

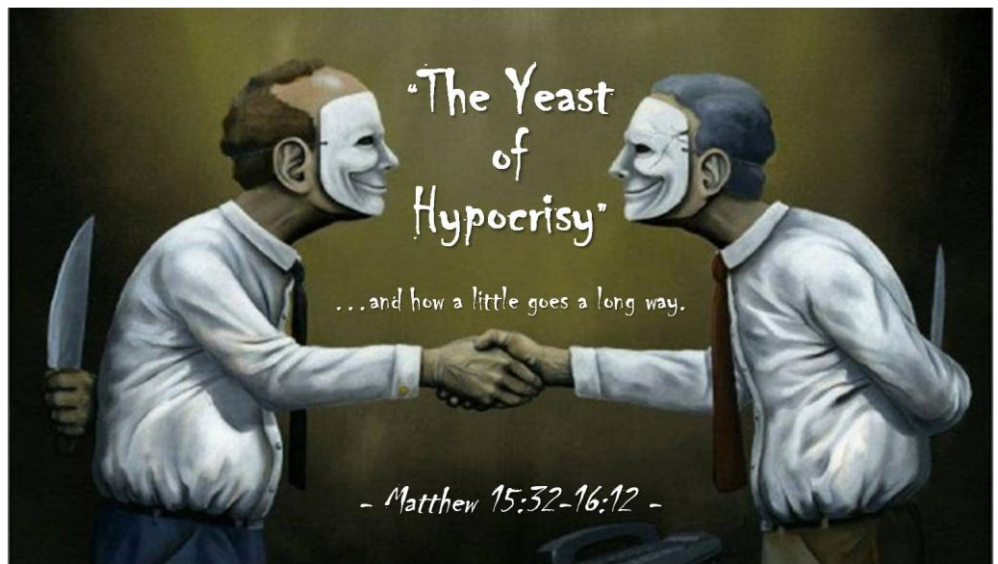
“The Yeast of Hypocrisy”

...and how a little goes a long way!

-Matthew 15:32 – 16:12

by **Pastor Tim Dodson**
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in **Menomonie Wisconsin**
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Matthew 15: 32-16:12 Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." 33 Then His disciples said to Him, "Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?" 34 Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few little fish." 35 So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. 36 And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. 37 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. 38 Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. 39 And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala. 1 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; 3 "and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. 4 "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed. 5 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6 Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." 7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." 8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? 9 "Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? 10 "Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? 11 "How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? —but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.



Let us begin by reading again the first part of our text today, and the last segment of chapter 15: *Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.” Then His disciples said to Him, “Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?” Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven, and a few little fish” So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. (Matthew 15:32-38).*

Hmmm...sound familiar? Of course...it was just a one chapter back for us, and couldn't have been more than days or a few short weeks for the apostles and Jesus.

It seems apparent that despite all that they had witnessed and all that they had been taught this far, the disciples had not yet come to understand what Jesus could do and what a life without learning from experience would mean. They had had a great "educational experience". They were truly living out the greatest display of Christ teaching discipleship in the history of the world. They had been taught—through practical, hands-on experience—the

greatness of Jesus' power and what a true life of faith looked like. But clearly, they had not yet made good use of the educational opportunity they had been given. They had not yet learned to trust in Jesus' power or to see themselves as a part of the great human experience where God is working a great 'learning lab': a place where they all...and all of us, are able to witness the triumphs and tragedies of those who went before...

You and I are in "the school of Christ" also. And yet, I wonder how many times we too have dozed off in the classroom. Surely we are without excuse even if one is apt to give the 1st century apostles a break without the NBC nightly news. We especially, in our age of the world-wide communication of internet venues like Facebook and the instant viewing of YouTube. Even in this fellowship with consistent Bible teaching, applicational classroom experience, and constant real-life missional dynamic, we often still tend to stand in line to be the next kid to freeze his tongue to a metal pole in the dead of winter!

I think that the saddest display is to watch folks who have literally detailed the warnings in oft teaching of their own, go out and fall to the very placard cautions that they warned others of repeatedly! I have often acknowledged that what we do here is like an old play or stage musical where the roles stay the same, and only the faces and actors change. How many high schools have done "The Sound of Music", "West Side Story" or "The Music Man?" And how many churches have seen the same beaten down roads to washed-out Christianity traveled repeatedly and individual believers catch the bus down the paved avenues to obscurity? It's like there is a mysterious screen play written someplace and we are inexplicably compelled to follow the story line despite all our adamant denials that **our** situation is different or that we are justified in **our** actions.

Some things are just absolutely expected when someone is in the hypocritical "cul-de-sac of stupidity." Now I'm not speaking here about the rookie errors or even the stumbles that we all are guilty of from time to time. I am speaking of the guy who knows better and even taught the righteous path to others and then knowingly with premeditation took a hard left in the heat of the battle.

One roll that is never void of an actor is the roll of that which the ministerial community here calls "*that guy*." The one who wants something so bad he or she blocks all contrary council, then squeals that everyone has turned against them and have gone mad because we won't support some reckless decision in their life. They heard all the sad stories of those who have gone before them and shook their heads in disbelief when someone went there anyway. They warned others of the pending disaster and saw the subsequent results, and yet that day came when they found themselves in the roll of "that guy" and *they are gone*.

This is the story that the apostles were living out herein, all the while no doubt telling everyone that Jesus is all powerful and can and does do anything without breaking a sweat. It is the same manifest that the Pharisees are exuding when they ask for a sign from Jesus after they had personally seen him heal the sick, make the lame walk and feed the hungry out of nothing. Everybody knew better, but lived contrary to the truth that they had been taught and had in some cases even proclaimed.

How does this happen? How do we get to this place in our lives? What is this small seemingly innocuous 'yeast' of danger that when ignored can permeate our whole lives and futures and infect every aspect of our living? Because one thing is for sure, once this yeast is mixed into the dough, there is no getting that yeast out of that bread! So we must **begin** by acknowledging and understanding that the danger is real and great, and it greatly behooves us to pay attention in class and learn from those who have went on before us, either to great humble service to God...a "well finished race", as well as those who hypocritically believed themselves to be different and 'better' ...having garnered a 'special dispensation' to ignore the obvious dangers and make it out there on their own.

As always, scripture holds our answers: In Ephesians 2:10 we're told to that "*we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*" And Romans 8:28-30 says "*all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*" And then in James 1:2-4 where we're told to "*count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*"

In a nutshell these passages tell us something remarkable and very encouraging—that God is ordering all the events of our life together in such a way as to conform us to the image of Christ. What they are claiming is either true or it's not. But do we *really* believe it, or do we deep down believe that such is not the case in *my* life and *I* somehow stand unique and outside of such scripture? Because our answer to that question will determine how we view the trials, the challenges, and opportunities that life presents. Our position in this will determine the kind of student we will prove to be in the classroom of Christ!

When we live "in Christ," He is controlling our every movement and experience. There is no aspect or situation that is independent of Him. He is the vine and we are the branches and we cannot live without our constant connection to Him for water, nutrients, and for our very life. Even the trials and challenges of life that we experience are for His purposes and glory, for our growth and conforming us into His image. All of life 'in His hand' occurs to teach us the truths of His sovereignty and to train us to trust in His sufficiency in the midst of those challenges.

When we stand at that crossroads we must ask ourselves "*does God work this way?*" "*What have I witnessed in my walk? What have I learned from his Word? What has he shown me even at the expense of others? What is the history of Christ in my life and what is the track record of those who became "that guy" and burned the village on the way out the door? What happened in the past to those who forgot the history of Christ's interactions as well as His methods of communication and interaction?*"

Again, Jesus likens this ailment as spawning from a small and seemingly harmless and inoffensive "yeast." Seldom if ever is real consideration given to where a path will take us if we are on that path out of great personal desire and a belief in self-entitlement. Thoughts of "*I* deserve this" or "*this is a good thing for me*" without consideration of Christ's direction and *how He has historically given us that direction*, thus we have planted just a seed of rebellion and pride that will one day tower over our lives like a mighty oak. *Am I troubled deep in my soul and are those who I have counted as family and friends...members of my very body troubled also by my actions? Have we adopted an "I don't care" attitude towards such? Are we, like Pharisees, living like the rules apply to others but not to me? Are we justifying the means in order to gain what we believe is a righteous end?*

Jesus had previously shown the apostles...*as well as the Pharisees*, His sovereign power over life and death. Note again Christian...*He has already spoken!* I have seen those who want to accept that God has divinely and provincially ordered every aspect of our lives, **except for** the one thing that they want real bad! Apparently God missed that one! Or those who know God speaks through the body of Christ and has historically used people in our lives to deliver a "word" from the king, but despite overwhelming voices to the contrary, we make a decision based on singular desire, emotion, and passion, believing everyone is against us, or, like the Pharisees, that they are the only one who is hearing from God. Forgetting Proverbs 15:22 that tells us "*Plans fail when there is no counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*"

When we live this way, we fly the flag of the hypocrite. It started so small, but eventually it consumed us. Then we find ourselves living dual lives...one in perceived secret and one in public.

Some time ago I arrived in the parking lot of our local pharmacy when a long passed friend came out of the store. Seeing us, she smiled and waved madly and I tacitly acknowledged her in response. Anyone who would have seen this exchange would have figured we were best buddies and current friends. But the fact is that individual has made it a mission to tear down this church and those within it in any way possible, no matter how evil and untruthful it might be. She is a legend in this matter! All because we asked her to step down out of her church position of leadership because of serious marriage problems. I mean, when the police come to your house because of your fighting, it's best that you step off of your service for awhile and focus on the elephant in the room!

In 20 plus years of ministry I have seen "that guy" play out over and over and over. The desire to move to this place or another, the want to marry this person, the desire to be a pastor, the "need" for position, etc etc etc. All rebelled because we would not get on board with their desires. And all of it doesn't make me feel special or better than they, but it in fact scares me to death personally. Because "*but for the grace of God, there go I.*" Not to mention His mercy and patience! The only reason I have not went down that same road is the same reason others of you have not. Effectively because I have seen the result of such a move. I paid attention in class.

I *do* remember the last time! I remember how He feed the 5000 so I figure that He can feed 4000. I have read of the likes of David in his presumptuous sin and the cost of such, Jacob's wrestling with God when things did not go His way, Jonah's attempt to circumnavigate the plan of God for His life, Aarons compromise with the gold calf idol for public opinion, Nebuchadnezzar's pride driving Him mad and becoming a crazy outcast. There was Judas, Peter, the 'rich young ruler', Paul when his name was still Saul, Abels brother Cain, and the list goes on and on. We know God! We know His ways and even if we don't know *why*, (and often I do not), we know He is the Master of all and we are nothing and can do nothing without Him. We deserve death only and we have been given life, life eternal, and life abundant. But let us never forget, *He is the one in charge.*

In order to avoid the "yeast of the Pharisees" we must be effective "students." We must hear this morning and gain from the spiritual "lessons" Jesus teaches us about Himself. Matthew tells us; *Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread" (Matthew 16:5-7).* The 'leaven' was on the table.

The Pharisees too did not believe that Jesus was the one calling the shots. They did not *want* to believe. Because they had other plans...plans and living that was their own. And once that yeast gets into a life, it spreads its influence throughout every aspect of that life. It does not remain small and inconsequential. It spreads and eventually consumes you.

Matthew writes; *But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:8-12).*

"*O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves...*" Jesus rebuked them because they firstly failed to *remember*, and secondly they failed to *understand*, and thirdly they failed to *believe* in Jesus and his power and sovereignty. A killer combination for any of us. A killer combination for "that guy," and whoever has donned that cape today. May we all see that we are in school here and if we fail to pay attention, when that pop quiz is presented, we will fail...