

## **Advent Devotional December 13, 2023**

### **Scripture**

#### **Matthew 23:1-12**

*1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 2 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; 3 therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. 4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. 5 They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. 6 They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, 7 and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. 8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. 9 And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father, the one 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 All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted."*

### **Devotion**

#### **The Rev. Dr. Allan Irizarry-Graves '17**

All of us desire to be someone of great worth and value. We live in a day and age where people determine their value by the number of likes, views, retweets, and followers they can rack up. With the advent of social media, there are seemingly endless opportunities to create new paths toward what many would deem greatness. While some have experienced the thrill of going viral and getting to know first-hand how it feels to be "great," the reality is that most of us will never go viral or have millions of followers. Despite this truth, there is good news in this passage for all of us. We all can be great. But how do we get there? How do we become great? What must we do to experience greatness?

The answer to the questions above is provided in verse 11 by Jesus when he says, "The greatest among you will be your servant." Before giving the key to greatness Jesus provides examples of what greatness is not. It is not in the seat that someone possesses. It is not the position that one may hold, nor is it how many people see what you do or who you are connected to. But rather, greatness is determined by service.

I love the way that Matthew shifts as he brings this passage to a close. In verses 7-10, he shifts from focusing on earthly positions that we hunger for to Jesus as the ultimate example of what we should seek and desire as followers of Christ. May we not only remember the example of Jesus who came to serve, and not to be served, but may we be moved to serve others in the same manner knowing that service we render to others supersedes any power, position, and prestige that we might possess in the eyes of God. As this is the case, I encourage you to serve, serve well, and remember the servants during this season of Advent. When people are consumed with stuff and things, may we focus on service.

### **Prayer**

May the grace of God, the sweet communion of God's Holy Spirit, rest, rule, refresh, and reform, until we meet at Jesus' feet, the bishop of the church, the bishop of our souls. Go in peace, go in love, go and serve. May the Lord be with you. Amen.