

Pleasant Valley
Church of Christ

3317 Amidon
Wichita KS 67204
(316) 838-4195
www.letjesusleadus.org

Schedule of Services

Sunday

Classes 9:30 am
Worship 10:30 am
Evening 6:00 pm

Wednesday

Classes 7:30 pm

The Pleasant Valley Church of Christ is a non-denominational group of believers who are committed to following Jesus in our attitudes, our relationships, and our worship. If you want the same thing in your life, please contact us. We'd like to help.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Wings



*"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31)*

November 29, 2009

Hypocrites in the church

by David King

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do. But do not do according to their works, for they say, and do not do" (Matt. 23:2-3).

Of all the reasons offered by people for rejecting the religion of Christ, by far the most common is the claim that there are hypocrites in the church. Christians claim to be so righteous and holy, but they are just as flawed as the rest of us. Their religion is just an act, a disguise through which they look down their noses at everyone else.

First, let's consider the legitimacy of that charge. Is it true that Christians are self-righteous zealots who delight in telling everyone else how to run their lives, while excusing misbehavior in their own? The sad answer is often "yes." In far too many cases, those who claim to be followers of Christ are pious frauds. They wear their religion on their sleeves, but do a lousy job of living up to what they preach. The inconsistency between their message and their behavior is a huge turn-off to others.

But before we close the book on this question, we need to consider another angle. Is the fact that Christianity is loaded with hypocrites sufficient reason to reject it altogether? Is there another, more appropriate, response to the problem, a response that salvages the good from the teachings of Christ, while avoiding the corrupting influence of the hypocrites?

Jesus understood the problem of hypocrisy in religion, and addressed it directly in his diatribe against the scribes and Pharisees. He

railed against their self-important posturing, and the corrosive influence it had on the religion of His day. But in His view, the presence of hypocrites did not de-legitimize the value of true religion. Notice the advice He gave His followers: "Whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do. But do not do according to their works." In other words, Jesus made a distinction between what was **taught** and what was **practiced**. Clearly, the hypocrites did not live up to their claims. But their personal failure did not invalidate the truth of God's word. Jesus' response to the problem of the hypocrites was simple, but profound: We should center our attention on the divine standard, not on those who are imperfectly following it.

Actually, there is nothing all that unusual about this approach. Is there hypocrisy in politics? Of course! Do we encounter hypocrisy in the workplace? All the time. Yet we still vote in elections and go to work every day, in hope that our efforts will help create something better. Why should church be any different? Yes, there are hypocrites in the church; but instead of rejecting religion outright, why not get involved and show people how it should be done? After all, if we are qualified to pass judgment on those awful hypocrites, surely **we** can do a better job of living what we believe.

Of course, maybe "hypocrites in the church" is not the issue at all. Perhaps that's just a convenient excuse to avoid accepting the challenge of serving God. If so, then we are letting the hypocrites stand between us and God — and they are closer to God than we are.