

PREPARING AT HOME

October 30-November 5, 2017

Focus reading: Matthew 23:1–12 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?q=375342627>).

Other lectionary readings: Joshua 3:7–17; Psalm 107:1–7, 33–37; 1 Thessalonians 2:9–13

Theme: What Should I Do?

After spending two months with the Hebrew people on their journey to freedom, we now turn to the Gospel of Matthew. Although we have crossed into a very different time and culture, the issue of leadership is just as important as it was in the time of Moses and Joshua. In Matthew's community, the scribes and Pharisees were leaders. They knew the Torah well and taught it to others. Jesus tells his followers to listen to their teaching and do what they say but warns them not to imitate their behavior. The actions of their leaders do not match what they and the Torah teach. More specifically, it is their motives that Jesus condemns. Even their good works are tainted by the fact that those deeds are motivated by a desire to improve the leaders' own standing in the community. The community that honors Jesus is an egalitarian community. Yes, leaders are important; but how they lead makes a real difference that shapes the community. Leadership, according to Jesus, is service. Rather than call attention to themselves, leaders should call the followers' attention to the triune God. Those who lead as Jesus led will help to form a community marked by love. Remember that Jesus is speaking to the "followers" here. They need to hold leaders accountable rather than following blindly.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Play a game of "Follow the Leader" using actions that show "service". When the "leader" changes the action to one that self-serving or shows arrogance, the "follower" should stop following.

SERVING OTHERS

What are some ways in which our congregation serves others? What can you do to serve?

SERVANT LEADERS

This Sunday we will share the Lord's Supper. Point out the ways in which our Elders, or church leaders, serve the communion elements to the congregation and the leaders are served last.

PRAYER

Gracious God,
We thank you for those who lead as Jesus led,
by serving others.
May our words and our actions
show others
the love and goodness of the
God we worship and obey.
Amen.

Prospect Presbyterian Church, Maplewood, NJ, www.prospectchurch.org

Rita Boyer, rita@prospectchurch.org