

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 11, 2013

The Rev. Elaine Loggi '13, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church in Fairfax, Mo.

SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 23:1-12

1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 2 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; 3 therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. 4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. 5 They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. 6 They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, 7 and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. 8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. 9 And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father — the one in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. 11 The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted."

DEVOTIONAL

Jesus has a pointed message in this passage for leaders who use their positions to gain recognition and self-glorification. If we're honest, we all find ourselves guilty of such actions at times. The busyness of this season can become a competition or an opportunity to bring attention to ourselves and our own efforts: Do I have the best cookies on the table? Can I find the perfect present in the midst of all the others he'll receive? Am I sure my house is cleaner than hers? How can I make my sermon more memorable than those others? My liturgy more creative? My devotional more thoughtful?

Jesus reminds us that we are called instead to use whatever spotlight or leadership role we find ourselves in to humbly point back to Christ, our only instructor and leader. In this season of watching, waiting, and hoping for Christ's coming that so often gets swallowed up in shopping, cooking, cleaning, and preparing, Jesus' message reminds us of who we are and of the humility and resulting joy in which we are called to live, during this Advent season and always.

PRAYER

Holy God, we give you thanks for this season of watching, waiting, and hoping, and the opportunity it gives us to turn back to you. Re-focus our lives, that all our words and deeds may always point to your great acts and your amazing love and bring glory to your name. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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