

## Discipleship

Study provided by UMC Discipleship Ministries, adapted by Kathryn Rauhauser

### Gathering

- Reflect and respond to the following: Who has been a role model in your life showing you how to follow Jesus? How do they embody Jesus' teaching and love?
- Read: Matthew 23:1-12.

### Discussion

- The scribes and the Pharisees were religious elites of the time who had political power and teaching authority (i.e., those who sit on Moses's seat). Please note that not all Jews and Jewish leaders are described as those who teach God's words without practicing them. Can you list the religious elites' behaviors, seeking public glory that Jesus criticizes in verses 4-7?
  - What do you think is the heart behind these behaviors?
- What differences do you notice when you compare these characteristics to those of your faith role model?
  - Where do you think those differences come from?
- Jesus tells his disciples, "Call no one your father on earth." The term "father" denotes religious, political, and social authority, such as the emperor, who exercised power to maintain a hierarchical world. Against this, Jesus reminds his disciples, "You have one Father-the one in heaven" under whom all disciples are equal as brothers and sisters. It is like a family defined not by birth order, ancestry, or gender but by Jesus' call, doing God's will. Is your church embodying this vision of Jesus? In what ways?
- The body of Christ is supposed to look like a church that represents the beloved community, celebrating diversity of every kind, and reflecting the tapestry of the world in which we live. What comes to mind as concrete features of such a church?
  - What roles are you playing to create such a community?
- "The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted. (23:11-12). According to Jesus, this is one of the features of his beloved community. Reflect on ways to embody Jesus' teaching to help your church be the beloved community. Take time to list the ways in which you can participate in building this type of community.

### Prayer and Sending Forth

- If studying with a group, share prayer requests and praise reports as well as those on the church prayer list. If studying on your own, take time to pray for those on our church prayer list and lift up your own prayer concerns to the Lord.
- Consider praying the following or a similar prayer: God, who looked across the expanse of the universe and called it good, thank you for creating mountains and valleys in various shapes and sizes, colorful rainbows, dark ocean depths, and deserts of hot and cold. We are grateful you made us in your image, which is completely beyond our limited grasp. Help us fulfill your will and vision in our community. Amen.