
Holding the Door Open

Scripture Reading: Matthew 23

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses. So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don’t follow their example. For they don’t practice what they teach. They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden.

“Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels. And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues. They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi.’

“Don’t let anyone call you ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters. And don’t address anyone here on earth as ‘Father,’ for only God in heaven is your spiritual Father. And don’t let anyone call you ‘Teacher,’ for you have only one teacher, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be a servant. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people’s faces. You won’t go in yourselves, and you don’t let others enter either...”

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.” (Matthew 23:1-14, 23 NLT)

Reflection & Discussion

- What’s Jesus’ tone of voice?
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 - What’s the atmosphere in the crowd? Who is listening in?
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 - What teaching was Jesus’ advocating obeying?
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 - What are the main areas of disconnect between teaching and practice that Jesus uncovers in this little tirade?
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 - Where does this connect with your experience of faith and practice?
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 - Where do you connect with the Pharisees’ problem?
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 - Shutting the door in people’s faces.... What does Jesus mean by this? It’s a great metaphor.
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 - What do these words say to us about sharpening our own attention to what Jesus cares about?
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 - What will I commit to change after hearing Jesus speak to us tonight?
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 - How do I hold the door for others on the way in to the kingdom myself?
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A Prayer for Today

*O God you brought me from the rest of last night
through the new light of this day – to this dinner with you and your
friends. Thank you.*

*Help me in this season approaching Easter to sharpen my ears to your
voice. Help me hold the door open and joyfully share the load with others.*

*Bring me in the light of each day and with ears of faith to see your
guiding light and hear your words of encouragement.*

*Lead me O God on the journey of justice, mercy and faith. While I do the
clearly defined practices of my faith help me do the most important.*

*Guide me O God
on the pathways of peace*

*Renew me O God
by the wellsprings of grace
today, tonight and forever*

*For Jesus' sake I ask for your help to be the person you have in your
heart for me to be.*



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Group Guide

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