

SERMON NOTES: SEPT. 15TH
SCRIPTURE READINGS...James 1: 22-25, Matthew 6: 1-8

BEING WHAT WE CLAIM TO BE ...as Christians, we strive to be authentic, to be what we claim to be. We are surrounded people who project the image of being Christians, but they are not what others think they are. The issue is: pretense. Whatever image they project, it isn't real. They are phonies and some people are phony to the core. The bible has an ugly word for it: hypocrisy, it means "pretending or feigning loyalty"

WE CAN'T SEE OUR HYPOCRISY...we are all hypocrites to one degree or another. The worst part of hypocrisy: we often can't detect it in our own lives. Christians are no less hypocritical than others. Every time we fail to live out the faith; every time we notice the faults of others but fail to see our own. Jesus doesn't expect perfection; what he wants is honesty and faithfulness.

Beware of practicing your piety before others or you'll have no reward from your Father in Heaven

He is pointing us beyond outward behavior to inner attitudes. He knew that it is easier to do the right thing than to have pure motives, or a Christ-like heart. The great threat to faith isn't failing to have perfect morals, but allowing faith to be a MASK WE WEAR, a ROLE WE PLAY when it suits us, but not a real part of who we are.

CALLING OUT A FEW HYPOCRITES...Jesus saw this pattern in Jewish leaders of his day. Their top priority wasn't serving God but being seen serving God. They enjoyed their status in the community. Their main problem wasn't pretense; it was self-righteousness. They were too good for their own good. Jesus saw some good in them, but not as much good as they saw in themselves. They were blind to their sin, blind to what mattered to God. They majored in minors, focused on external issues.

THE STRUGGLE TO BE AUTHENTIC...the struggle to be authentic is a daily struggle, striving to be what we claim to be. Are you Christ's Disciple or whatever others want you to be? What is at stake our character: our core/essence. Character tests seldom occur in the public spotlight but in the shadows...when there's no one is to give us credit for what we do and only God is watching. To Jesus, we don't just have character; we are meant TO BE CHARACTERS, who live distinctively, who see the world differently than others do. We walk to the beat of a different drummer. Serving Jesus, we don't just BELIEVE SOMETHING; we BECOME SOMETHING, something braver/more distinctive than we would otherwise be.