



Daily Reflections

August 25, 2018

Scripture

Matthew 23: 1-12

Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying,
"The scribes and the Pharisees
have taken their seat on the chair of Moses.
Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you,
but do not follow their example.
For they preach but they do not practice.
They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry
and lay them on people's shoulders,
but they will not lift a finger to move them.
All their works are performed to be seen.
They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels.
They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues,
greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.'
As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.'
You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers.
Call no one on earth your father;
you have but one Father in heaven.
Do not be called 'Master';
you have but one master, the Christ.
The greatest among you must be your servant.
Whoever exalts himself will be humbled;
but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Our Scripture Reflection

The scribes and Pharisees were pathetic religious leaders and teachers. They did not practice what they preached. They arrogantly strutted around in public in their fine dress and expected the common man to grovel beneath them while addressing them with honorific titles such as Father, Master and Rabbi. Jesus will call them hypocrites time and time again, a word which translates from Greek as "stage actor." Jesus, our Good Shepherd, is the true role model for a religious leader and teacher. His humility and sacrificial love set the bar high.

Food for your Journey

Wendell Berry's novel, *Jayber Crow*, contains a character who's the antithesis of humble -- a young farmer who's sadly out of touch with his true place in the earth.

Troy marries a woman who stands to inherit rich farmland from her parents. When her parents retire, Troy takes over the operation and decides to modernize. He tears out the protective hedgerows between fields so he can plant more crops. He mortgages the land to buy more land. Tired of nursing the cranky old farm equipment along, he borrows even more money to buy larger tractors and implements. He's perpetually in debt and struggles to keep up with the payments.

Troy no longer enjoys the cycle of the seasons. He loses all awareness of Sabbath. The farm that provided generations of his wife's family with a comfortable livelihood has become a tiresome burden.

Finally, its soil depleted, the farm is seized by the bank. By refusing to be humbly grateful, by constantly grasping for more, Troy upsets the balance of nature and squanders the gift.

--Wendell Berry, *Jayber Crow* (Counterpoint, 2001).

A Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, You are the Good Shepherd Who watches over and protects Your people. You gave Your life for Your people. Help me to follow Your example of humble and loving service to others. Amen