

Week of January 29-February 4

## **PLAYACTING**

**Scripture Reading:** Read Matthew chapter 23

As I write this devotional, it is only 31 days to the 84<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards show, also known as the Oscars. Millions of fans around the globe will tune in to see what or who won awards in the more familiar categories of best picture, actor and actress in a leading role, actor and actress in a supporting role as well as for the less familiar categories like sound mixing or sound editing. Fans will watch the red carpet “fashion show” that precedes the Oscars and critique what a particular actor or actress was wearing. They will also sit through an endless litany of thanks and hope that this year’s host, Billy Crystal, will keep the awards show moving along at a decent pace with plenty of humor thrown in along the way. People around the world watch the show year after year because they enjoy movies and love to watch actors and actresses do their thing. Most appreciate a solid storyline, great acting, excellent cinematography and sound directing.

In a movie theater or at an awards show, good acting is expected. In the day-to-day life of church community, it better not be present, especially among the leadership. This is one of the points Jesus makes in our Scripture reading today. Six times in this chapter, Jesus calls the religious leaders “hypocrites.” The word literally means, “playacting” and the Pharisees and teachers of the law were good at it. In fact, if they lived today, they could win an Oscar for best performance at the Academy Awards. Look at their qualifications:

- 1) They put on a show for the crowds – Matthew 23:5
- 2) They loved to be noticed – Matthew 23:6
- 3) They practiced image management – Matthew 23:25-28
- 4) They power-postured their authority – Matthew 23:7
- 5) They were performance-preoccupied – Matthew 23:15
- 6) They didn’t practice what they preached – Matthew 23:3
- 7) They used double-talk – Matthew 23:16-19
- 8) They majored on the minors and minored on the majors – Matthew 23:23-24
- 9) They were legalistic rule-makers – Matthew 23:4
- 10) They prevented others from entering the kingdom – Matthew 23:13

In contrast, Jesus modeled healthy leadership for the people. His life was marked by spiritual and emotional health; by authenticity, transparency, holiness, grace, freedom and life. No wonder the crowds chose Jesus and responded to his call to rest. The same Jesus who practiced healthy leadership calls those who lead others (as well as the rest of the body of Christ!), to live spiritually and healthy lives as well. When we live like Jesus did, we live real lives. We live without the playacting since our goal is not an Oscar for our performance but a “well done good and faithful servant” from the King!

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** Are you striving to perform for others? Are you practicing image management, double-talk or power-posturing? If so, repent today!

**Take-a-way:** *Playacting works for actors but authentic living pleases the King!*