

A man went to the store because he had seen an advertisement in the paper that said it was selling exactly what he wanted. But when he got to the store, he looked and looked only to discover the store never had it in the first place? One clerk told the now very angry customer, “We don’t have any. We never had any. We’re not going to get any!” “But,” the customer protested, “they were in your ad in the paper this morning.” “Well, sir, just because we had them in our ad doesn’t necessarily mean we have them in the store.”

You’d think that if a store advertises it sells a certain product, it will in fact actually carry that product in the store! God has the same kind of expectation when He looks into our hearts. God desires that the faith we profess with lips and practice in our lives will in fact be the same faith He finds inside us. He desires more than just what we advertise on the outside to others. **More than anything, God wants our hearts.**

- I. Too often, when God looks into our hearts He finds false advertising—hearts that are far from Him.
  - A. That is what Jesus found in the scribes and Pharisees who came to Him from Jerusalem. You see, Jesus, did not always follow the rules, and because of that He got in big trouble with the religious authorities. In our text Jesus is faulted for not leading His disciples in the ritual of washing their hands whenever they came from the marketplace.

After our cruise to Alaska in July we stayed in Seattle for 3 days. It’s a beautiful city. One of the attractions is the Public Market where you can buy just about anything – dried fruits, fresh flowers, vegetables and fruit of every kind. It’s the home of the famous flying fish company. Lots of people touching lots of goods in an open market. I’m sure there were germs enough to go around for everyone. But germs were not what concerned the “elders” when it came to Jesus and His disciples. They had weightier things on their minds – like their tradition of washing their hands because you never know who might have touched something which they touched. It could have been a G-e-n-t-i-l-e.

1. They believed that in His ignoring “the tradition of the elders,” they have found a way to discredit Jesus (vv 1–5) since He didn’t live up to their standards of what it meant to be religious. They called for a delegation of investigators to pay a visit to Jesus and report their findings back in Jerusalem.

2. But Jesus actually uses their abuse of those same traditions to unmask their hypocrisy.
  - a. Their hypocrisy is that they use their profession of love for God as a mask to excuse or hide the evil they harbor in their hearts (vv 6–8). We all know someone like that, don't we! Someone who likes to tell you how much they love God but whose life doesn't match their words. Jesus said, **“All men will know that you are my disciples if you keep my commandments.”** Here Jesus quotes Isaiah, **“This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”**
  - b. As an example of their hypocrisy, the Lord points to their use of the traditions to allow them to circumvent the Fourth Commandment (vv 9–13).

**You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God) – then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”** It is certainly not wrong to want to support the Lord's work, is it! Is it?! But in doing it in the way they were doing it, they were letting a man-made rule trump the Fourth Commandment which calls them to honor and care for their parents. Remember, the fulfilling of the Law is Love.

- B. When our profession of faith and outward works are not matched by a heart of faith, that's spiritual false advertising.
  1. When we do and say all the right religious things because that's what we're supposed to do, or simply because our parents make us, or our spouse wants us to, that's hypocrisy. Don't get me wrong, God won't excuse you from church one Sunday just because you say, “My hearts not really in it today. It would be hypocrisy if I went when I really didn't want to.” It's God's command and He wants you to come to worship and support the work of the church even if you don't feel like it any particular Sunday. He wants you come singing, “Lord I love the habitation of your house the place where Your glory dwells.” Your loving heavenly Father wants you to put your heart into it because you love Him. Let me give

you another example: If I say, ‘Son, please the garbage up the curb,’ do you think I will excuse him if he says, ‘Father, it would be hypocritical because I’m just can’t get into that,’ do you think I would look kindly on it? I want him to want to do it because he loves me enough to obey me (but I’ll take it even if he’s not into it.) The point is that we can be outwardly obeying one of God’s commands and at the same time be guilty of honoring God with our lips, because our hearts are far from him.

There may be times when we can fool others and even ourselves. But for the most part the world knows when we are just going through the motions. The world sees the disparity between what we say we believe and what we do. How much more does the all-knowing God see as He searches our hearts.

2. God doesn’t want worship and faith to be merely lip service. He wants your heart! That is why the hymn writer began this month’s hymn with the words, “Take my heart and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee.”

II. God desires so much that our hearts belong to Him that He gave His own Son.

- A. God did more than just pay lip service to His desire to love mankind and restore the world to Himself. He didn’t just say He loves us, though He does that too, He showed it by sending Jesus just as He promised from the mouths of the prophets—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, John the Baptist—announced again and again God’s promise to give the world a Savior from sin and death.

But the Holy Scriptures also record for us the story of all God actually did in order to keep His promises—preserving His people through the flood, the Red Sea, from the Philistines, from Babylon. Our God didn’t just make promises; He kept them all, finally, by giving His own Son. God gave His Son to die. That was no lip service; that tore out the Father’s very heart! And Christ went willingly to the cross. All His words of teaching He backed up with that action of deepest, heartfelt love. He died for the ungodly – for you and me!

- B. In the Sacraments, the God who loves the world that much also acts in our lives to make clear that His love includes you and me.

1. In Holy Baptism, He has called us each by name and adopted us as His own sons and daughters.

2. In the gift of His Son's body and blood, in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, He makes clear that His love for us is more than just a promise; that's the very body and blood given on the cross, and they are given to each of us personally!

III. In doing all this, the Lord strips away our hypocrisy so that our hearts do become His.

- A. He strips away the mask of hypocrisy from the religious leaders in the text because He desires that they turn from their ways and be forgiven.

*Illustration:* Do you remember the story of King David? After he committed adultery, David went to great lengths, even murder, to cover up what he had done. Then he went right back to living a very religious life as he always had. Yet now it was only a cover used to hide his guilt. God loved David too much to allow that. That's why He sent the prophet Nathan to confront David with his sin. God wanted David's heart. God wanted David's faith to be real again, so He stripped away David's mask. He confronted David so he would confess his sin. He confronted David because He wanted David to know that He forgave him.

- B. God loves you and me too much to allow us to continue to use our faith as a mask to hide our hypocrisy.
  1. Through His word of Law, He strips away our masks, because more than anything He desires to speak to us His word of forgiveness and grace.
  2. He acts in our lives because in the place of an empty shell of religion He desires to give us hearts that belong to Him!

*Conclusion:* There's no false advertising with God. What you see is what you get. What we see—made clearly visible in the life and death of Jesus—is a heart of love that wouldn't let us go our empty way. And what we get then is that loving heart for all eternity, His loving heart pouring love into our hearts so that our lives match the profession of our lips.