



## Sermon

Fr. Jeff Wylie

Rector, Christ's Church, Greensburg, Pennsylvania

March 6, 2019

---

When people ask me what I think about Lent, they are amazed to find out that I compare it to going to the dentist. It is not something that I particularly look forward to. It is actually my least favorite season; however, I do find it necessary. Despite them both seem to have aversion to sweets and chocolate, and when we prepare ourselves for a dentist and Lent, we tend to want to overdo it. Brushing and flossing to make up for all those times we were lazy. If you think about it going to the dentist, you want your teeth to be as white as possible as pure as possible and to make sure there is no decay. If there is evidence of decay, eradicate it as quickly as possible.

Jesus is not stating it's wrong to have as we say in today's terms pious acts, but we have to be careful in the motives we have behind our pious acts. Let's look a little deeper in our Gospel passage for today. It comes in the

middle of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. This section specifically is pointed to those who understand the importance of being religious and spiritual. The term Jesus uses is righteousness.

Jesus did not use the term "pious," as pious is only found in 1 Timothy 5:4 and it refers to being reverent to one's parents. Righteousness focuses on the state of mind. If we do things for others to see, we are not doing it for the Lord. Our life is to be an outward expression of our inward faith and relationship with God. Jesus calls those who are showing outward righteousness not righteous at all, but hypocrites. In biblical terms, it associates those to the Greek actors on the stage and the masks they put on to assume that role.

I know one of the worst things to call a pastor or minister is a hypocrite, but I realize that I am a hypocrite at times. I know sometimes I get angry with my children and my heart is pounding, but then come to church all smiles and nice when my heart is still pounding from my anger. This is a season when we aspire to be more sincere. I love that word, "sin sere: - without wax."

In ancient times people would buy beautifully sculpted statues and then place them in their yard only to find that the scars beneath the surface were revealed when the sun began to melt the wax used to cover the sculptor's errors. The word, "sin sere: without wax" means we see from the beginning the sculpture with all the missed cuts. The beauty is still within the sculpture, even with those errors.

We need to expose our cuts and errors from our sinfulness and be sincere. We begin to realize we need to rely on God, we need His mercy and grace, and through this we are made beautiful again. In our approach to purifying ourselves and living in righteousness, we need to remember to keep smiling, for Jesus is with us. Amen.

Fr. Jeff+