



Ego trips / No humility

April 27, 2018

MATTHEW 23:1-12 NIV - (1) Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: **(2)** "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. **(3)** So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. **(4)** They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. **(5)** "Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; **(6)** they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; **(7)** they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others. **(8)** "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. **(9)** And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. **(10)** Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. **(11)** The greatest among you will be your servant. **(12)** For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Jesus was simply exposing the inappropriateness of the behavior of the scribes and Pharisees who desired to be honored publicly. Perhaps their top three favored forms of being addressed in public in those days were: **1) Rabbi 2) Father and /or 3) Leader.** In Jesus' estimation and economy no one but God is as worthy of any of those terms. That's not to say we must not call anyone "teacher," "father," or "leader." It is to say we as Christ's followers should not play into the hands of those people who want only to be noticed, recognized, and the center of attention as they perform what they consider to be God's work, whether teaching, mentoring, or leading.

If a true brother or sister in Christ is a teacher, mentor (father or mother), or leader, he or she should go about his or her business in teaching in the same way any other brother or sister in Christ might go about his or her business in helping, giving, exhorting, showing mercy, prophesying, pastoring, administering, leading, mentoring, or whatever the spiritual gift. The greatest teachers, mentors, and leaders will not draw attention to themselves but will be satisfied being humble servants in the employ of the King of kings. From their point of view, if God chooses to exalt them at some point in their ministry, fine; if not, then that's fine, too. After all, we all are at best, servants of the King (**1 Corinthians 3:5; 4:1**).

We may be rewarded for faithfulness in this life, but then again we may not be. We will, however, be rewarded in heaven. "Well done, good and faithful servant" will be a sufficient reward for me! As for the scribes and Pharisees Jesus criticized, their reward began and ended in this life, with no possibility of a future reward. In this regard, what did Jesus say about their reward for public almsgiving, prayer, and fasting as recorded in His Sermon on the Mount?

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven . . . Truly I say to you, the hypocrites who parade their righteousness have their reward in full" (**Matthew 6:2, 5, and 16**). In conclusion, there is nothing wrong, in addressing a teacher, a mentor, or a leader in a respectful way, as long as said person is not on an "ego trip" as were the scribes and Pharisees that Jesus described in **Matthew 23**. For a man to be called "my spiritual father or mother," his or her motive in wanting to be addressed as such must not be rooted in pride and the desire for attention and notoriety.

In the U.S., for example, we might address someone as "Doctor" (Ph.D or M.D.), "Boss" (or "Sir" or "Ma'am"), or "Pastor" (or "Reverend" or "Bishop" or even "Father," within the Roman Catholic Church) and not thereby experience Jesus' wrath. Again, if the said person considers himself or herself a servant-leader, teacher, or mentor, and is humble in that role (or "gifting"), an honorific title is perfectly OK.

SCRIPTURE READING: JEREMIAH 23:11

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: Practice what you preach before you try to teach it to someone else.