

MONDAY, AUGUST 9TH

DAILY READING ASSIGNMENT: **Matthew 21-25**

SCRIPTURE Matthew 23

OBSERVATION

It may come as a surprise, but sometimes Jesus delivered bad news.

When Jesus pronounced seven woes to the teachers of the law and Pharisees it wasn't for lack of word choice. Woe means bad news and it was used to pronounce judgment.

Hypocrisy is the sum of the issue and Jesus hits it right off the bat [v. 2-4]. Jesus warns about cultivating outward appearances and titles while living in the opposite manner, and pointed out quite clearly how he views such phoniness [v. 5-7, 25-28].

The leaders were furious for being called out like this in front of the people, but Jesus was not intimidated.

It is the true character of the person that matters, not title, position, or bank account. This is not disrespect – it is wisdom. The teachers of the law and Pharisees are being judged--and harshly--for their fake public image and for leading people astray.

APPLICATION

If you think about why some people avoid church like the plague, what's the first reason that pops in your mind? That's right – the church is full of hypocrites. It's a common blanket statement, though it would probably be truer to say that the church is actually full of sinners (people who actually believe but don't live it out perfectly). In any case, it's an easy grenade to launch at the church that let's the non-attender off the hook. I believe it was Joe Horness who said in a recent message that in our culture no one is being pressured to go to church. There is little doubt about that!

But when people use the word "hypocrite" what do they actually mean? If it is the true definition, and the one for which Jesus has no tolerance, then you are talking about someone who preaches one message and lives quite the opposite, with – and this is key – no intention of changing. This isn't as prevalent as you may think. What most people are doing is confusing a hypocrite with a sinner.

I'm a sinner [well, it's not that scandalous a confession, you are, too]. That means there are times when I behave contradictory to Scripture, my principles, and that which I profess to believe. Am I trying to become more Christ-like? You bet. Am I perfect? Not in this lifetime. Am I saved by grace because of what Christ did on the cross? Absolutely. And nothing can change that or take that away from me.

I mess up. You mess up. The key is admitting it, asking for and receiving forgiveness, and moving on.

PRAYER

God, forgive me for the times I thought I was better than others. I pray for the discernment to check myself and for the wisdom to encourage those who miss out on the joy and comfort of community by avoiding church, whatever their reasons. Thank you for Your Word, for your love, and for your blessings. Amen.

S.O.A.P. Entry Author: Kelly Ellis