

The 5th Sunday after Epiphany ~ Sunday, February 4, 2018

“Half Truths ~ Cleanliness is Next to Godliness”

Mark 7:1-20

I. The Half Truth

God had the task of teaching these former slaves how to live as _____ people and as His _____. An important part of this teaching was the handing down of the _____—a set of rules and regulations—or _____—outlining how they were to live in _____ relationship with God and each other.

These laws, recorded in the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, may seem odd to us, but many of them were very _____ precautions to help prevent the people from getting _____ both physically and spiritually.

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. You shall keep all my statutes and all my ordinances, and observe them; I am the Lord.” (Lev 19:36)

To follow these laws was to be ritually _____ to not follow them was to be unclean or _____; and not only meant the person was outside of the Law, but was also _____ from the community.

“For the unclean they shall take some ashes of the burnt purification offering, and running water shall be added in a vessel; then a clean person shall take hyssop, dip it in the water, and sprinkle it on the tent, on all the furnishings, on the persons who were there, and on whoever touched the bone, the slain, the corpse, or the grave. The clean person shall sprinkle the unclean ones on the third day and on the seventh day, thus purifying them on the seventh day. Then they shall wash their clothes and bathe themselves in water, and at evening they shall be clean.” (Numbers 19:17-19)

_____ laws like these were elaborate washing rituals prescribed to render an unclean or defiled person clean again so they could be _____ to the community.

For the Jews, keeping the Law was believed to be the best way to _____ God, and to be in _____ relationship with Him.

“You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my rules and do them...I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples. You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.” (Leviticus 20:22-26)

Cleanliness eventually became a _____ for the people of Israel.

II. The Lie

God gave His people the law to set them _____ and to make them _____—to be a blessing to all nations. However, they _____ the point.

They used their rules and rituals to make themselves feel _____ about themselves and their religion, which created spiritual _____. And eventually the people of Israel became more concerned with _____ purity—with keeping of the rules and rituals—than they did about _____ purity or their _____ with God.

At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees, a religious group who prided themselves on their strict _____ to the Law, were following _____ laws oral and written laws, which produced a heartless, cold, and arrogant brand of righteousness.

The Law may have been a _____ to holiness and godliness; however, the Jews took it to the extreme, and the regulations soon became an _____ in themselves, instead of one of the ways to holiness. To them cleanliness wasn't next to godliness—it _____ godliness!

Jesus was extremely disturbed that the Pharisees substituted all these rules and _____ for God's _____.

“Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” (Mark 7:6-7)

There's nothing wrong with _____ in and of itself, and not all of them are bad, as long as they don't _____ scripture.

“...thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.” (Mark 7:13)

“Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean.” (Mark 7:14)

Our real problem wasn't dirty _____, but a dirty _____.

“For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and

folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean.” (Mark 7:20)

Jesus is clear: The heart of the problem is the human _____. The problem with the Pharisees’ approach to religion is they focussed on the _____ instead of the internals—they focussed on cleaning up the exterior of a person without really touching their _____.

This is the creed of false religion:

Religious ritual always allows us to feel good about _____ and better than others. That’s what false religion does—it appeals to the _____—it gives one a sense of outer respectability, but seldom addresses matters of the heart.

False religion focuses on how you look _____. False religion majors on the _____—it’s all about externals.

The externals don’t matter if our heart is in the _____ place. In fact, Jesus says we’re worshipping in _____; we’re only going through the motions; and _____ our time.

God doesn’t want us to embrace _____, He wants our _____ to be clean, and that can only happen when we _____ Him. Anything else—all our righteous deeds—are, as Isaiah said, nothing but _____.

III. The Truth

No matter how hard we try, we all _____ and fall short of God’s glorious _____. Or to put it another way: We have an inner _____ that no amount of soap or water can ever make clean—no matter what how many external _____ we follow.

“Although you wash yourself with soda and use an abundance of soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me,” declares the Sovereign Lord.” (Jeremiah 2:22)

Despite this spiritual reality, God’s desire is that we be _____ and pure.

Godliness = holiness = *hagiasmos* =

How clean is your heart today? Do you think God would be pleased if your heart was 80% clean? 90% pure? 99.44% pure?

God wants us to be _____ pure.

“So you must live as God’s obedient children. Don’t slip back into your old ways

of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn’t know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, ‘You must be holy because I am holy.’” (1Peter 1:14-16)

You’re _____ in that God wouldn’t call us to be holy if it wasn’t _____. However, you’re _____ in that we can’t do this in our own _____.

“‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.’” (Isaiah 1:18)

This passage _____ God’s redeeming work in Christ.

“For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. But now God has shown us a better way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.” (Romans 3:20-22)

Jesus makes us clean by His _____.

“The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death!” (Hebrews 9:14-15)

Jesus keeps us clean by His _____.

“You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.” (John 15:13)
What a bath does for your body, _____ does to your soul—it cleans you up on the inside. However, as we walk around in a dirty world, our spiritual feet get dirty, and so we need to stay in Jesus’ Word to stay _____ and clean.

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Rom 8:1-4)

What’s in you heart? Do you need forgiveness today?

Do you need cleansing?