

**Sunday, November 5, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church**  
**Bible Study – All Saints Sunday**  
**“From Every Tribe”**  
**Matthew 23:1-12**

Open with a word of prayer

**Gathering Time** (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants talk about their role model in following Jesus. Have them name the characteristics of their role model’s faith (For example, “They embody Jesus’ teaching and love through their deeds beyond their words; They are people of deep prayer, but they never boast; they are always there for others in need.”)

**Matthew 23:1-12. Context.** This reading is the beginning of Jesus’ final discourse that runs to the end of chapter 25. Jesus starts off by warning his listeners about the hypocrisy of many contemporary religious leaders.

**Read Matthew 23:1-12**

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the text?

**Read Matthew 23:1-12 again -**

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- Using a typical polemic of the time that was widely used to criticize the opponents within and outside a community, Jesus is comparing two groups here. Who are they? (The scribes and Pharisees versus the community of disciples.)
- The scribes and the Pharisees were religious elites of the time who had political power and teaching authority (i.e., those who sit on Moses’s seat). Please note that not all Jews and Jewish leaders are described as those who teach God’s words without practicing them. Can you list the religious elites’ behaviors, seeking public glory that Jesus criticizes in verses 4-7?
- What differences do you notice when you compare these characteristics to those of your faith role model? Where do you think those differences come from?
- Jesus tells his disciples, “Call no one your father on earth.” The term “father” denotes religious, political, and social authority, such as the emperor, who exercised power to maintain a hierarchical world. Against this, Jesus reminds his disciples, “You have one Father-the one in heaven” under whom all disciples are equal as brothers and sisters. It is like a family defined not by birth order, ancestry, or gender but by Jesus’ call, doing God’s will. Is your church embodying this vision of Jesus? In what ways?

- It is said that the body of Christ looks like “the church that represents the beloved community, that celebrates the diversity of every kind, that reflects the tapestry of the world in which we live. This is the church that makes it into the kingdom; this is the church that stands before the throne.” What comes to mind as concrete features of such a church? What roles are you playing to create such a community?
- *“The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted. (23:11-12).* According to Jesus, this is one of the features of his beloved community. Reflect on ways to embody Jesus’ teaching to help your church be the beloved community. List three actions you will do:
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.

### **Closing Reflection Question**

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

**Prayer** (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

**Sending Forth** (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

God, who looked across the expanse of the universe and called it good, thank you for creating mountains and valleys in various shapes and sizes, colorful rainbows, dark ocean depths, and deserts of hot and cold. We are grateful you made us in your image, which is completely beyond our limited grasp. Help us fulfill your will and vision in our community. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven  
 hallowed be thy name.  
 Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
 on earth as it is in Heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,  
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
 Lead us not into temptation  
 but deliver us from evil.  
 For thine is the kingdom, the power  
 and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.