

# SUNDAY GOSPEL BIBLE SHARING



**Wednesday November 1, for the 31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**OPENING PRAYER:** Lord Jesus, thank you for gathering us together to share life and your Word. Breathe your Spirit upon us so that we can be led by you as we break open your Word.

## **READING OF THE ASSIGNED GOSPEL**

- In the words of Saint Benedict, “Listen with the ears of your heart.”
- Please note a word, phrase, or verse that seemed to really catch your notice.
- A volunteer slowly read aloud today’s passage Afterwards, we have a few minutes of silent reflection.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

## **Matthew 22:1-12**

### **Gospel**

- 1 Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying,**
- 2 "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses.**
- 3 Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example.**
- 4 For they preach but they do not practice.**  
**They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them.**
- 5 All their works are performed to be seen.**  
**They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels.**
- 6 They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues,**
- 7 greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.'**
- 8 As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.'**  
**You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers.**
- 9 Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven.**

**10 Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Christ.**

**11 The greatest among you must be your servant.**

**12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.**

13\*<sub>g</sub> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites.

You lock the kingdom of heaven\* before human beings.

You do not enter yourselves, nor do you allow entrance to those trying to enter.

\* [23:1–39] The final section of the narrative part of the fifth book of the gospel is a denunciation by Jesus of the scribes and the Pharisees (see note on Mt 3:7). It depends in part on Mark and Q (cf. Mk 12:38–39; Lk 11:37–52; 13:34–35), but in the main it is peculiar to Matthew. (For the reasons against considering this extensive body of sayings-material either as one of the structural discourses of this gospel or as part of the one that follows in Mt 24–25, see note on Mt 19:1–23:39.) While the tradition of a deep opposition between Jesus and the Pharisees is well founded, this speech reflects an opposition that goes beyond that of Jesus’ ministry and must be seen as expressing the bitter conflict between Pharisaic Judaism and the church of Matthew at the time when the gospel was composed. The complaint often made that the speech ignores the positive qualities of Pharisaism and of its better representatives is true, but the complaint overlooks the circumstances that gave rise to the invective. Nor is the speech purely anti-Pharisaic. The evangelist discerns in his church many of the same faults that he finds in its opponents and warns his fellow Christians to look to their own conduct and attitudes.

\* [23:2–3] Have taken their seat...Moses: it is uncertain whether this is simply a metaphor for Mosaic teaching authority or refers to an actual chair on which the teacher sat. It has been proved that there was a seat so designated in synagogues of a later period than that of this gospel. Do and observe...they tell you: since the Matthean Jesus abrogates Mosaic law (Mt 5:31–42), warns his disciples against the teaching of the Pharisees (Mt 14:1–12), and, in this speech, denounces the Pharisees as blind guides in respect to their teaching on oaths (Mt 23:16–22), this commandment to observe all things whatsoever they (the scribes and Pharisees) tell you cannot be taken as the evangelist’s understanding of the proper standard of conduct for his church. The saying may reflect a period when the Matthean community was largely Jewish Christian and was still seeking to avoid a complete break with the synagogue. Matthew has incorporated this traditional material into the speech in accordance with his view of the course of salvation history, in which he portrays the time of Jesus’ ministry as marked by the fidelity to the law, although with significant pointers to the new situation that would exist after his death and resurrection (see note on Mt 5:17–20). The crowds and the disciples (Mt 23:1) are exhorted not to follow the example of the Jewish leaders, whose deeds do not conform to their teaching (Mt 23:3).

\* [23:4] Tie up heavy burdens: see note on Mt 11:28.

\* [23:5] To the charge of preaching but not practicing (Mt 23:3), Jesus adds that of acting in order to earn praise. The disciples have already been warned against this same fault (see note on Mt 6:1–18). Phylacteries: the Mosaic law required that during prayer small boxes containing

parchments on which verses of scripture were written be worn on the left forearm and the forehead (see [Ex 13:9, 16](#); [Dt 6:8](#); [11:18](#)). Tassels: see note on [Mt 9:20](#). The widening of phylacteries and the lengthening of tassels were for the purpose of making these evidences of piety more noticeable.

\* [[23:6–7](#)] Cf. [Mk 12:38–39](#). ‘Rabbi’: literally, “my great one,” a title of respect for teachers and leaders.

\* [[23:8–12](#)] These verses, warning against the use of various titles, are addressed to the disciples alone. While only the title ‘Rabbi’ has been said to be used in addressing the scribes and Pharisees ([Mt 23:7](#)), the implication is that Father and ‘Master’ also were. The prohibition of these titles to the disciples suggests that their use was present in Matthew’s church. The Matthean Jesus forbids not only the titles but the spirit of superiority and pride that is shown by their acceptance. Whoever exalts...will be exalted: cf. [Lk 14:11](#).

## Thoughts and reflection on the Gospel Passage

### QUESTIONS FOR SHARING

1. Are there forms of Phariseeism present in today’s Church? If so, how do they manifest themselves? How might a spirit of Phariseeism manifest itself in us?
2. What qualities in leaders turn you off the most? What qualities attract you the most?
3. To whom is it easy for you to offer service? To whom might you offer it to begrudgingly?

### Commentary

The Gospel is a strong condemnation of the Pharisees and Scribes. This whole chapter must be read in the context of the historical situation that Matthew is dealing with. Around 85AD, Christians are being expelled from the synagogues, which resulted in a lot of antagonism between Jews who became Christians (people like Matthew himself) and Jews who did not convert to Christianity. While Jesus, most likely, did say some harsh things to the Pharisees and Scribes (just like the prophets of old condemned the leaders of their time (e.g. first reading), it seems that Matthew exaggerates Jesus’ words. For one thing, not all Pharisees and Scribes are bad. The language of chapter 23 is that of a prophet who chastises a stubborn people. Also, when reading Matthew 23, we need to remember that Matthew’s primary concern or focus is not the Pharisees and Scribes but the leaders of his own community, some of whom may have been throwing their weight around and beginning to manifest the bad traits of the

Pharisees and the Scribes who lived in Jesus' time. Some of the leaders may have been more concerned about their own self-importance than about the Gospel. The warning for the leaders in the Christian Church is that they should not follow the bad example of the Pharisees and Scribes. If God did not spare them or their temple, surely he will not spare an unfaithful church. In today's section of chapter 23, Jesus specifically levels three criticisms at the Scribes and Pharisees. They do not practice what they preach. They are too legalistic in their interpretation of the Scriptures. They are full of their own self-importance, seeking the front seats and titles. This Gospel challenges today's shepherds and all disciples to look into their own hearts and see to what extent the spirit of the Pharisee lies within.

**IS THERE A CAUSE FOR GRATITUDE THIS WEEK?**

**IS THERE A PRAYER REQUEST YOU HAVE?**

**CLOSING PRAYER - The Lord's Prayer**

Bible Sharing Room 5 and Zoom

Starting Nov 1 from 6:30 – 7:30 pm EST Weekly on Wednesday  
notes

Description: Blessed Sacrament is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Blessed Sacrament's Zoom Meeting

Time: Nov 1, 2023 06:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Weekly: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZIKd-qgrj8qG9Rt4LoXWaku9w9Mo6AzLDCs/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGupzspEtSRsBiHRpwAHYigbzziClfjfpviEvJDBhkYwjbbUbH7opMcL8>

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86903804010?pwd=MGJydS9qSW9LSzNGbIZSM2xZcWpGZz09>

Meeting ID: 869 0380 4010

Passcode: 086586 One tap mobile

+13017158592,