Matthew 16:1-12; Luke 12:1-3
Beware Of Spiritual Hypocrisy

I. Profile Of A Spiritual Hypocrite
A. What Is A Spiritual Hypocrite? 16:3; Luke 12:1
1. **Hypocrite**- an actor, a stage player, one who wears a mask, conceals true identity
2. Spiritual hypocrites pretend to want the truth 16:1
   a. “They came testing Him” - their challenge was insincere; they often sought to prove Him wrong, not to really discover the truth about Him
   b. Religious hypocrites are manipulative
   c. They want to steer situations to obtain validations of their positions
   d. Talk spiritual & ask spiritual questions: they want a sign “from heaven”
   e. Not any old sign would do. They sounded so sincere and appropriate
   f. Who could refuse that kind of high-sounding request?
   g. Religious hypocrites have a way of making you look foolish for not being able to answer their questions or refute their argument

B. Look Anywhere For Support 16:1
1. Normally, Sadducees & Pharisees are enemies of each other
2. Here, they join together against Jesus
3. The truth of Jesus is threatening to “their world”
4. Religious hypocrites want to maintain “their world”; they don’t want truth

C. Intellectual & Logical
1. Jesus said that they could discern the weather by analyzing the sky
2. Religious hypocrites don’t lack natural understanding; can be intelligent people
3. They make observations, but their insincerity prevents them from correctly analyzing their observations
   a. Remember when the se leaders analyzed Jesus’ ability to cast out demons?
   b. They attributed that ability to Satan
   c. Jesus corrected their thinking: Satan casting out Satan doesn’t make sense
4. Oftentimes, it is their high level of intellect & logic that makes them seem correct about their analysis of spiritual truth
5. The Pharisees & Sadducees were intelligent acc. to human standards
6. There is a big difference between natural & spiritual understanding
   Turn to 1 Corinthians 2:13-15
7. Many are fooled by spiritual sounding arguments that come from human reasoning. May are led astray by spiritual hypocrites
8. Jesus told the disciples to “take heed & beware”: recognize & guard against S.H.

D. Jesus’ Response To Them
1. Jesus refuses to be manipulated by them
2. He had already given many signs which they refused to believe
3. Jesus told them that they would receive a sign: Turn to Matthew 12:40
4. Jesus rebuked their insincerity & pointed out their hypocrisy
5. He revealed their inability to discern & analyze spiritual truths
6. Then He left them w/0 trying to “win the argument”. That’s tempting for us
7. “A pit bull can beat a skunk in a fight any time, but it’s just not worth it”
8. It is wiser to leave religious hypocrites alone w/God. Turn to Matthew 15:14
II. Safeguarding Your Life Against Spiritual Hypocrisy (Leaven)

A. Actual Leaven
1. Actual leavening agents have the following characteristics:
   a. Leaven works itself through a batch of dough; its very nature is to spread
   b. It lightens a batch of dough so that the rises, is lighter, & more porous
   c. **Wikipedia definition** - a substance used in doughs and batters that causes them to rise. In the presence of moisture, heat, acidity, or other triggers the leavening agent reacts to produce gas (often carbon dioxide) that becomes trapped as bubbles within the dough. When a dough or batter is baked, it "sets" and the holes left by the gas bubbles remain. This is what gives breads, cakes, and other baked goods their soft, sponge-like textures.
   d. The bread is bigger & lighter, but it’s because it is full of holes
   e. The leaven worked itself in, and produced a lot of hot air
   f. It looks bigger, but doesn’t have corresponding weightiness/substance
   g. The bread seems to be bigger than it actually is. It’s not all it seems to be
2. Leavening agents have great longevity
   Sourdough bread is made by using a small amount (20-25%) of "starter" dough, which has the yeast culture, and mixing it with new flour and water. Part of this resulting dough is then saved to use as the starter next time. As long as the starter dough is fed flour and water daily the sourdough mixture can stay in room temperature indefinitely and remain healthy and usable. It is not uncommon to have a baker's starter dough that has had years of history, from many hundreds of previous batches. As a result each bakery's sourdough has a distinct taste.

B. The Leaven Of Spiritual Hypocrisy
1. Spiritual hypocrisy sounds good but ignores facts (Jesus’ previous miracles) 16:12
2. Biblically, leaven is symbolic of sin
   a. Like leaven, sin spreads...
   b. Like leaven, as long as it is “fed”, S.H. stays alive & will infect others
   c. Like leaven, spiritual hypocrisy produces puffed up, inflated egos
   d. Like leaven, sp. hypocrites sound much weightier than they really are

C. Why We Need To Safeguard Against Sp. Hypocrisy 16:5
1. Because Jesus said that we need to
2. Take heed- see w/ the eyes, perceive w/ the mind, know by experience
3. Beware- to bring near, to bring a ship to land, give attention to, apply yourself
4. We have the tendency to take the “spiritual low road”
   a. The disciples thought Jesus was speaking of actual leaven & bread
   b. Our first spiritual considerations tend to be “lower” rather than “higher”
   c. More “natural” than “spiritual” 16:11
5. It is sometimes easier for us to believe logical sounding human arguments
6. If we are hypocritical, the truth will eventually come out Luke 12:2, 3

D. How Do We Safeguard Ourselves Re. Spir. Hypocrisy & Hypocrites?
1. Don’t analyze life simply by human reasoning 16:8
2. Focus on and remember the truth about Jesus 16:9, 10
3. Learn to recognize hypocrisy be becoming familiar w/ the truth
4. How to spot a counterfeit bill: become very familiar with the real thing
   a. Feel the paper. Counterfeits don’t feel right (witness of the Holy Spirit)
   b. Hold it up to the light to look for watermarks and threads (light of Word)
   c. Check print quality: is what is printed clear? (confusing/contradicting?)
   d. Take a deeper look; use a magnifying glass (take time; God will reveal)