

Unit 25, Session 3: Jesus Warned About Not Loving

Big Picture Question: How is Jesus the perfect prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Memory Verse: Deuteronomy 18:15 – The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

Christ Connection: Jesus said that the greatest commandments are to love God and love others (Mt 22:37-39). The religious leaders loved themselves most of all. When we trust in Jesus, He makes us right with God and changes our hearts so we can love and obey Him.

Bible Passage: Matthew 23

Find the passages together in your Bibles and read through them together. You could also read the paraphrase of all these passages below in blue. For younger kids, you may want to just read the bolded portions.

Matthew 23 is a serious indictment against the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day. The scribes and Pharisees were the most learned in Old Testament scriptures and generally whom the people looked to for spiritual guidance. The problem, as Jesus makes very clear in his condemnation of these men, is that they weren't doing their jobs faithfully. Jesus' seven pronouncements of woe to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees is a complete pronouncement of judgment. "Woe to you" is not simply a call for the religious leaders to show remorse, it is a promise of punishment for their intentional misdirection of the people and manipulation of God's Word to serve their own ends. "Woe to you" means "It will not go well for you." As Jesus calls these hypocrites out, he condemns their practice rather than their preaching (vv. 2-3). The scribes and Pharisees were lazy, self-indulgent, entitled, and prideful. They placed heavier expectations on the people than Scripture called for (v. 4). They sought to be the center of attention for all their "good works" rather than honoring God (vv. 5-7). They created loopholes in the law to avoid keeping promises (vv. 16-22). They made shows of tithing herbs while neglecting to practice justice, mercy, and faithfulness as God had commanded (vv. 23-24).

Jesus does not mince words when he calls these men whitewashed tombs (v. 27), snakes, and brood of vipers (v. 33). They are spiritually dead inside, deceiving those who follow them (v. 15, 27-28). The scribes and Pharisees are so prideful they even assumed they were above committing the murderous sins of their ancestors, yet they are about to fill up the measure of their ancestors' sins (v. 29-32). They will crucify the perfect Prophet. We should take care to remember that we are no different (Eph 2:1-3). Because of our sin as well as those of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus meets his death. Yet, the Lord who humbled himself for our sakes will be exalted (Mt 23:12). For a few hours, Jesus was raised up on a cross, but for all eternity, he has been raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God the Father (Eph 1:20).

One day, Jesus spoke to the crowds of people and to His followers. He said, “The religious leaders tell you about God’s law that came through Moses. You should obey this law.” Then He told them, “But do not be like the religious leaders because they tell you to do one thing, but they don’t do it themselves. They make up hard rules for you to follow, but they do not follow their rules.”

The religious leaders—the scribes and Pharisees—believed the right things, but they were doing something wrong. **Jesus said that the religious leaders did everything so that other people would think were great.** They liked being front and center, getting all the respect and attention, and being called “Teacher” by others.

“You have one Teacher,” Jesus reminded them, “and you are all brothers and sisters. You have one Father—God—who is in heaven. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

Jesus warned the religious leaders, “It will be terrible for you leaders who keep people away from God’s kingdom. You convince people to follow you, but you lead them away from God. You care more about following rules than showing justice, mercy, and faithfulness.”

Jesus said the religious leaders looked clean on the outside but were dirty on the inside: “You wash the outside of the cup and dish, but you are greedy and selfish. You look like a beautifully decorated tomb, but the inside is full of bones and unclean things.”

Finally, Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, “You are like a family of poisonous snakes. Do you think you will escape God’s judgment? No! You will be punished.”

If you or your child have questions about what it looks like to follow Jesus in salvation or baptism, Pastor Sam would love to talk with you! Please feel free to contact him at sievers@lenexabaptist.com.