

Burdens and humility : Matthew part 3

We have said that Jesus confronts the hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leadership at the end of this Gospel. Matthew 23 :1-12.

1.”Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and his disciples :

2. The scribes and the Pharisees , he said, sit on the seat of Moses.³ So you must do whatever they tell you , and keep it , but don't do the things they do. You see they talk but they don't do. 4. They tie up heavy burdens and they dump them on people's shoulders – but they themselves aren't prepared to lift a little finger to move them. 5. Everything they do is for show, to be seen by people.¹¹. The greatest among you should be your servant.¹². People who make themselves great will be humbled; and people who humble themselves will become great.”

What burdens ?

Jesus is showing us that , at the heart of true religion , lie the two commandments we looked at in part 2.

- And what he now says is in stark contrast to the religious leaders. They are telling people – that the journey to God and with God is a hard, burdensome one. If people want to – as the Israelites did , “cross the Jordan and live in the promised land” – they need to carry heavy burdens.
- Now the burdens the religious leaders prescribe, are all focussed on their attention to the detail of the law – and, from one point of view – it all looks marvellous.
- It looks like wonderful devotion, a lavish attention to the detail of the commandments. If you are “ in the know” you will pay attention to the detail- and be blessed.

Burdens as a means to status

- But Jesus is saying that if your relationship with God consists of external , outward show, then you are missing what Moses – and he is saying – that if you do these things but you don't evidence your love for God and your neighbour - God is not being honoured.
- And, we know, by defeating sin and death, Jesus , unlike the religious leaders, who carried no burdens for anyone , carried THE burden of sin - for us – and he shows through this, he loves his father - and his neighbour.

Whose burden are we carrying ?

- Do you think things are any different today? I am pretty sure that we will agree that the answer is a no.
- And let me be clear about things. What Jesus was saying about external observations goes far beyond religious leadership. The whole World is full of people , both elected, and self-elected , who make grand pronouncements about public values. And it all generally leads us nowhere.
- But having acknowledged this problem , is there any “burden” we need to carry ?
- Jesus provides the answer for us in Matthew 11: 28 -30. “come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. 30. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The humble servant

- Humility isn't about us either "doing" religious stuff or the opposite - dropping titles or lessening external shows of religion – its about one's attitude.
- And its about the huge and humbling principle of verses 11 and 12.
- And the NT keeps on coming back to this – servant hood – and humility. But this is an identity based humility – *not as slaves but as part of God's family* – whose leader reveals what God values seeing in us. OUR model is Jesus.
- Moreover, if we are now his children – what possible need can we have for the further approval of man – except that what we do leads to others glorifying him?
- Jesus was not sitting on a King's throne issuing this denunciation – he was on his way to the death of a criminal, in single garment, not made of rich materials. He is only carrying your burden and mine. He is carrying the heaviest burden ever carried and ever to be carried.
- He is saying – take my burden – Chapter 11.28 -30. His yoke is easy and his burden is light.