

Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Matthew 23:1-12

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

We have heard lots of parables and teachings in the last few weeks addressed to the people who were testing Jesus, the religious leaders who were challenging him. Today, however, he outright addresses their behavior. He's letting all those around him that it is not right to order others around and lay your heavy burdens on them while you sit by showing how wonderful you are. Matthew has already touched on this a bit in Chapter 6 when he talks about practicing your piety in front of others. For Matthew, it is our true, actions that speak of who we are and how we follow Christ. It is not about showing others what we do or how we follow, but the action and the following that are important. We also see this in Matthew 20:25-26, "But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant...' This is a message that will greatly resonate with people who have seen others in authority say one thing and do another or order others around while they do nothing.

Theme: Following God Humbly

Before: You will need copies of the Scripture for today, possibly in different translations.

Beginning: Welcome people as they arrive.

Opening Prayer: *Almighty God, thank you for teaching us your ways and guiding us on our journey. Be with us today as we learn your more about you and what you call us to do so we may go into the world and serve you better. Amen.*

The Story: Matthew 23:1-12

Invite someone to read Matthew 23:1-12.

If you have time, invite someone to read it from a different version (like the Common English Bible or The Message) to see how it reads differently. If you have time, you can invite the participants to talk about the differences they heard in the two passages.

Reflection Questions:

- What do you think Jesus is trying to say to the crowds and disciples?
- I wonder what those around him thought of his message?
- I wonder if you have ever known someone who gives all the hard work to others while sitting by?
- I wonder what Jesus would warn against if he was telling us this today? How would this Scripture passage read differently if Jesus were talking to us today?
- What can you take away from this today? What does it mean to be a disciple today?

Getting Closure: Invite the children to clean up their space and gather back in a circle. Have them share what they have created.

Closing Prayer: *Gracious God, We thank you for our time together today. As we go out into the world, help us to remember that we are called to be a disciple. Help us to listen so we can learn, and help us follow as you lead. Amen.*

Matthew 23:1-12

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father— the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

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