

Sermon Summary

20th after Pentecost

30th October 2011

- It would be very easy to take Matthew 23:1-12 as a simple criticism of corrupt people, but its more complicated than that.
- Look at verse 2-3 which are a reminder of the positive way in which Jesus regarded or respected his opponents.
- They have an authority which comes to them “from Moses”: they are not simply bad people.
- This is a reminder to us of the seriousness of our situation.
- We, like the opponents, of Jesus, have been placed where we are by God. This is a good thing.
- But like them we are in a precarious position. Like them, we have the potential to turn people away from God, to make their life intolerable, to judge and condemn them, to drive them away and make them think that the things of God are not for the likes of them. It is very human of us to fall into this way of thinking.
- A priest I knew used to minister in an English city church once preached like this at a big civic service: “Some of you are here today, because you have a civic function to perform. I am happy for you. Some have come because these are big social events and you are here to be seen, I am very happy for you too. Some of you are here because you want to honour and respect God: God blesses you for it”. We can see the difference immediately, can’t we?
- Sometimes we mourn how our church has lost its place and status in society, but this has a silver lining. People come now not to be seen, or because its socially ‘the right thing’, or even because its the only entertainment on for the day, but because they want to love and honour God.
- God bless you for it.
- But let us make sure that our human ingenuity doesn’t make even this motivation an opportunity to alienate others.

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