

Conflict and tension are a part of daily life. Just as we have struggles with people who seem opposed to every idea we put forward, so to with Jesus. When Jesus heals a blind man, the Pharisees find fault with the good he has done. Jesus defends his actions, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind” (9:39). Jesus is critical of the Pharisees who are blind to the work of building the Kingdom and who don’t reach out to help those in need.

“Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber” (Jn 10:1). Jesus is careful to veil with his language, but nevertheless he is rightly critical of the self-serving Pharisees. They are thieves and robbers who exploit the flock for personal benefit. When Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate, they will rouse the crowds to release Barabbas in their desire to retain power and to eliminate Jesus as a threat to their perceived control.

The Prophet Ezekiel also lends light to just how blind these Pharisees are. “You did not strengthen the weak nor heal the sick nor bind up the injured. You did not bring back the stray or seek the lost but ruled them harshly and brutally... my shepherds did not look after my sheep, but pastured themselves and did not pasture my sheep” (Ez 34:4; 8).

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who will lay down his life for the sheep. He is the model for all human leaders. They “are to care for God’s people; the people are God’s sheep, not the possession of the appointed leadership. When the human leadership fails to care for God’s sheep and leads them astray from God, it comes under God’s judgment.”<sup>i</sup>

As we hear Jesus in his criticism of the Pharisees, we should reflect on our own lives and any responsibilities we may be entrusted with. We are stewards of the goods we possess. God blesses us that we will be generous and help others. God will judge us based on our willingness to sacrifice for the good of others ... or are selfishness in looking out for ourselves at the expense of others.

As we hear Jesus in his criticism of the Pharisees, we should also reflect on the leaders we look up to. Do we seek leaders for their ability to help a narrow point of view that benefits us or leaders with the care and concern of a good shepherd looking out for the common good?

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<sup>i</sup> Martin, Francis; Wright, William M. IV. The Gospel of John. Pg. 189.