

**Full Circle (or, top 8 things NOT to do!)  
Matt 23**

1. **(Men – awesome turnout @ breakfast – I am blessed that so many men are committed to growing!)**
2. **It is Tuesday of Passover week – Passover is on Friday, the day Jesus will be crucified.**
  - a. **This message will be Jesus last public sermon before He retreats to be with His disciples before the Passover Meal.**
  - b. **I had to wonder, if I were Jesus, what would my last public sermon be? What would I tell people?**
    - i. **How much God loves them? One last call to repentance? Perhaps perform some miracles to prove who I am?**
3. **Interestingly, instead of a “I am here to save you” message, the Lord Jesus uses this opportunity, with the Pharisees and the people all around Him, to publically call out the Pharisees.**
  - a. **What was it that would cause Jesus to bring such a stinging rebuke to these men?**
  - b. **I believe it is because the religious leaders had lost their way.**
4. **In Romans 2 Paul tells us it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance...**

*Rom 2:4 ... the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

- a. **Yet in 1 Cor we are told that some people are “saved as through fire...”**

*1 Cor 3:15 ...but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

- b. **In other words – sometimes when the goodness of God has not reached the heart, then the truth of judgment needs to be declared...**

1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, 2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3 Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. 4 For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. 5 But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'

5. **Jesus is pointing out the these religious leaders, the ones who are responsible for representing God to the people, the ones called to love and minister to the people, are instead laying heavy burdens on the people.**
- a. **They burdened them with rules and regulations, while at the same time they would not lift a finger to help the people grow.**
  - b. **They were willing to work – but only work at the things that would elevate themselves in front of the people.**
  - c. **Instead of loving God and the people, they loved themselves.**
  - d. **They loved recognition, they loved looking like important people, they loved sitting at the good seats, they loved being called “Rabbi” and “Father”**

8 But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. 11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

6. **Peter noted in Acts that the Pharisees put yokes on people that no one could bear...**

**Acts 15:10**

*Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*

- a. **When in reality Christ’s yoke is not burdensome...**

**Matt 11:30**

*For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

7. **And so the Lord Jesus brings forth eight truths that the Pharisees need to heed – and interestingly they parallel the eight blessings that Jesus proclaimed at the beginning of His ministry:**

**Woe #1**

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

*Matt 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

8. **Jesus declared in the sermon on the mount that the kingdom belonged to the “poor in spirit” – in other words, those who recognize their state**

of spiritual bankruptcy, humble themselves before God, and seek forgiveness.

- a. The Pharisees were just the opposite: they were so prideful that they really thought they were without sin!
- b. They would pray “God, thank you that I am not a sinner like those other men!”
- c. This pride would not only keep the Pharisees out of heaven, but their religious pride infected those who followed them – keeping them out of heaven as well!

### **Woe #2**

14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

*Matt 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

### **9. Jesus taught that those who mourn will be comforted**

- a. But the Pharisees, when a man died and left a widow, they would show up on her doorstep and tell the widow that if she wanted to honor her dead husband, she would make a donation to their ministry.
- b. They would take advantage of a widow at a vulnerable time.
- c. We should be careful these days, as fund raising has become such a huge business, with companies that specialize in marketing “needs”, and of course taking a huge slice of the money that comes in...

### **Woe #3**

15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

*Matt 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

### **10. Jesus taught that the meek would inherit the earth, and when you look at Jesus teachings, it's obvious:**

- a. Love one another, love our enemies, go the extra mile, speak words of grace and not condemnation, even honor the King...
- b. But the Pharisees sought to convert the earth into a legalistic place of rules and regulations, and they looked down with scorn upon those that didn't meet their standard of righteousness.
- c. And the tragedy is that when you raise up followers in a legalistic environment, they become more legalistic than the teacher!

**Woe #4**

16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' 17 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? 18 And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' 19 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? 20 Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. 21 He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. 22 And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

***Matt 5:6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

**11. Jesus taught that those who desire holiness will be blessed, but the Pharisees worked hard to cut corners whenever it was convenient.**

- a. **One of the most blatant ways was in their use of “swearing by the temple”**
- b. **See they knew from Leviticus that they were not to swear falsely by the Lords name – in other words – LIE. (like a person today would say “I swear to God”)**

***Lev 19:12***

*And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.*

- c. **So to get around breaking the law, they would swear by the temple. But to them it was like crossing your fingers; it didn't count!**
- d. **But if they swore by the gold of the temple, well that was different, you had to keep that!**
- e. **In other words – it was a game – semantics.**
- f. **Jesus taught:**

***Matt 5:33-37***

*"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' 34 But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But **let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.'** For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.*

**Woe #5**

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

*Matt 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

**12. Jesus is getting to the heart of the law: If you sign a contract, you better read the fine print, because there might be a “gotcha” clause in there.**

- a. **But when it comes to the law, I believe that God is interested in the heart – not the details.**
- b. **See the Pharisees were so consumed with following all the details of the law, that they totally missed the purpose of the law: To show man that he cannot live up to God’s standard of righteousness, and the he needs a Savior – Jesus Christ!**
- c. **So they would follow all the little details of the law – which incidentally were the easy things to do – tithe, wash your hands, keep the feasts, pray three times a day...**
- d. **And they neglected the weightier things – such as loving one another, giving grace, extending mercy (*which means being loving and gracious to people who don’t deserve it!*)**

**Mic 6:8**

*He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*

- e. **They were straining gnats out of their soup, but leaving camels swimming around in it!**

**13. Remember the Ten Commandments – the first four deal with our relationship to God, and the last six deal with our relationships with other people – people who usually fall short of what we think they should be.**

- a. **Of course, the reason we need to extend grace is that we aren’t what we should be either!**

**Woe #6**

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

*Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

**14. It's easy to clean up the outside, put on a good appearance, and seem righteous. But God looks at the heart, and that is the true measure of a person.**

- a. Now that does not mean that we have a “pure” heart in that we are sinless –the Greek term implies a straightforwardness, honesty, an undivided heart...**
- b. In other words – we are who we appear to be, not hypocritical which means “double-faced”**

**Woe #7**

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

*Matt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

**15. These men who stood before the people in the temple, with their beautiful robes, oiled hair, and clean hands...**

- a. Where in fact at that moment already plotting in their hearts the murder of the Prince of Peace!**

**Woe #8**

29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

31 "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. 33 Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? 34 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

*Matt 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

**16. Perhaps the hardest hitting charge was that these men had the audacity to pass judgment on their fore-fathers who persecuted and killed the prophets that God has sent to them...**

- a. **And yet the next day these same men would plot to kill Jesus, and at Jesus trial before Pilate these same men would clamor for Jesus death, death by crucifixion.**
  - b. **These same men would conspire to persecute and kill those who would follow Christ in the years that followed.**
- 17. This is hard stuff – you wonder is Jesus mad at the Pharisees? Is He condemning them?**
- a. **No – Jesus came not to condemn, but to save**

**John 3:17**

*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

- b. **I don't believe Jesus was taking pleasure in making these statements, I believe they were the difficult truth that needed to be declared – listen to His closing words**

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 38 See! Your house is left to you desolate; 39 for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

- 18. Jesus greatest desire is that the people, the leaders, the Pharisees, that they would all be forgiven – remember He prayed on the cross “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do (Luke 23:34).**
- a. **God's heart is that none would perish – that all would be willing to come to Christ...**
  - b. **But the key word is willing... and yet even for those who have rejected Christ – there is time – even Israel will recognize Christ when He returns**

**Rom 11:25-26**

*For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved,*

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