

Don't be fooled by the mask

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

Halloween is an opportunity for children to dress up, pretend, and get candy. The purpose of Halloween is to obtain goodies in quantities that their own parents would not normally provide. I remember the special excitement of laying out the evening's loot on the living room floor with my brother. That candy, carefully portioned would last us until almost Christmas. Since I don't remember buying a candy bar as a child, Halloween was a bonanza.

But not all dress-up activities are innocent. Putting on a mask to obtain what one wants may have sinister implications. Is someone acting nice to manipulate us? Are they wearing a scary mask to frighten us into doing their will?

There is an aspect of the human mind that plays Halloween every day. The carnal mind wants goodies whether that is defined as money, sex, a spouse, children, a job, the car keys. Intuitively knowing that the target may not willingly relinquish the desired goodie, the carnal mind dresses up in a costume.

It may be a costume with a sad face and a long tale of woe designed to elicit sympathy. It may be a sexy costume to entice. A mask of repentance to lull us into complacency. A costume of kindness to entrap.

There is nothing wrong with being kind, repentant or needing help. But there is a difference between the genuine emotion and the mask. Spiritual discernment is needed to distinguish between the genuine and the pretend mask.

Motive is important. Is the person being kind whether you do their will or not? Is their motive selfish or unselfish? Do they apologize only to repeat the same behavior next week? Are they willing to sacrifice short-term gain in order to make a genuine change? Or are they willing to change only to obtain their goals? Or are they focusing on doing good simply because it is the right thing to do? Or is it a matter of recognition, accomplishment, and wealth?

Jesus taught the value of discerning what is in the heart rather than judging by appearance. He warned, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly

appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”
(Matthew 23:27, 28)

The lesson of Halloween can be to practice wise discernment. Look at the heart and the inward man. What is the motive? Is it unselfish, sincere, willing to do right without recompense?

If so then you are looking at the genuine person. But beware of the mask which the carnal mind uses to deceive us. The wolf in sheep's clothing should not frighten or trick us into complacency.

Let us be alert and unmask the error. Then we will not be tricked into giving away blessings unwisely that we have received from God.

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