

## Luke 20:20

*So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor.*

Without thinking of today's verse, read what these men said to Jesus.

† **Luke 20:21-22** *Then they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth: Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"*

Now reading this you may not understand where I am going with it. But look again at what today's verse says: "*spies who pretended to be righteous*" These guys "*pretended to be righteous*" and with that in mind as you read verses 21-22 we see that these are a bunch of empty words trying to flatter Jesus with their false words of praise.

*"Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth"* These all sound good, but honestly they did not believe one word of what they were saying, instead they were trying to flatter Jesus with their words because they "*pretended to be righteous*". And why did they? "*that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor.*" Simply, they had their own agenda in mind.

Yet how many pray using words of flattery, yet they are empty words that sound good coming from their head and not their heart, but in reality they are trying to butter up the Lord so they can get what they want from Him.

How do you know if others are using words of flattery in prayer? By the way they live. Are they living for the Lord because they truly believe that He is Lord of lords and King of kings, or are they living like the world, wanting themselves to rule over their own lives, wanting to look good in the eyes of others, but could care less what the Lord thinks of them? And it's not only words in prayer, but also words to others, trying to flatter them with empty talk, because they have an agenda.

We all know those who use words of flattery all the time. Be it at work, or school or in your family or even those in the church, but in reality, we know they are full of lies, and the words they are saying are empty and meaningless, words full of hot air. The only reason they use them is to get what they want out of others.

The Psalmist says that: "*My enemies cannot speak a truthful word. Their deepest desire is to destroy others. Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled*

*with flattery.*” **Psalm 5:9 (NLT2)** Reading this Psalm, it sounds just like the guys who were talking to Jesus.

These type of people think they are getting away with these false words. But the truth is, everyone can see right through them, and King Solomon in his wisdom said that: **“*In the end, people appreciate honest criticism far more than flattery.*” Proverbs 28:23 (NLT2)**

No one likes false flattery, and a lot don’t like flattery at all. Reading King Solomon’s proverb, may I add that, flattery will get you many enemies, but honesty will get you true friends. Something to remember this holiday season as you get together with family and friends and coworkers. Simply, be honest with who you are and don’t try to flatter others to be accepted or because you have your own agenda.

- † **Psalm 32:2 (NLT2)** *Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!*
- † **Proverbs 11:5 (NLT2)** *The godly are directed by honesty; the wicked fall beneath their load of sin.*
- † **Psalm 15:2 (NLT2)** *Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts.*