

Worship Material
Authentic role models
Materials from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 5th November

Begin with an opening prayer

All-powerful, all-seeing God, you are our role model in life.
Father, you beckon us into your kingdom glory,
where there is no room for self as all hearts overflow with your love.
Lord Jesus, our Saviour, you are the light that shines without blemish.
Holy Spirit, full of wisdom, your kingdom integrity is our guide.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we worship and adore you.
Amen.

Read Matthew 23:1-12

Bible notes

Jesus has told several parables that are increasingly open in their criticism of the religious leaders. The 'two sons' (21:28-32) highlights their refusal to change their minds concerning his message, despite all the evidence presented to them. The 'wicked tenants' (21:33-45) tells and foretells their treatment of prophets and of Jesus himself, and warns that the kingdom of God will be given to those who live as the people of God. The 'wedding banquet' (22:1-14) points out their refusal to join

in with what God is doing now. In this week's passage, Jesus abandons stories and speaks directly, not to, but about the religious leaders: do as they say, not as they do. They have learning, and authority to teach the instruction passed on by God to Moses, so learn from them. But don't follow their example, because they are concerned about appearances – making a show of practising their religion, wearing oversized prayer shawls (that have fringes, v.5) and reminders of the law (the phylacteries, v.5 – small boxes worn on the arm and forehead during prayer, containing verses from the Torah). They want honour, respect, accolades and titles, but have forgotten that we are all learners, all disciples, and are here to point others to God. Their blind spots are so significant that they are keeping people out of God's kingdom. The religious leaders were perhaps unaware of what people saw in them as role models. Experts in their subject, they had lost sight of the need for authentic behaviour to accompany this knowledge. What do people see when they look at us? Who are we following, and how can we become aware of our blind spots? The

religious leaders needed someone to ask them these questions. Jesus does so forcibly.

Prayer

A prayer of thanksgiving

May our heartfelt praises ring out and make your light, O God, shine brighter amid the hypocrisy and negativity in this world. You are like an eternal firework lighting up the inky sky. Unlike an earthly firework, you never fizzle out. Your love makes life sparkle with joy. Thank you for the myriad blessings that explode and colour our lives as we follow you. Thank you for working in us, highlighting our blind spots and growing us in faith.

Amen.

A prayer

Go into the world with Jesus
as your inspiration, guide and friend.
Be generous, without always counting the cost.
Give of your time, without always seeking a reward.
Share your love with a needy world.
Make peace and strive for justice.
And do it all in Jesus' name.

Amen.