



## Week 4: Rejection

### Day 1 - Hometown Folks

#### Matthew 13:53-58

<sup>53</sup> When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place.<sup>54</sup> He came to his hometown and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? <sup>55</sup> Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? <sup>56</sup> And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?" <sup>57</sup> And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor except in their own country and in their own house." <sup>58</sup> And he did not do many deeds of power there, because of their unbelief.

#### Mark 6:1-6

He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. <sup>2</sup> On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! <sup>3</sup> Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. <sup>4</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." <sup>5</sup> And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. <sup>6</sup> And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching.

#### Luke 4:16-30

<sup>16</sup> When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:  
<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

<sup>20</sup> And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup> Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." <sup>22</sup> All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" <sup>23</sup> He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" <sup>24</sup> And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. <sup>25</sup> But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; <sup>26</sup> yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. <sup>27</sup> There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." <sup>28</sup> When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. <sup>29</sup> They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

### **Understanding the Passage:**

A prophet is not welcome in their hometown. This is the message threaded through all three of these accounts of the same event. This story is detailed differently in three of the four Gospels. Sometimes stories have little variation in their Gospel counterparts, but this story is told from a slightly different perspective in each telling. This is a gift to us who couldn't be there because we are then given different details, facts, etc. We are left with a more rounded understanding of the event even as they express the very same sentiment. Regardless of how the story is told, these folks communicated loud and clear that a prophet is not welcome in their hometown.

We might immediately jump to astonishment. Our modern minds almost have to do a double take. They reject the Messiah—the Christ for whom they had been waiting for hundreds of years?! This is the one about whom the Scriptures had foretold! This is the one who just emerged victorious from an intense scenario with the devil! This is the one for whom the heavens opened up and the Father's voice declared his belovedness and identity! Maybe they hadn't heard. Perhaps word didn't travel that fast back then (though that's hard to believe in a culture that was primarily an oral tradition). Regardless, their rejection of Jesus was so extreme that they resorted to violence attempting to drive him off a cliff. So not only was a prophet not welcome in his hometown, but he, in fact, was not welcome to live any longer.

Perhaps we can convince ourselves that we would never be guilty of rejection, but the concept of disbelief is something much more familiar. Disbelief can come in many forms: verbal disagreement, doing what we think is right in our own eyes (see the Book of Judges for how that turns out), walking away from our church or faith altogether, skepticism, dismissing a sermon because it sounds offensive. The list could go on. It may sound extreme to define disbelief as rejection, but in order to mature in our faith we need honest self-reflection. Remember, these were the people in the synagogue—religious folk, devout practitioners of the faith—and when the living Christ stood before them and read from the sacred text (words their ancestors had longed to come to pass), they couldn't hear it or see it.

What's at the root of this disbelief? Mark 6:30 names it. He was too familiar to them. He was one of them. They had seen him grow up, skin his knees, participate in ancient near-Eastern

teenage shenanigans, come into his own as a man in a profession. They knew his family and from where he had come. Had they forgotten so easily the stories of the virgin birth and the other prophecies that were fulfilled about his early life? The passage doesn't give us an in-depth look at their reasoning, but one thing is sure—they rejected Jesus as the Messiah. In fact, they drove him out of town with the intent to kill him.

This same Jesus comes to us to tell us the truth about ourselves, what his ministry is about, and what we are to do about it. Look at Luke 4:18-19. This is the mission of Christ, our mission.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to **bring good news to the poor.**  
He has sent me to **proclaim release to the captives**  
and **recovery of sight to the blind,**  
to let the **oppressed go free,**  
to **proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.**”

Today this same Jesus comes to us in the most unexpected of ways. No matter how long we've been in the faith—familiarity need not produce disbelief within us. The truth is sometimes very offensive. He shows up in the cry of the migrant, the exhausted and lost CEO, the refugee, the isolated and lonely stay-at-home parent. Our all-too-familiar Jesus comes to us today afresh with his mission from the Isaiah scroll. Will we turn away in disbelief and rejection or will we dive deeper into the uncomfortable, an unfamiliar place of faith?

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. Write about or discuss a time when the truth came to you from something or someone that was too familiar to you and so you rejected it.
2. What danger does familiarity or comfort bring to our journey of faith?
3. Which account of this story speaks to you most? Why?
4. Look to the words of the Isaiah scroll in Luke 4:18-19. If this is the ministry of Christ, what implications does this mission have for us as Christ followers?
5. Consider the most recent time you were offended. Reflect upon how there might be some truth found in the offense. Could there have been a message of truth coming to you? Or at the very least an opportunity to consider a different viewpoint?

## **Day 2 - Martha of Bethany**

### **Luke 10:38-42**

<sup>38</sup> Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.” <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; <sup>42</sup> there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

### **Understanding the Passage:**

The author of Luke highlights more stories about women than any other Gospel. It's important to note that most of these stories feature Jesus pushing back against societal norms that kept women at a disadvantage. In continuing with this theme, this scene is centered around Mary and Martha. In a plain reading of this passage one might quickly assume this story gives us a message about busyness or distraction. This isn't entirely correct. There is a deeper mission of Christ that Luke wants us to see. Martha's rejection did not come from a place of busyness, it came from a place of social conditioning.

It is no secret that in ancient near-Eastern women and men held very different roles in society. This was evident at every turn—drawing water from the well, with whom to speak, where to sit at gatherings, and so on. In a society that valued hospitality, it was of the utmost importance that this household welcome the Rabbi—the Christ—in the most astounding way. One can imagine the house being prepared days prior to the event; the busyness, the excitement, the pressure. The day finally comes. Jesus has arrived and everyone is playing their role and doing their part, except Mary. In such a setting when a Rabbi would be teaching the front row, at his feet was a position of one who was in training to be a teacher. Everyone knew that's where the disciples were to sit. A woman taking this seat would have offended any Jewish man—and could have resulted in dire consequences for Mary. One might even interpret Martha's statement to Jesus as a plea to help save her sister from embarrassment and/or punishment.

Jesus' response to Martha is indeed a teaching moment, but not just for Martha. Like Jesus tends to do, he turns the social norms on their head. He shows everyone there that women are fit to learn from a Rabbi. The Good News he came to bring extends to all. One might even interpret his actions to say, "Mary is preparing to preach the Gospel. This is what you all will do soon. This is the better choice." Christ is not correcting Martha, but he is addressing the rejection that can happen when we place societal norms, into which we were conditioned, before sitting at the feet of our Savior.

Christ is not scolding or chastising Martha here. He is inviting her into a new, albeit risky, way of being. Her concern for Mary is valid and understandable, but Christ is gently redirecting her, giving her the opportunity to see the world in a different way. He was perhaps inviting her to see herself in a different way.

It's difficult to see the ways in which we've been socially conditioned to 'reject' Christ's teaching. We have a gentle Savior who's inviting us to sit at his feet, learn about him and the Gospel in order to move forward in a new way, with a new perspective.

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. Consider Martha's concern for her sister. Would you have shared in that concern? Why?
2. Would you have accepted Jesus' invitation to sit at his feet with the possible social repercussion that could have followed?
3. What's a societal norm that is keeping you from living out a life that reflects time spent at Christ's feet? (Example: Sabbath keeping, welcoming the stranger, serving the poor, etc.)

## Day 3 - Judas Iscariot, Greed and Personal Gain

### John 12:1-8 (NRSV)

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. <sup>3</sup> Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" <sup>6</sup> (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) <sup>7</sup> Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

### Understanding the Passage:

Before we dive into this particular passage, let's look to the sections before and after to understand the larger context. John 11 is going to accomplish something for the reader. Keep in mind the book of John is not written in chronological order. The author is using a literary tool by intentionally ordering the events. Let's take a bird's eye view.

- 11:1-16 - The death of Lazarus
- 11: 17-27 - Conversation with Martha about resurrection
- 11:28-44 - Jesus is moved by grief/ resurrection of Lazarus
- 11: 45-55 - Plot to kill Jesus
- 12:1-8 - Mary's extravagant act and Judas' resistance
- 12:9-11 - A plot to kill Lazarus
- 12:12-18 - Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)

Palm Sunday points us to the immanent **death** and subsequent **resurrection** of Christ. On Sunday, these people are praising him and shouting "hosanna!" By Friday they are shouting "crucify him!" John is interweaving the themes—plots to kill, death, and resurrection.

What is the significance of this literary tool to our passage today? An ancient reader (along with us if we had read chapters 11 and 12 in one sitting) would have seen the parallels between Lazarus' death and resurrection and Christ's death and resurrection. The Gospel of John emphasizes the resurrection and the adverse reaction to it now (in Lazarus) and later (in Christ). This story as told by John is a foreshadowing of what Christ will do himself!

John, pointing us to this parallel between Lazarus and Jesus, only emphasizes two more characters who *should* have been living a parallel life: Judas and Mary. Both had the opportunity to sit at Christ's feet to learn from him. But instead of parallel paths we see a **stark contrast** between them. Look to verses 4-5. This perfume event strikes a chord with Judas—her extravagant love, her commitment (that would take her all the way to his cross), her preparing his body for burial indicating that she believed and understood Christ's statements about his death (something that clearly none of the 12 truly understood). All of this disgusted Judas. Judas and Mary were eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Lazarus. Judas saw Christ do many miracles—perhaps even more than Mary—and he still betrayed and rejected Christ.

How does one bear witness to such amazing, life-changing events and still reject their beloved Lord? The sad answer to this question lies in verse 6, **money**. Later, we'll find out, **power**. Judas had alliances with Zealots that were interested in overthrowing the Roman government. They just needed to get Jesus out of the way. Two lives that could have been parallel split apart now. Mary's heart was committed to Christ. Judas' heart was committed to money and power. There's a word for this repeated in the Old and New Testament—idolatry. This is anything that takes the place of Christ in our hearts. Idolatry will always cause us to betray and reject our Lord. Sometimes blatantly, like Judas, or sometimes subtly. Judas' rejection might be considered the ultimate and most extreme rejection, and yet making an alliance with money and power might be the easiest and most prevalent form of idolatry we see today.

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. Read aloud chapters 11 and 12 in one sitting. Write about the similarities and recurring themes.
2. How do you identify with Mary? How might you express this type of commitment and love to Christ today and in the coming weeks?
3. This may be a difficult question, but it's necessary to examine our hearts regularly. How do you identify with Judas?

## **Day 4 - Saul/Paul**

### **Acts 7:54-8:3**

<sup>54</sup> When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. <sup>55</sup> But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" <sup>57</sup> But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. <sup>58</sup> Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup> While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." <sup>60</sup> Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

**8** And Saul approved of their killing him. That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup> Devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him. <sup>3</sup> But Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison.

### **Understanding the Passage:**

This passage is situated in Acts of the Apostles, which is a historical narrative in which the early church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, began to share the Gospel through evangelism, proclamation and church planting. Once they received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they jumped into living out the Great Commission. This Gospel was very offensive to the people Christ first came to—the Jews. Some did accept the risen Lord and this new fulfillment of the Law while others were vehemently against it. Saul is on the latter team—blind and deaf to the message of salvation.

Up to this point we've studied a few different ways one can reject Christ and the Gospel. Some forms are subtle. Some are blatant. Saul was the latter. How exactly did rejection of Christ show up in Saul? It began with zealous devotion to his religion (cf. Acts 22 and Galatians 1:14). This devotion blinded him to the work of the Holy Spirit (blindness seems to be a theme in Saul's life). This form of rejection of Christ began in his heart and mind, but it did not remain internal. His rejection of Christ drove him to action. **Saul's rejection becomes outwardly destructive.**

This is the first mention of Saul whose first appearance in the book of Acts is one of extreme violence. One might interpret his position, watching the coats, in this murder as one of passivity—it is anything but. His position actually indicates that he was leading this bloody execution. In a way, the author of Luke is making the reader relive the bloody, violent death of our beloved Christ. Stephen's last words mirror Christ's from Luke 23:46. He does not request that his own sins be forgiven, but that the sins of his persecutors (including Saul) would be forgiven (Acts 7:59-60). The taste of this murder further propels Saul into his mission to uphold the Jewish Law that required these Christians to be executed. How could someone with so much blood on his hands, living a lifestyle driven by hate, ever be redeemed?

The Martyring of Stephen will be turned into beauty in a way that only happens in the Kingdom of God. It has been said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. This situation will eventually be an on-ramp to Saul's miraculous conversion in Chapter 9. Stephen's death was not in vain. God would still reach Saul in his heart that was hardened by hate.

Saul's hardened heart drove him to commit heinous acts that can never be undone. The unchecked hatred did not stay within—it came spilling out. It is important that we check our values every now and again. Christ can reach us (like he did Saul on the road to Damascus), but we are capable of doing a lot of damage in the meantime. Rejection can show up in the form of unexamined thoughts, beliefs, tightly held values. Fear of change or others doing things differently can drive us to cause harm with our words or with our actions. Saul's story is extreme, but it gives us an opportunity to pray as the psalmist does "Search me oh, Lord. See if there is any wicked way in me" (Psalm 129). May this always be our humble prayer lest we be tempted to blindly cross a line into rejection. The help and grace of Christ is always available, we simply need to know that we need it.

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. Consider the life of Saul a cautionary tale for us. How might you identify with Saul's version of rejection? (Example: criticizing other Christians, harshly critiquing church leaders, tearing others down, etc.)
2. Who are the Sauls of our modern day? Who is persecuting the church? Is God able to reach them? Look to the website *persecution.com* for current stories of Martyrs.
3. How might our zealous devotion to religion (laws/regulations) be blinding us to the larger world of grace that offers us freedom from hate and leads others to Jesus?

## Day 5 - Pharisees

### Matthew 23:1-36

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, <sup>2</sup> “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; <sup>3</sup> therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. <sup>6</sup> They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, <sup>7</sup> and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. <sup>8</sup> But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. <sup>9</sup> And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. <sup>10</sup> Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. <sup>11</sup> The greatest among you will be your servant. <sup>12</sup> All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted. <sup>13</sup> **“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them. <sup>15</sup> **Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. <sup>16</sup> **“Woe to you,** blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the sanctuary is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by the oath.’ <sup>17</sup> You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that has made the gold sacred? <sup>18</sup> And you say, ‘Whoever swears by the altar is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gift that is on the altar is bound by the oath.’ <sup>19</sup> How blind you are! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? <sup>20</sup> So whoever swears by the altar, swears by it and by everything on it; <sup>21</sup> and whoever swears by the sanctuary, swears by it and by the one who dwells in it; <sup>22</sup> and whoever swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by the one who is seated upon it. <sup>23</sup> **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and **have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others.** <sup>24</sup> You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel! <sup>25</sup> **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup> You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean. <sup>27</sup> **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. <sup>28</sup> So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. <sup>29</sup> **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous, <sup>30</sup> and you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ <sup>31</sup> Thus you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets. <sup>32</sup> Fill up, then, the measure of your ancestors. <sup>33</sup> You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell? <sup>34</sup> Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, <sup>35</sup> so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. <sup>36</sup> Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation.



<sup>37</sup> “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! <sup>38</sup> See, your house is left to you, desolate. <sup>39</sup> For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

### **Understanding the Passage:**

In this passage Christ calls out the Scribes and the Pharisees—two of Jesus’ leading adversaries. Pharisees are a Jewish sect that is consumed with the keeping of the law—*their* interpretation of the law. They believe that they hold the one true interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and they obsessively use that interpretation to define the “in” group and the “out” group. Whenever they are mentioned in the New Testament, it is never positive (with the exception of Nicodemus, who has a character growth; Gamaliel; and Matthew, who becomes a disciple of Christ). However, Pharisees as a group are a complex villain in this story. It is easy to paint them as the bad guys, and they earn that title, but it’s important to keep in mind the power dynamics of the day. The Pharisees may enjoy a *measure* of power and control, but at the end of the day they, too, are being crushed by the Roman Empire. They find ways to benefit, while also participating in the oppression of others. Do note that this section ends with lament, not anger. Christ grieves over this way of life (v. 37-39).

The entirety of Matthew 23 is Jesus scolding the Pharisees. It’s likely this did not happen all at once, but the author found it important to list these critiques all at one time. Christ’s message is clear to the reader as it is repeated over and over: you are not who you say you are. You do not follow the laws that you insist that others follow to a T. You say one thing and do another. You are hypocrites. In this speech we see Christ utilizing imagery that comes right out of the law. He uses the Pharisees interpretation against them, holding them accountable to what they espouse. However, it is important to note that Christ is not criticizing the law itself. Christ does not hate the law, he simply is insisting that **they should have learned mercy, justice, and covenant faithfulness first (Matthew 9:13, 12:7)**. There is no humility, no mercy, no repentance. They are working to ‘be right’ simply for the sake of ‘being right.’

The need to be right is a merciless taskmaster. Perfectionism is a close cousin to it. This happens when we attach ourselves to the dos and don’ts of religion rather than listen closely for the direction of our Savior while being guided by the law. Allegiance to the rules, however it manifests, can lead us directly to rejection of Christ as we see it did with the Pharisees and other sects.

This critique is very interesting because the Pharisees were actually interpreting the law correctly. Christ is not telling them they’ve got the law part of it wrong. What does he say over and over? Hypocrite! Hypocrisy is when our espoused beliefs/teachings do not match up with our actions. The age-old adage of “do what I say not as I do” applies here. In verse 3 Christ says as much, “Do what they teach you, but not what they do.” So, this form of rejection comes in beliefs and actions not matching up. Honestly, human beings will always be hypocrites without the grace and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We need the law AND Jesus. We need the guidelines AND grace. This form of rejection shows up if we accept the teachings, but don’t let them translate into action. This type of behavior is a red flag to us because it can lead to very dangerous places (for our own faith and the faith of others) as it did with the Pharisees. Jesus very simply explains how we can get out of the hypocrite

lifestyle—place humility, mercy, justice and covenant faithfulness above all else. May we be individuals and a community that with the grace of God is always putting these things first.

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. How many times did Christ use the word hypocrite? What does this word mean to you?
2. How do you see hypocrisy show up in your life? (Be gentle with yourself. Remember there's already so much grace for you.)
3. How might you place humility, mercy, justice and covenant faithfulness as a priority today/this week?

### **Video Discussion Questions:**

1. After having studied these characters this week and watched the video discussion, what does rejection mean to you?
2. How has your definition of rejection changed this week?
3. Which character(s) from this week do you identify with most or understand their 'rejection' the most?
4. Rejection of the Gospel/Christian way of life can take many forms. How might we unknowingly be 'rejecting' the message of the Gospel as we live out our daily lives?
5. Write about or discuss what changes you might consider making in order to live more fully aligned with Christ? (Be gentle with yourself. Resist self-condemnation. Remember there is extravagant grace available.)
6. Which of the character(s) do you not understand the most? Why/why not?
7. Are there other characters in Scripture that exhibit rejection of God?
8. Dig into one character from question 7 and analyze the rejection exhibited there. How did they get there? What choices did they make? Were they aware of their rejection or was it subconscious? What can their stories teach us?