

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #260

Tuesday of Passion Week... Day of Testing and Teaching

Jesus' Warns The People Not to Emulate the Pharisees and Scribes MT 23.1-12 (Parallel Texts: MK 12.38-40; LK 20.45-47)

1 ^LWhile all the people were listening, ^{MT}Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples:

2 ^L*"I command you to continually be careful concerning the teachers of the Law. ^{MT}The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3 So you must be careful to do everything they tell you.*

"But I command you not to do what they are doing, for they are not practicing what they preach.

4 *They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. ^M"They devour widow's houses and make lengthy prayers just for show. Such men will be punished most severely.*

5 ^{MT}*"Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; 6 they adore the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; 7 they ^Mdelight to walk around in flowing robes and ^{MT}love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others.*

8 *"But I command you not to be called "Rabbi," for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9 And I command you not to call anyone on earth "father," for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. 10 I command you not to be called "Leader," for you have one Leader, the Messiah.*

11 *"The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	The Temple Courts in Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	C. Tuesday: Day of Testing and Teaching
Title	10. Jesus Warns the People Not to Emulate the Pharisees and Scribes

COMMENT:

Since early Tuesday morning, Jesus had aimed three parables against the Jewish leadership, answered their three trick questions to him, and then silenced them with David's words in Ps. 110. Now Jesus would abandon parables, and speak the truth straight to his enemies with nothing held back (MT 23). The people in the Temple Courts had never heard the truth spoken in love like this before.

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In today's reading Jesus began to give his spiritual diagnosis of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. It was not a report of spiritual health and vitality, but sickness unto death. Therefore, Jesus would move from this opening warning concerning the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, to seven "**woes**" upon them in the following verses (the next two days of DJN postings).

While these words were spoken against a specific group of people, Matthew included them in his gospel because the same sinful nature resides within all of us. These sins are especially devastating in spiritual leaders. We must constantly obey Jesus' command to carefully guard against falling into the same temptations as the Pharisees. The same sins are lurking at our own heart's door. Let's catalogue them.

At the top of Jesus' list was hypocrisy. No surprise here.

These spiritual leaders were happy to make legalistic, difficult demands upon others that they did not adhere to themselves. More hypocrisy.

They took advantage of helpless widows for their own financial gain, and they prayed long and fervently only when people were watching in approval. Yet more hypocrisy.

They loved the self-importance and pride they felt when people addressed them by respectful names, such as "pastor" or "teacher;" they always wore special clothing that identified them as "spiritual men of God," they loved recognition of their work as spiritual leaders, and they made sure that they surrounded themselves with a band of admirers. They loved the praise of people in the guise of loving God.

Jesus gave three direct commands to his own disciples here that are consistently ignored in most churches of Christendom today:

- (1) Refuse to be called "my special Teacher (rabbi)."
- (2) Refuse to call anyone else your spiritual "Father."
- (3) Refuse to be called "Leader."

These commands ought to trouble us as much today as they did the Pharisees on the day Jesus spoke them. (The way we use the term "pastor" and "senior-pastor" in Protestant churches today is perilously like what Jesus was addressing here.)

Why should true spiritual leaders forsake the terms of endearment and praise that people naturally heap upon them? Jesus' concluding statement gives the reason. He repeated the message about true greatness in the kingdom that he had been repeating consistently for over a year: "**The greatest among you will be your servant.**"

Like Jesus, true followers are consumed with loving God and others in a way that serves God through ministering to people.

APPLICATION:

Mature spiritual leaders model the humility before God that abhors the praise of man. They are sincerely convinced that they are the greatest sinners in the world, not the most spiritual in the land. They grieve when they hear words of praise and respect for them that should belong to God. They exult when Jesus is glorified, and is given the supremacy and centrality that is his alone.

In our desire to honor God's servants we may do them a disservice by treating them in a way that elevates their pride. Do you ever do this?

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Do you use terms of respect for spiritual leaders that should only belong to God?

Do you pray for the humility of your spiritual leaders?

What do you need to change, to obey Jesus' commands in this text?