

HYPOCRITES KNOW THEMSELVES!

Today's Text: Lk 11: 33- 36

Extracts:

[And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, (Jesus) began to say],
“**No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. *The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore, take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light***” [Lk 11: 29, 33-36]

On Friday, 29 October 2010, an elderly Caucasian man boarded Air Canada Flight AC018 in Hong Kong en route Vancouver.¹ He wore glasses, a brown cardigan sweater and a leather flat cap. He had passed through the multiple security checks, including the Chinese government-run Hong Kong passport control before the Canadian airline crew admitted him on board. But by the time that the plane arrived Vancouver, a young Asian man (in his 20's) disembarked. It took the Canadian border officials to establish a link between the old Caucasian that boarded and that young Asian that arrived! On his arrest, the young man admitted that he was seeking political asylum. Reports are emerging that he wore a mask to disguise his true identity and that he had removed it hours after he had boarded. Investigators have found two items of luggage that he had left behind on the plane, one of which contained the mask. They may never have all the facts but the young man himself knows what he did!

So it is with hypocrites, that is, people who say one thing and do the opposite. They can deceive others for a long season and receive the benefits of their deception. They know everything about themselves but can they really escape? In this week's study, Jesus has made the point that light and darkness cannot mix. If there is no light in every part of us, there is darkness in all of us! Find out how you can give up that little darkness of hypocrisy in your life for the true light of God to shine through.

¹ Based on “Air Canada passenger disguised as old man,” By the Canadian Press, Fri. Nov. 5, 2010; http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/capress/101105/national/passenger_disguise ; and “Asian man board plane disguised as old white man,” *The Telegraph*, 05 Nov. 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/canada/8113296/Asian-man-boards-plane-disguised-as-old-white-man.html>

1. **Background: Hypocrisy means darkness posing as light!**

In continuation of His rebuttals to the unending and unjustifiable attacks from the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders, Jesus used the Parable of the Lighted Lampstand to illustrate another aspect of their hypocrisy. The following aspects of the story should be noted:

a) *Light is put on a lampstand*

Jesus told them, “No one, who has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light” [Lk 11: 33]. Ordinarily, light drives away darkness for as long as it keeps shining. While it shines, it is important to place the light at that point where it can produce the most light. If it is covered up (in a secret place or under a basket, as in the parable), the light cannot expel the darkness in that place. Therefore, it should be put on the lampstand which, presumably, is the highest level in the room to be lit up.

Light in that story represents the truth of God that believers are expected to exhibit in their thoughts, words and deeds. On one occasion, Jesus told His listeners, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” [Jn 8: 12]. Therefore, light in this parable represents *spiritual transparency* which should not be tainted by shady deals in dark corners or modified to fit exigencies or occasions. For example, at Antioch, Peter ate with Gentiles that had become believers in Christ. But, as soon as certain Jewish brethren sent by James, the Lord’s brother and one of the pillars of the Jerusalem church, came there, Peter separated himself from the Gentiles, “fearing those who were of the circumcision.” Paul openly withstood him and his men because “they were not straightforward about *the truth of the gospel*” [Gal. 2: 11-14]. So, the light you show in your church on Sunday should be the same light you show at home, in your office or school or business. To do otherwise is to put your light under a basket or in a secret place.

b) *You are what you see!*

Jesus also told the Jewish leaders, “The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness” [Lk 11: 34]. Two people looking at the same object may see different things. That is because you are what you see! The Psalmist says, “I will set nothing wicked before my eyes. ... My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me” [Ps. 101: 3, 6], and Job added, “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?” [Job 31: 1]. In both cases, their eyes see the purity of their hearts for, as Jesus has put it, what defiles a man comes from within, “for out of the

heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness [and] blasphemies” [**Matt. 15: 19**].

So, when the eye of your body is ruled by the truth of God, what you see follows. For example, when you look at others, especially of the opposite sex, you will see love or admiration instead of lust. When they put other people’s property under your control, you will see integrity instead of zeal to steal. When people undermine your power or position, you will see the need for humility rather than wounded pride. It is instructive that God sees the heart not our physical features [**1 Sam. 16:7**] because He is Spirit [**Jn 4:24**] and “no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” [**1 Cor. 2: 11**]. That is why Jesus has warned, “Therefore take heed that the light in you is not darkness” [**Lk 11: 35**]. You are what you see!

c) *Your light should be full not partial!*

Jesus concluded the parable by saying, “If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light” [**v. 36**]. Your spiritual light is for all seasons, not for certain times or certain occasions. There are no half measures and you cannot go on vacation to enjoy some darkness and return to light! God expects you to be always faithful.

In the words of Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [at the same time]” [**Matt. 6: 24**]. The risen Christ that spoke with John on the island of Patmos sent a warning to the church of the Laodiceans, “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” [**Rev. 3: 15-16**].

In summary, the parable addresses the question of hypocrisy. Light represents truth and it drives away the darkness of hypocrisy. Unfortunately, most of us thrive on presenting a public image of probity and transparency but do dirty things in secret. Unless such secrets are exposed, we are able to get away with so much and still give the impression to our admirers that we are angels. But two facts are quite clear. First, we know ourselves that we are hypocrites because “the spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord searching all the inner depths of his heart” [**Prov. 20: 27**]. Second, God also knows and, as His word confirms, your sin will surely find you out [**Num. 32: 23**]! If you do not deal with hypocrisy, it will deal with you!

2. Let us audit your ‘light’!

It is quite easy for every one of us to think or say that we are not hypocrites. I advise you to reserve your self-adulation until we complete the audit of the ‘light’ that you ‘radiate’ before others. See to what extent you are free of the following practices (among others):

a) *Exaggeration of the truth*

Something about you may be true but you then go ahead and blow it out of proportion to make yourself look bigger than you should be regarded. It reminds me of one telephone company’s ad where a young lady who has a little flower pot with a withered plant in front of her is speaking on the phone with her grandmother. She excitedly tells grandma, “I am here in my lovely garden!” A girl who recently got a job as office assistant that serves tea/coffee during board meetings boasted to her friends that she was a “process facilitator!” See how many candidates during the recently (November 2, 2010) concluded US Congressional elections lied about their war records to portray themselves as war heroes. In fact, one who did not go beyond a boot camp in the US was talking of his heroic exploits in Vietnam! See what we do with our CVs (curricula vitae) or résumés. We take liberty of the potential employer’s ignorance of our past to inflate our worth. For example, a self-employed IT technician told a panel interviewing him for a paid job that he was his present employer’s Internet provider!

Look at the story of the young Amalekite man who brought Saul’s crown to David from Mount Gilboa. In the battle with the Philistines, King Saul and his sons had been killed. In fact, Saul had been injured and when his armour-bearer refused to kill him, he took a sword and fell on it and died. When the armour-bearer saw the king die, he also fell on his own sword and died [**1 Sam. 31: 1-5**]. Therefore, it was not the Amalekite that killed Saul. But, when he came to David with the crown, he was expecting a reward. He told the story of his gallantry on Mount Gilboa: how he happened to be passing by when the Philistines were pressing hard on King Saul; how the king looked behind and saw him and begged him to kill him and how he obliged. Concluding his story, he said, “I took the crown and the bracelet that was on his arm and have brought them to my lord.” The truth could be that he found the items on the battle field. Instead of a handsome reward, David got him killed for “killing” God’s anointed [**2 Sam. 1: 1-15**]. So, be careful how you blow up your ego. It is hypocrisy.

b) *Crocodile tears*

Crocodiles shed tears when they want to lure their victims or when they are eating one. So, anyone who expresses insincere grief or

sympathy for others is said to be shedding crocodile tears. When you hear bad news about somebody you hate or envy, are those tears that you shed for them genuine or faked? When you say wonderful things about people that you know are crooks and evil, are you not shedding crocodile tears?

Take the example of Joseph's brothers that had sold him into slavery in Egypt. The same brothers took Joseph's tunic, the coat of many colours that they had taken from him, killed a goat kid and dipped the tunic in its blood. They brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?" As Jacob tore his clothes to mourn for his dead son, "all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him" [Gen. 37: 23-35]. They were shedding crocodile tears because *they knew the truth* of Joseph's fate. They had sold him into slavery because they hated him [v. 4]. In like manner, you are a hypocrite when you do not mean what you say or say what you mean.

c) *Keep it confidential*

Sometimes, we think that our darkness is not known to others because we have kept a confidential lid on it. As long as we can do so, the light that people see of us on the outside will remain bright. Unfortunately, sooner than later, the secret becomes public knowledge. Either the gossip media pick it up or the police and other investigative agencies of state have become interested in your records. In no time, your dirty linens are washed in public!

David had an adulterous affair with Bathsheba and she became pregnant whereas her husband, Uriah, was in the battlefield. David tried to cover it up by bringing her husband home to sleep with his wife, hoping thereby to make him responsible for the pregnancy. When that plot failed, he got him killed in battle. Thereafter, David thought that his secret was safe until the prophet, Nathan, brought word from God condemning David's action. God said to David, "Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; ... for you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun" [2 Sam. 12: 1-12]. If you think that nobody knows, you are joking. Can a politician corruptly enrich himself without the connivance of public servants? Can you commit fornication or adultery alone? Others may not squeal but God knows and will expose you in due course!

d) *Fear*

Sometimes, we know that what we are doing is wrong but we are afraid to stop it because we could be persecuted or killed or denied benefits, such as pocket money or promotion. For example, the home phone rings and somebody wants to speak with your mother. As you try to pass the phone to her, she whispers that you should tell the caller that she is not there. What should you do? Most of us would pass on that lie because mummy could 'deal' with you later should you tell the truth!

Look at Aaron's reaction to his people's call for him to make them a god to serve when Moses delayed coming down from the mountain. Aaron was not just anybody. He was Moses' spokesman to the people. Perhaps, out of fear for his life, he asked them to break off their golden earrings which he used to make the golden calf. He presented it to the people, saying, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" [Ex. 32: 1-5]. There are worse priests and pastors today in our places of worship that will serve you the gods of your choice as long as you underwrite their ministries with fat tithes, even from questionable sources.

From the forgoing, can you still claim that you are not a hypocrite? Do you obey *all traffic signs* when you are not being watched? Do you pay tithes without asking for or accepting receipts for tax credits? Do you claim your true age? Have you *truly* forgiven everybody that has offended you? If you answer anyone of them or suchlike questions in the negative, we can conclude that you are a hypocrite like the rest of us "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" [Rom. 3: 23]. Remember, hypocrites know themselves! But God is merciful and if we confess our sins, He will do what He has promised and forgive us *all of them* [1 Jn 1: 7-9].

3. Conclusion: Make Jesus your light provider!

A lamp can easily burn off if its oil is not replenished. An electric bulb has a fixed life time and when it comes, it goes dead. The power supply to your home or office can occasionally go off even when the national grid is in order. Every sunrise has a sunset. Therefore, no natural or man-made light can last forever. If you want your lamp to burn without ceasing, you must make sure that it is permanently hooked to the Light of the world, Jesus Himself, for as the Psalmist says of the Lord, "In Your light shall we see the light" [Ps. 36:9]. So, make Jesus your light provider and when next God looks at you, He will only see the light of Christ in you.

Alleluia!