# Jesus and the Pharisees

# The Word

# Read together Matthew 22:41—23:12

**The Big Idea**

Jesus contrasts the religious leader’s grab for earthly authority and power with the upside-down hierarchy of the kingdom: “But the greatest among you shall be your servant.”

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What was the most impactful idea from Sunday’s message?

2. Take some time to discuss what servant leadership actually looks like. For instance, think of someone in your life who has modeled true servant leadership for you? What specifically did that look like? Is servant leadership merely “meek and mild?” Is it stern and assertive at times? Do we overemphasize one aspect over another?

3. Consider our church community at Grace and this vision of servant leadership with Jesus as our one true Shepherd for all. Where do you see this vision being embodied well at Grace, and what are one or two areas you think we could grow in as a community to be more faithful to this vision?

4. As you consider Jesus’ model of servant leadership, take a moment of silence to consider the various contexts in which you have a place of authority and leadership. What is one specific thing you could do or change to be more faithful to Jesus’ model of servant leadership?

**Digging Deeper**

Read together Matthew 18:1-9 which continues the theme of humility and true greatness in God’s kingdom. What strikes you most from Jesus’ comments there?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Context: Jesus the King in Matthew’s gospel

A. Mt 1-4: The preparation of the king

B. Mt 5-7: The preaching of the king: an upside down kingdom

C. Mt 8-11: The presentation of the king: miraculous demonstrations of his authority

D. Mt 12-13: Opposition to the king

E. Mt 14-18: The reaction of the king

F. Mt 19-25: The Rejection of the king

II. The Big idea of the passage

In this passage we find that after silencing the religious leaders, Jesus turns his attention to the crowds, warning them about the scribes and Pharisees. In particular, Jesus states that these leaders have put themselves in a position of authority that does not belong to them and then required the people to adhere to laws they themselves don’t live by (indicating their hypocrisy). In verse 11, Jesus contrasts the leader’s grab for earthly authority and power with the hierarchy of the kingdom: “But the greatest among you shall be your servant.”

III. Consider the implications for leadership and community in the body of Christ

A. Jesus makes it clear that there is one leader in the Messianic community: Jesus himself (23:10)

B. So, first, the body must view its “leaders” (pastors, elders, teachers, youth workers, Sunday school teachers, ministry leaders, etc.) in light of the fact there is only One true Leader, Jesus himself. This protects us from propping up church leaders as celebrities or heroes and becoming co-dependent upon them. Church leaders must continually deflect attention from themselves and re-direct it toward Jesus.

C. And, second, this means that greatness in the kingdom is marked by servanthood and humility. Therefore, the Pharisaical model of leadership does not belong in the body. The leadership model we find in our current cultural context does not belong in the body. According to Jesus, the body’s leaders are characterized by humble service.