

"Beware of the scribes" MARK 12:38-44.

Jesus points to men entrusted with religious leadership who have turned their positions of trust into selfish jobs that require little work but pay well. The scribes relish the public honors that accompany their positions. In the marketplace, people rise respectfully when they approach. In the synagogue, scribes sit in seats of honor facing the congregation — seeing, but more importantly, being seen.

These are temptations for every age. Who does not like red carpet treatment? Who does not enjoy wearing finely tailored clothes? Who does not enjoy finding a mint on one's pillow? Who does not enjoy being addressed by honorific title? All of these can be innocent or corrosive, depending on how they affect our relationships.

We should not assume that all scribes are guilty. Jesus just had a conversation with a scribe whom he pronounced to be not far from the kingdom. People who hold honored positions often serve honorably, but dishonorable people also seek such positions.

Jesus taught the disciples, **"If any man wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all"** . His life contrasts dramatically with the scribes whom he is criticizing. Unlike them, Jesus dresses modestly and serves the needs of humble people along the way. He warned a would-be follower, **"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head"** .