying." That's not what he said. *When* you do. It's the same thing that was covered last week in the text about *when* you give. It's not *if* you give, but *when* you give. It's not if you pray, but when you pray.

"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. 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. 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. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." Let me kind of break the text on prayer into this.

1. *Don't*. Don't do it like this. Don't pray like the hypocrites. How are the hypocrites praying? They're praying in two different ways. Jesus is saying don't do it that way. I've kind of made it my own sentence because I think it works its way out in a little bit different of a way. I don't think you go into your workplace and pray loud prayers anymore, but that's what's being referenced here. Here he's saying, "Don't pray publically in order to be seen by others." Let me chat about that. I do not believe what Jesus is saying here is we should not pray publically, but rather *when* we pray publically, that is an overflow out of our private prayer.

Let me ask a diagnostic question...*Is the only time you pray in public?* I know some of you don't want to pray at all. That's the last place you want to pray. You're like, "Give me that closet all day long. Just don't ask me to pray in public." I know that part of Home Group when somebody starts looking around for somebody to pray, you won't make eye contact. You're looking at the floor. "I've got nothing. You ask me to pray, I'm just going to read part of the Bible as my prayer, so you go on."

This is not that we don't pray publically, because we are commanded often to pray publically. It's when we pray publically, we are not praying in such a way that we are performing for the crowd, but rather out of the overflow of our private prayer, our relationship with God, we publically plead with God Almighty. Don't pray like the hypocrites who pray as a performance, but rather let your public prayers flow out of private prayer.

The second thing I would say here to simplify what he's doing in the text is don't be someone you're not when you pray. When you're publically praying... I need you to hear me say this. I do believe when you pray there should be reverence before God. I don't think you have to downshift into King James. Reverent before God when we pray, but you don't have to be someone you're not. Have you ever seen this? Like all of a sudden, just a completely different dude praying than was there like six seconds ago. It's like, "What's up, man? Are you doing all right?"

"Yeah."

"Will you pray?"

"Sure. O heavenly Father, thou hast..." You're like, "Was that a hast? What is a hast?"

Listen; be who you are. Now here's what I think motivates that: One is you need to get more comfortable with how God views you, and two, you might get yourself exposed as a pretender. Sometimes people will pray in a way that is different than how they are. They will use a different kind of tone, a different kind of language, because they have bought into the lie I've been trying to work on here for a *decade* that God doesn't really like you right now. He likes some later version of you, like a version that has learned to pray better, a version that just doesn't screw up as much as you do.

It's that future version of you nonsense that has you believing God has forgiven you right now, but he's kind of just tolerating you until you get your big boy pants on, until you grow out of diapers and quit making a mess of everything, and you get to that spot where you're nailing stuff, you're really doing well, and *then* you can just be you. You can't be you now; you have to be you 10 years from now. One, that's exhausting. Two, it's a theological, biblical train wreck! Christ's cross is so sufficient that you're loved *now!* Are you tracking with me? Now!

"Well, I'm a mess." He knows! That's the cross, right? Isn't that what the cross screams out to you? God's grand public acknowledgement that you're a bit of a chump? Paid the bill. "You keep jacking this up, so I had to come in, absorb it." God delights in you now. As believers in Christ, we're able to just come as we are. Man, God has given you a *billion* illustrations any day of the week. If you have kids, he definitely has. I'd like my 3-year-old to be a little bit further along than she is. We have not had terrible 2's. You know how everybody warns you about that. All three of mine, beautiful 2-year-olds, and then something happened at 3. I don't know if it was demons. I don't know what it was, but at 3, they all lost their minds.

My youngest right now, she's going to burn our house down or kill an animal. Something's not right there. We started praying, putting oil in her room. We're after that right now. Something's not right. The girl has lost her mind. I wish she would do things differently. I wish she wouldn't run from room to room to room and destroy it. I wish she wouldn't cry every time she doesn't get her way. There'll be a day where she doesn't do those things anymore...or there'll be a day she ain't in my house no more! There'll be a day she grows out of that.

But here's what I can tell you just with everything in me: As difficult as she is in seasons right now, I love that little girl so much. I love that girl so much, my heart will hurt. Crazy about her. Even though I have these stages in her life where, "Man, I wish she would learn to go to the bathroom; I'm tired of handling that. Wish she wouldn't eat a cookie and have it look like it exploded in the living room," I could just go down the line, have all these, "I wish she was further along," and at no point at any level of that, "I wish she was further along," did I ever think, "I just really don't like her." I love that little girl.

What a picture that is, for those of you who have children, of God's steadfast love for you now. As messy as you are, how you can't walk, you're always stumbling around, falling over, and he rejoices in that. He rejoices in you because of Jesus. That's good news. Don't be someone you're not. Be you. That's who God loves in Christ. You. Now 10 years from now you are going to be closer to perfection, and do you know what's going to change about his love? Nothing. He's not going to be like, "Now we're talking." Now. He loves you now.

"Well, you don't know me." I don't have to know you. "You don't know what I've been doing." I don't have to know. I can look in the Bible and see that no matter what level at which you are sinning, you are a Junior-Varsity, not-starting, fourth-string, never-going-to-touch-the-field sinner compared to these cats in the Bible whom God has saved in Christ. Don't be like that.

2. *Do*. Verse 9: **"Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven..."** Now we have that idea again, right? The idea we just covered is we have to believe God has not just forgiven us, but he likes us, he delights in us, he is our adopted Father, he chose us and rescued us and grabbed hold of us and cleaned us up. Our Father. You will never pray well if you don't believe you're welcomed in the Father's presence. You will *never* pray well if you don't believe you're welcomed in the Father's presence.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

I want to point out that this prayer, this kind of blueprint of prayer, is unbelievably, undeniably God-ward. It is God-centered. It is about God. It is, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be *your* name. Great is *your* name. Not great is my name. Great is *your* name. *Your* kingdom come. *Your* will be done. This isn't my kingdom come. This isn't my will be done. This is *your* kingdom come, *your* will be done."

Hear me; God is going to say no to some of the things you ask for. Are you tracking with me? You are not Aladdin with the lamp. He's going to tell you no. Do you know why? Because he knows more than you and he loves you too much to give you what you want. You are too shortsighted, and even prayers that are good and right about things you want you will often be denied, and it is not because he is cruel; it's because he's all-knowing, and you're not. **"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."**

"Give us this day..." Who's the needy one? **"Give us this day our daily bread..."** "You give to us. We are lacking. You have in abundance." **"And lead us not into temptation..."** Who has the power to lead us not

into temptation? Who has the power to give us victory over our sins? He does! **"...and forgive us our debts..."** Who has the power to forgive us of our sins? God does. We don't. He does.

Think about how deceitful and wicked the human heart is that according to this passage we can take something that is completely and only God-ward and make it about us and use it as a platform to perform to get the praise of men? Jesus is saying, "No, no, no. When you pray, that thing is God-ward. It's 'Do *your* will. Be about *your* business. Give me strength. Help me.'" You *are* praying for yourself, but you're praying for yourself much more like Jesus did in the garden. "Let this cup pass."

Hey, man, I've prayed, "Can we do this another way?" Has anyone else thrown that one out? "Hey, I love you. You're smarter than me. Have you thought about this?" He has never gone, "Do you know what, Chandler? I didn't think we could do it that way. Now that you've brought it up, let me consult with the Trinity, and I'll get back with you." Never brought that up. He always has known best, but I have not always liked God's way of doing things in my life. Anyone else? I have often preferred we took another path of sanctification. But he is good, and that's unquestionable.

When you pray, you pray like this. God-ward. "You increase me." I need to decrease. I'm telling you, if you get this... This is one of those things you're going to hear me say over and over and over again no matter long you're here. You will leave the church before I quit saying it. The more you will decrease and the more he increases, the more a *billion* anxieties in your life will disappear, the more fear will dissipate, the more free you'll be, the more untouchable you'll become when it comes to the whims of others, the more empowered you'll feel.

The more you can land on that, "Your kingdom come, your will be done," the more you can live in that verse, the more free you'll be. The more you want to get out of that verse and, "My kingdom come, my will be done," the more anxious you're going to be, the more fearful you're going to be, and the more you're going to fight people. I'm not talking about physically fight; I'm just talking relational breakdown.

Do you want a better marriage? "Your kingdom come, your will be done." Do you want a better relationship with your kids? "Your kingdom come, your will be done." Do you want a better understanding of money in life? "Your kingdom come, your will be done." That opens up your hands on a thousand different things, a thousand different scenarios. "I want what you want, and if I don't want what you want, help me want what you want."

Then he moves on. In the next part, he's going to move into fasting, and it's honestly a bit confusing, so let's look at this. Verse 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. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 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."

Now did you catch that? Jesus has just been saying, "Don't be hypocritical. Don't act like a hypocrite," and then he literally just told people to act like hypocrites. Did you see this? When you're fasting, don't be gloomy. Instead, act like you're not fasting at all! Did you catch that? When you fast, don't act like you're fasting. In fact, when you fast, act like you're not fasting. So what's happening here is this idea just got flipped on its head. How can you do what is right and good and be open, authentic, and honest, and it still be called *hypocrisy*? Well, I led with it. It's all about the motive of your heart.

The motive of fasting is, "I'm hungry for God. What I need is God. What I want is God. Who I need to be around is God." It's that angst you read about in the Psalms so often. "As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs for you. When am I going to meet with God? When can I be in the presence of God? How long, O Lord, will you forsake me?" Fasting is a hunger for God that transcends and trumps other hungers in our lives. It's that moment when we go, "I'm using this time I normally set aside to eat to press into God and to pray and seek his face. I'm going to take this time I normally watch television and I'm going to press into God and I'm going to pray. I'm going to take this time I normally do this and I'm going to press into God and pray."

The motivation of a heart that's fasting is, "I need God." It's not, "I'm going to *not* do these things so God will do what I want him to do." How do we know that? Because he has already led with that. "Your kingdom come, your will be done." A heart that's right before God in fasting is a heart that is hungry for the things of God. That's not why these men are fasting. They're fasting to be seen by men. They're trying to be Varsity Christians. They don't love God and have a hunger for God. Now follow me. They want to have the *appearance* of a hunger for God. Is it because I'm a pastor that I think that's dumb? "I want to *look* like I want to know God. I mean, I don't really want to know; I just want to look like it."

Are you trying to win the approval of *church* people? We're not the coolest people on earth. There are other people you can try to win the approval of. There are wealthy people and sexy people and wealthy, sexy people and people with power. There are all these other people you could cater to. Why would you come to the church and want church people to go, "That dude is legit"? Aren't we on a lot of levels mocked and despised in several segments of our culture? Do you see what kind of crazy lie your heart has drawn you to that you want the appearance of godliness but you don't want any of the power of godliness? It's insane.

This has to be our question. Let me tell you why I think this *beware* is in all caps for us here. Several years ago, we were actively involved in doing mission work in another country. It was a country that was closed, which means it was illegal to do things in that country in regard to preaching the gospel, in training pastors. So first trip into the country... It was actually kind of cool because I felt like Jack Bauer.

They put me in a little van at a train station and then drove me out, and then they just opened the door and said, "Two clicks that way." I'm like, "Clicks? Am I Davy Crockett? What? Clicks? Well, who am I?" I'm literally just walking in this field, and then a guy gets me and took me to this place. I'm at this farmhouse, and I'm sleeping in this bed. Then I wake up at about 4:00 in the morning, and in the next room I just hear bunch of dudes just getting after the Lord. You could tell it was worship. You could tell they were getting after the Lord.

I went in, and then we just started the day. Here I am teaching a room of about 80-90 pastors in this country, all of whom have horrific stories we like to use in Christian circles as, "Oh, isn't that amazing!" It's *awful*. There are emotional, physical, spiritual scars that occur when you get beat nearly to death because you love Jesus Christ, when your family is thrown in prison because you love Jesus Christ, when the potential of death hangs over your head by publically saying, "I love, worship, and follow Jesus Christ, and I'm serious about other people knowing."

Here's what happens in that environment: There's not as much of this. But here, everybody's a Christian here. We're Texans. We're all Christians. We've been to church a couple of times a year for a decade. We're all Christians. We got baptized when we were 6, right after RA Camp, right after the scary hell sketch. We were baptized as babies. We're all Christians here.

In a culture like ours that does not sit under (if I'm really honest right now) very little, if any, oppression, to play the part is attractive, because to actually pursue Jesus as your treasure requires selling all you have and buying the field. Look right at me. It is harder, much, much harder and far more painful to actually be godly than to pretend to be. We take the soft way out, we take the easy way out, and we just become satisfied, inoculated to the things of Jesus, and just pretend rather than know.

If you're in here and that's you, if you've come into this place, and maybe you're coming from the hypocrisy side of things, you're Christmas and Easter and stumbled into this joint today, and you've done so because you've had a tough month or you're trying to get back on the straight, trying to clean yourself up, and you've come from that, I'm just saying God is not tricked. He's not looking down and seeing you here and going, "Oh, okay, we're cool. I thought I was just looking at last Friday. Glad we're back." He's just not fooled by all that religious performance. You being here...look at me...is not impressive. You praying out loud, you doing church stuff, you watching your mouth, he is not impressed. What he wants is your heart.

But listen; I want to be really honest. Who can just stir up their own motivations like this? Who can just decide in this moment that, "My motive is actually to know him"? I think if we had a little few minutes of honesty, most of us could say, "I don't think that motivation is as strong as I'd like for it to be. My motivation to know him, to worship him, to pursue him is not the inferno I wish it was. Matt, I'm just here trying to be faithful today."

What do we do if we're probably a mixed bag of this? Didn't we start this whole talk by saying we're somewhere between perfection and hypocrisy? If we find ourselves in a place where our hearts aren't desirous of the things of God and we've fallen into a false rhythm of just kind of playing the part rather than being serious about pursuing the Lord, what do we do? Okay, here's where it'll get, I think, sketchy for some of you. You quit pretending. Look at me. That doesn't mean you tap out. Doesn't mean you give up. Doesn't mean, "Oh, I'm not going to pretend," and you just head on out of here and get yourself a nickel bag or something. That's not how it works.

What I mean is you press into the covenant community of faith and just say, "Matt, I'm in a dry season. I'm in a dry season where the Lord feels far from me, and I don't have a lot of motivation to chase after him. I need prayer. I need help. I need community." You press hard into all the tools of grace God has given you. You get serious about the gathering of the believers. You get serious about those who love Jesus Christ and are following him. You surround yourself with those kinds of people.

Maybe you're in a season where that kind of missional engagement of a lost and broken world, maybe you press pause on that for just a bit, you surround yourself with people who are very serious about the things of God who can strengthen your resolve, who'll be used by the Holy Spirit to throw kindling on that kind of wavering flame of yours. But you quit pretending because...look at me...you have nobody who matters fooled. I worded that perfectly. You have no one who matters fooled.

So I think you're godly and you're not. Congrats. Your family thinks you're godly and you're not. What? You just won an Oscar? Do you know who knows you're not? The One you're going to stand completely naked in front of and give an account for your life, and that's the One who counts. Hypocrites are welcomed, but all hypocrites under Christ are being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We're honest about our hypocrisies, we seek to be more sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit, and we position ourselves under the waterfall of God's grace over and over and over again until that just flicker of a flame turns into a roaring inferno. Let's pray.

If you're here today (and you can just keep your head bowed and your eyes closed) and you would say, "Matt, if I had to be honest... Not with you, because I don't know you. We're not hanging out after this. If I

have to be honest before a God who knows me, I'd say that little flame in me is a bit of a flicker. I am dry. I am not motivated to know him, not motivated to pursue him. I'm here tonight just kind of hanging on by a thread. I just need to be honest before the Lord today that, Matt, I am in a lot of different ways pretending to be something I'm not. I'm weary of that game," if that's you, would you just lift up your hands?

Even if you're on video, if that's you, would you just lift up your hands and say, "Listen; I'm weary. I'm dry. I'm in a lot of different ways not living out all I know I should be living out. I'm not serious about pursuing the Lord"? All right, praise God. Why don't you put your hands down? I'm going to pray for us and then we'll just transition into a time of just getting after the Lord via song. That's a gift to us as covenant people, to sing unto the Lord. Then after that, we'll partake in Communion with one another.

I've prayed that the Lord will haunt you over the next couple of days over these issues, that you would dig deep into your heart, that you would allow the Holy Spirit to expose and illuminate and really show you what's there. I pray that through the proclamation of the Word this weekend that we might in that tension between hypocrisy and perfection that we might move further away from hypocrisy and closer toward perfection. May the Spirit grant us such grace.

Father, I thank you for these men and women, just believing full well you've called us into this place today, that we are not here by accident, that you have through a friend or through a random set of circumstances brought us here that you might expose some things in our hearts. Help us. Our hearts are deceptive. We're not clear about all that's in there, and so will you reveal to us and show to us areas that need to be confessed, places where we need to quit pretending, and friends and family members who are serious about the things of God who might encourage us in this dry season. It's through your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Love you, guys.