

Take Off That Mask

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Inwardly

- Who they really are...
- They say they are one thing but,
- They turn out to be something else.

There is a danger in aligning yourself with someone who is not who they say they are.

Jesus said watch out for these people because who they really are is something far different than who they appear to be.

- I understand that a sheep is a harmless animal.
- They do not prey on other animals.
- They eat grass and not meat.
- A wolf on the other hand is something that kills and eats whatever it can, whenever it can.
- The wolf is obviously something that is very dangerous.

You can be injured very quickly when you hang around people who appear to be one thing but turn out to be something far different.

Jesus told us that there are some people, who appear to be very religious,

- They look like they are one of the sheep.
- They dress the part.
- They look the part
- They may even sound like a sheep.

- But given time and opportunity, who they really are will be revealed and you may not like what you see.

Mark 12:38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,

39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

When you read the Gospels, you will find a common thread with Jesus.

- He does not like people who say they are one thing but are actually something else.
- Jesus didn't like people who wore masks.
- And here's why,
- People who wear masks create confusion in the Church.
- They misrepresent to the world who Jesus is and what living for Him is really all about.
- This confusion causes those people who need salvation to be turned away from the Church because they find there something worse than their own situation.
- Hypocrisy.

Jesus told a parable one day... He said....

Luke 6:41-42

King James Version (KJV)

41 And why beholdest thou the mote (splinter) that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

Can you imagine a person walking around with a beam in their eye, trying to help other people get the little splinters out that they may have.

I hear Jesus saying to us today.

- Take off the mask.
- Stop pretending to be something that you are not.
- It is better to be real.
- It is better to be honest.

This is why you hear Jesus over and over telling people to not judge one another.

- He knew that if people in the church were to judge one another that the person being judged may start acting like nothing was wrong in order to keep other people from judging them.
- Listen if we act like nothing is wrong, we'll never get healed.
- If we pretend like everything is honky dory in our live when really we need the church to pray for us and support us, then we will never be benefitted by the love of the family of God.

Can I say today, "There is a beauty in being who you really are."?

- When you are genuine, God can use you.
- And if who you really are would prevent Him from using you, then at least He now can work on you and heal you to the point that He can then use you.

Hear me...your life doesn't have to be perfect for God to use you.

- It just has to be honest.
- It just has to be real.

When I read the scriptures, I find God using some pretty savory individuals.

- Some of them are liars.
- Some of them thieves.
- Some were drunks
- Some adulterers.
- Some murderers.
- One man who God used to write most of the New Testament had actually been a murderer and torturer of Christian men, women and children.
- I'm not sure it gets any worse than that.
- But in the day that Saul had a coming to God moment where he took off his mask of religious piety, God said, "Now I can use him."

You see, at some point it's time to take off the suit and tie and show them who Jesus really is.

- Or maybe for you it's not a suit and tie. Maybe it's your pride.
- Or maybe it's your pain.
- Or your prosperity.
- Or your education.

At some point it's time to take off the mask that the real you hides behind so the Holy Spirit can heal you and clean you up so you can show your family and your neighbors who Jesus Christ really is!

- I don't know about you, but I want to be real.
- I want to be honest with God and with you.

I don't know if everybody knows this or not, but 1 Timothy 3:16 tells us that the Great God of the Universe, stepped down off of the throne of Heaven, took off His royal robes and clothed Himself in the weakness of human flesh so He could reach people.

- We want this church to be approachable.
- We want to be accessible to anyone who would walk through those doors.

Masks you see come in many forms.

Jesus mentioned the scribes and their long clothing...

- They loved to dress up and put on the image of religion.
- They thought what they wore made them Holy.
- They thought how they looked told people who they were.
- Inwardly Jesus said, "they devour widows houses", but outwardly they pretended to represent the Kingdom of God.

That's what I love about Jesus; I don't have to put on some mask in order to be loved by Him.

- He loves me just the way I am.
- He died for me when I was at my worst.
- He cared for me when what I looked like and what I acted like was completely reprehensible to Him.

That's why I love Him,

- You don't have to put on some act to be accepted by Him.

- You don't have to wear a mask for Him to love you or use you.
- You just have to be real.
- You just have to be honest.

You see if we are not real, we never will reach people with the love of Jesus.

- You can't wear pride and show people Jesus,

And I'll tell you something else, you can't wear a mask that Looks Like Jesus and pretends to represent Him if you really don't and I'll tell you why...

- People's needs are too great.
- A false image of God cannot heal the broken hearted.
- A fake persona that tries to be religious cannot minister to people whose lives are falling apart.
- If we're going to be used to reach this world the way Jesus intended for us to reach it, we are going to have to take off the masks and be vulnerable to the criticisms of those who would judge us.

I'm putting down the piety and picking up the cross that Jesus died on so I can show the people I love how much He loves them.

- It's time to be real.
- It's time to be honest.
- What you see may not be what you expect to see, but what you see is what you get.
- It's the real me.

I have won more people to God.

- I have baptized more people.
- I have prayed more people through to the infilling of the Holy Spirit in the last 3 years than I have in my entire ministry and I'll tell you what I've been doing differently.

- I've stopped acting the way I think people expect me to act and I've started loving people the way I know He wants me to love them.
- Can I say today, "It's important to be real."?
- It's ok to be common
- It's ok to be authentic.
- It's ok to Take Off That Mask.
- It's ok to be someone who people can relate to.
- Because if they cannot relate to us how will they hear us when we tell them about our God.

I know today that you have loved ones you would really like to introduce to Jesus.

- I know today that there are people in your family that you would like to see come to church.

The people around us need to feel what we experience when we come together on a Sunday morning like this.

I wonder today if you would consider spending some time this week with someone you know and love and inviting him or her to be your guest here next week.

- Folks, let's take off whatever it is that is separating us from the ones that we love.
- Let's show them that we love them.
- Let's show them that we care about them.
- Let's show them Jesus.