Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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August 21, 2022

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“Woe to you hypocrites, who lock the door to the Kingdom of heaven before others. You do not enter yourselves, nor do you allow entrance to those trying to enter” (Matt 23:13).

2 Thes 1:1-5, 11-12; Mat 23:13-22

In Matthew’s Gospel, when Jesus arrives in Jerusalem for the last time before his death, he levels his harshest criticism at the religious leaders who are obstructing people’s access to God. Instead of opening the door to a loving, merciful God, they have made the path to salvation an obstacle course of legal and ritual duties, sacrifices and oaths that serve only to keep them in control.

Jesus seems able to absorb any criticism and resistance to himself, but he erupts in indignation at this misrepresentation of God and at any abuse of power that keeps ordinary people from finding God’s love.

Matthew’s gospel continues the theme we found in Sunday’s gospel from Luke about the door to God. God is eager to welcome everyone into the Kingdom, but the door narrows for those who try to exclude others or who see themselves as superior to others.

When religion becomes a game of control and power, attracting leaders who make it a source of status and privilege for themselves, it is worse than nothing at guiding people to spiritual health and purpose. Jesus avoided all forms of special status and warned his disciples against seeking power over others. The early church was presented as a way of life rather than a religious cult. Faith came from a direct invitation from God to the hearts of seekers and those who saw the power of love in the community of believers.

The Word of God comes to each of us today, urging us to simplify our path to God with love and joy. The merciful face of God looks at us in every experience. All we need do is step into the harness of life with Jesus, who embraced our humanity in all its challenges and opportunities. His yoke is easy and his burden is light. The door is open, and all are welcome who come in love and without judgment of others.

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