

“Woe to you also, teachers of the Law! For you prepare unbearable burdens and load them on the people, while you yourselves don’t move a finger to help them.” (Luke 11:46).

Brothers and sisters, God gave only ten commandments to the Israelites, but in their efforts to be perfect, the religious leaders began to add their own understanding of the laws. So, by the time of Jesus, the laws had increased from 10 to 613 commandments of “do’s” and “don’ts.”. Jesus is harsh on them because they paid attention to the externals and applied the laws to the little things. For instance, they collected tithes on the chaff of every grain and herbs, but they did not pay attention to the weighty aspect of justice and love of God.

The consequences of their actions were that instead of religion to be a place of mercy and love of God, it became a place of burden and weighty sacrifices on the people. At the end of today’s gospel, a scribe also took offense at Jesus’ harsh statements and said, “Master, when you speak like this, you insult us too.” Jesus said the scribes will also not be spared because they load the people with burdens so hard to bear but will not reach out a helping hand to assist them.

These words of Jesus may also apply to us Christians. Sometimes people come to church with their burdens that weigh heavily on them hoping to find rest. Jesus advises us to carry each other’s burdens with love. We are encouraged to extend a helping hand to ease other’s burdens. But sometimes we like the religious leaders in the gospel add to people’s burdens by the way we treat them. Jesus said, “Come to me...., and I will give you rest.” If we knew the real story of people, we probably might show them mercy. Let us ask Jesus to help us do something to lighten others’ burdens. **Amen.**

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