

Living Lent | March 7

## Lift a Finger, Carry a Burden

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*Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.*

**Matthew 23: 1-12 (NRSV)**

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### Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

Even in my finest moments, when my heart expands to notice another person’s need and then act out of compassion, even then there is a glitzy little puff of “I did that; I’m a good person; notice me and be thankful” swirling under the act. It’s a universal human trait, I think, to boost and solidify your identity. One of the very first questions asked at a cocktail party or social mixer when you meet a new person is, “What do you do?” While this isn’t the case everywhere, in 21st century America we place a huge amount of stock in our careers, our purpose, our productivity. And certainly, what we do matters.

Jesus, in this discourse that enthusiastically admonishes the Pharisees (religious

leaders), underlines that our actions matter. It's easy to talk the talk, but can we walk the walk? The temptation for me when I read Jesus' warnings to the Pharisees is to join in his outrage and thank my lucky stars I'm not like them. Once the wave of self-righteous indignation passes, the Spirit nudges me to take a second look. No one is all Pharisee. There's a little Pharisee in everybody. Which is why Jesus came to save us from ourselves.

When, in our lives, do we enjoy the pomp of our moral integrity? When do our metaphorical fringes trail the ground in glory as we fan ourselves from our goodness? More often than is comfortable, I would guess. What does Jesus remind us (not so subtly)?

Lift a finger to carry the burdens of the world.

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

Some of the Rev. Kate Buckley's earliest memories consist of hide-and-seek under pews and church picnics filled with fried chicken and deviled eggs. As a pastor's daughter, it was to be expected. Buckley's father is the Rev. Bob Brearley, the former head of St. Simons Island Presbyterian Church. While not initially planning to follow in his footsteps, Kate always had an abiding faith. It was something that solidified on a youth mission trip to Honduras. Kate took a part-time position in Pastoral Care and Ministry of Visitation at her former church home, St. Simons Presbyterian, where she served during some of the most challenging times of COVID, and even wrote an inspirational book of Beatitudes entitled Bless It. As a full-time Mom these days, Kate continues to bless others through her writings, just as she has blessed us this day. Her commitment to the Children of the Coast of Georgia, including the Children of Morningstar, is constant.

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