

TODAY’S SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 23:1-13, 23-39 (selected verses below)

13 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

23 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. 24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

27 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

37 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. 38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. What stood out to you in this sermon and why?
2. What would you say to someone who accuses Jesus of being judgmental and unloving in these verses?
3. How do you think Jesus might confront American Christians, or American pastors, today? What might He “deconstruct” and what would He create in its place?
4. Think about the things Jesus built His new community on: integrity, self-denial, compassionate leadership, a clear mission and purpose, and self-giving love. How well do you think we as a church are living out these things today? Where, in particular, could we stand to improve?