

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

Jesus said of the woman who put two small copper coins into the offering box, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing” (Mark 12:43). I praise you today as the God who rejoices in the sincere generosity of your people! There’s not a single heartache or tear that goes unnoticed by you, and you will redeem each and every hurt in the life to come! Hallelujah!

Today in Your Word

Today you told me about Jesus’ woes against the scribes (the teachers of the Law) and the Pharisees. He began by making a clear distinction between their talk and their walk. ‘They talk the talk,’ Jesus said, ‘and what they say is true, for they teach and preach the Scriptures. You should, therefore, observe and do what they say (cf. Matt 23:1–3). But don’t imitate their lives, for they do not walk the walk.’ Amazing! Jesus calls me to recognize and obey the truth, even if it comes from a hypocrite! I may shake my head at the drunk who preaches the evils of alcohol abuse, but I must also acknowledge that he is proclaiming the truth. Jesus then gave a brilliant example of what it means to “judge with righteous judgment,” for he had said, “Judge not,” and yet he publicly denounced the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites and fools. This shows me that there’s a big difference between the harsh, fault-finding judgment of others and the careful, discerning inspection of the fruit of their lives. The former will be measured back to me, while the latter will guard me from false prophets. Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for several things: (1) they multiplied the number of ways that people could offend you, but they never showed the people how to truly please you, (2) they eagerly sought the praise and approval of men, but they refused to humble themselves before you, (3) they made intricate rules about how to phrase an oath, but they ignored your desire for truth and integrity, (4) they scrupulously observed the minute details of the Law, but they neglected the weightier matters of justice, mercy and faithfulness, (5) they took great care to clean the outside of their cups and utensils, but they refused to come to you for cleansing from greed and self-indulgence, and (6) they denied any complicity in the killing of the prophets by their ancestors, but their determination to destroy Jesus showed that they too had murder in their hearts. In fact, their decision to crucify him meant that their hands would soon be stained with the blood of all the prophets that came before, for those men had been the messengers of the supreme Prophet of God!

Reflection

My initial reaction to Jesus’ words is to join in his condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees. Yet before I get too consumed with indignation, I need to ask myself: Have any of their attitudes and tendencies found a way into my heart? Do I care more about my image and status than I do about your Kingdom?

Request

Father, keep me from the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees! Help me to have a servant’s heart, and may the mind of Christ control all I do and say. Let my life be always full of mercy and faithfulness!

Thanksgiving

Thank you for the stinging rebuke Jesus gave to the religious leaders of his day! It serves as a reminder to me of the importance of holiness in the midst of a corrupt and perverse generation.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “[Let Hypocrites Attend](#)” – Joseph Hoskins.

Meditation Verse: Matthew 23:37.