

# Living Lent | Friday, February 27

Tony Lankford

**“Follow Me.”**

**Today’s Reading: Matthew 23:1-12**

*Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. “Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others. “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

**Matthew 23:1-12**

## **Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:**

Our text today calls for reflection upon the woes Jesus proclaims of the Pharisees. In summary, Jesus speaks a word of conviction and warning before the crowd against those who seek to focus on the law or seek to bring attention and honor to themselves- all of which the Pharisees did, understandably so. To be a Pharisee was to enter a high social cast whose primary function was to legalistically

require others to obediently follow the Jewish Law. Jesus rightly points out the obvious, they require people to carry too heavy a burden; a heavy burden they themselves do not even carry. In contrast to the Pharisees, Jesus offers a different call, “Follow me.”

That simple call still rings true of those entering into Christ’s grace today...follow me. Do not follow a political agenda. Do not follow a cultural ideology. Do not follow the way of the world’s skewed

version of success and value. FOLLOW ME.

The Pharisees of today have left a wide path of people with religious hurt and scars. We can and must be honest about that. Perhaps the only redemptive path forward for the church is to humble ourselves and return to the single desire to follow the way and will of Jesus, to speak a word of woe against those who wish to pollute the identity of Christ with modifiers other than the call to follow Jesus. This great redemptive transition, however, starts with you and with me. As we move into what will no doubt be a turbulent year, may we commit to hearing Jesus’ woes/ warnings and focus our life each day on following the humble path of Jesus, and Jesus alone.

Prayer: Lord, allow us to cast off the heavy burdens culture places upon our faith and return to the humble path of following you. May we embrace caring for those in need as part of that humble path. For those so-called, may the sacred work of Morningstar be a recipient of our care. Amen.

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## **Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ:**

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