

was not close to Him. I guess we can apply that to ourselves. It is not enough just to study about God, to even read and study the Bible but we need to be responding to God Himself.

Jesus then puts another spin on his conversation with the Pharisees. He gets them, as well as the crowds and the disciples too, to think about another aspect of spirituality. The Pharisees thought that this ceremony of washing hands cleansed them from any contact they might have had with anything unclean. Jesus said they were wrong in that thinking. They were not acceptable to God, just because they were clean on the outside. He goes on to say: "Listen to me everyone, and understand this, nothing outside a man can make him unclean, by going into him, rather it's what comes out of a man that makes him unclean." So, it's not what we put into our bodies that makes us unclean.

So is Jesus saying here, that he's abrogating the whole of the Mosaic law? No, he says to them you should honour your father and mother, a law that we should follow to day . . . but he's reminding them that they are neglecting the spiritual purpose of the law, which is to love God with all their heart, and to love their neighbour as themselves. He's also giving them another perspective from which to view these laws . . . and that is the perspective of Christ Himself.

What cleanses us from the inside is Jesus' death on the cross, the atonement he made on our behalf, and inner cleansing by the Holy Spirit who lives in us and works to change our attitudes, motives, and behaviour. It is only when we keep our lives in vital relationship with God and open to the Holy Spirit that we can be cleansed and changed inwardly.

# NAMBUCCA VALLEY ANGLICANS WORSHIP at HOME

29.08.2021

## SUPPLEMENT

### SENTENCE, COLLECT, READINGS & HOMILY for today 29 August 2021

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

#### Sentence

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

James 1.17

#### Collect

#### Prayer of the Day

Cleanse our consciences, O Lord,  
and enlighten our hearts  
through the daily presence of your Son Jesus Christ,  
that when he comes in glory to be our judge  
we may be found undefiled and acceptable in his sight;  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## Prayer of the Week

Lord of all power and might,  
the author and giver of all good things:  
graft in our hearts the love of your name,  
increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness,  
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Reading from the Old Testament: Song of Songs 2:8-13

- <sup>8</sup> Listen! My beloved!  
Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains,  
bounding over the hills.
- <sup>9</sup> My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.  
Look! There he stands behind our wall, gazing through  
the windows, peering through the lattice.
- <sup>10</sup> My beloved spoke and said to me,  
'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me.
- <sup>11</sup> See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.
- <sup>12</sup> Flowers appear on the earth;  
the season of singing has come,  
the cooing of doves is heard in our land.
- <sup>13</sup> The fig-tree forms its early fruit;  
the blossoming vines spread their fragrance.  
Arise, come, my darling;  
my beautiful one, come with me.'

When do I hold onto man made traditions and ignore the living  
Word of God speaking to me?

The hearts of the Pharisees weren't connected to and touched by God, and as a result they didn't have a heart for others, and this was reflected in their actions. Abiding by the many detailed and superficial laws was actually preventing them from following the spirit of the law. There was no heart engagement . . . not with God, nor toward their fellow man.

Donald English explains this:

"It is by raising the human commentary to a level of importance equal to the divinely given law that they have actually negated the real purpose and spirit of the law itself. They can go through the ritual of word and deed depending on the rules given in the tradition without even being committed in their hearts to the spiritual intention of it."

So, God's law is actually set aside in favour of human teaching based on it. In this particular example it was connected to a Korban vow . . . money dedicated to God's temple that otherwise would have gone to support parents. Korban had become a religiously acceptable way to neglect your parents so that the child's responsibility was negated altogether. Although the action of giving money to God seemed worthy and no doubt conferred prestige on the person giving it, many people who took the Korban vow were disregarding God's command to care for their parents.

Donald English again:

"The bringing near of this gift to God as holy was not then available for any other purpose. Something that was designated as Korban, even if it remained in the possession of the owner, was simply not available for ordinary use."

So Jesus highlights how the Pharisees hearts were far from God even though they looked like they were obeying his law. I guess Jesus is saying to the disciples, where is your heart with God? Where is your love of God? The Pharisees knew a lot about God, but they didn't know God himself. They had stepped to the side of Him. Their spirit

God and open to the Holy Spirit that we can be cleansed and changed inwardly.

How might maintaining this vital relationship with God (that inwardly cleanses us) affect our worship of God? What does God desire?

Michael Green makes a very poignant remark:

“The attitude to worship is so different when comparing the Pharisees and Jesus. Both believed in the grace of God. For the Pharisees it was possible to honour God if they carried out their rituals with detail and precision. For Jesus worship meant loving obedience and an intimate relationship with God, whom we can call “Abba, Father”. For the Pharisees worship was possible if services were rendered properly, for Jesus it was impossible unless people’s hearts were turned to Him and changed by Him.”

William Temple gives a beautiful description of the vital relationship with God in our worship when we allow the Spirit of God access to our lives:

“To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, and to devote our will to the purpose of God.”

So, it is having our hearts open and responsive to God's Word and Spirit, not external practices that delight the heart of God. When our relationship with God is distant, it grieves God deeply. We know from other passages in the Bible that God guards our relationship with Him jealously. He wants our whole heart and spirit and he desires to change our lives into ones that show humility, mercy, compassion and above all LOVE.

So perhaps we could ask ourselves a few questions in regard to worship of the heart.

Do I read his word but not put it into action?

Do I go through the motions of church activity without engaging my heart . . . do I keep it distant?

## Psalm 45: 1-2, 6-9

- 1 My heart is astir with fine phrases, I make my song for a king:  
my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.**
- 2 You are the fairest of men, grace flows from your lips:  
therefore has God blessed you for ever and ever.**
- 6 Your throne is the throne of God, it endures for ever:  
and the sceptre of your kingdom  
is a righteous sceptre.**
- 7 You have loved righteousness and hated evil:  
therefore God, your God, has anointed you with  
he oil of gladness above your fellows.**
- 8 All your garments are fragrant with myrrh, aloes and cassia:  
music from ivory palaces makes you glad.**
- 9 Kings’ daughters are among your noble women:  
the queen is at your right hand in gold of Ophir.**

## New Testament Reading: James 1:17-27

- 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.**
- 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.**
- 19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,**
- 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.**
- 21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.**
- 22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.**
- 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror**
- 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.**
- 25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do.**
- 26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.**
- 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.**

living relationship with God.

The second point of teaching is the matter that Jesus then raises with the crowd and the disciples. He places emphasis on what constitutes real inner cleanliness and purity – i.e., true worship of God.

The Pharisees thought that the ceremonies of washing hands and cooking pots cleansed them from any contact they might have had with anything unclean. Jesus said they were wrong in that thinking. They were not acceptable to God just because they were clean on the outside. Jesus said to them: “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.” And in verses 20-23 he expands on this by saying it is what comes from within us, what comes out of our hearts, that places us at odds with God. He gives many examples - two of them being, deceit and arrogance. Donald English simplifies this for us:

“Food that enters the body does not affect who or what we are as people, but it is that which comes out of us that is expressive of who or what we are. Because what comes out of us relates to all the ways in which we reveal our character, our outlook, and our perspective on life. In other words, all the things that relate to our heart.”

Jesus was pointing out that sin actually begins in the attitudes and intentions of the inner person. He was also giving them another perspective from which to view the laws, and that is the perspective of Himself. They are to look at it in the light of His teaching. Even though they didn't recognise it now Jesus was going to address the change that man's heart needs. It would be done by Him on the cross through his death and resurrection. No longer will the social regulations of that law apply because they will have a new birth through the action of the Holy Spirit in response to faith in Him.

What cleanses us from the inside is Jesus' death on the cross, the atonement he made on our behalf, and inner cleansing by the Holy Spirit who lives in us and works to change our attitudes, motives, and behaviour. It is only when we keep our lives in vital relationship with

throughout the ages) that spelt out the fine and particular details in the application of the law. This they felt, was being undermined. This oral tradition safeguarded the proper standing and keeping of the laws. The Pharisees questioned: "If Jesus really was from God, as he proclaimed, why would his disciples be doing things contrary to God's law?"

Jesus replies to the Pharisees by quoting from the book of Isaiah. He says: "These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." He then gives them an example to show how their fervent attachment to ritual didn't constitute true heartfelt worship. This example is in verses 8-14 (although not in our reading today it is pertinent). Jesus cites the commandment given by Moses that you 'should honour your father and mother'. He exposed the fact that an offering they had adopted called Korban, which was an offering brought near to God, and so not available for any other purpose (and at times remained in the possession of the owner) was being used as an excuse not to look after their parent's needs. It was set aside for God, whilst their parents went without. Jesus was highlighting the immorality and hypocrisy of this, given the law says, "honour your father and mother!"

In answer to the Pharisee's accusation, Jesus firmly points out that they were putting their oral traditions above the actual purpose and Spirit of the law intended by God. They were going through the rituals without being committed in their hearts to its spiritual intention. Their worship was for outward appearances so that they could be seen by others as being devout. In actual fact their hearts, according to him, were far from God.

Abiding by these detailed and superficial laws was actually preventing them from following the spirit of the law. There was no heart engagement . . . not with God, nor toward their fellow man. A reminder that we need to be careful that our worship and service is motivated by a love for God and not the wrong reasons, lest we too become like the Pharisees.

Perhaps for us a parallel may be - going through the motions of worship, church activity or work for God, whilst keeping our hearts distant from God and others – and thus not maintaining a personal and

## Gospel of Mark 7:1-8, 14-23

- <sup>1</sup> The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus
- <sup>2</sup> and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.
- <sup>3</sup> (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. <sup>4</sup>When they come from the market-place they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)
- <sup>5</sup> So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, 'Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?'
- <sup>6</sup> He replied, 'Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:
- <sup>7</sup> "These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules."
- <sup>8</sup> You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.'
- <sup>14</sup> Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, 'Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.
- <sup>15</sup> Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.'
- <sup>17</sup> After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.

18 'Are you so dull?' he asked.  
'Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from  
the outside can defile them?  
19 For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach,  
and then out of the body.'  
(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)  
20 He went on:  
'What comes out of a person is what defiles them.  
21 For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil  
thoughts come – sexual immorality, theft, murder,  
22 adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander,  
arrogance and folly.  
23 All these evils come from inside and defile a person.'

## Homily REFLECTION MARK 7:1-8, 14-23 by Sue Noble

You would all be familiar with the humble teapot. In our household it was a silver aluminium teapot with an intricate pattern engraved on the outside. As children my siblings and I would take paper rubbings of the pattern. But if you looked on the inside . . . it was as black as pitch, a complete contrast. I remember once trying to apply steel wool and a hard scrubbing action to the inside in an effort to return it to a shiny, radiant silver, only to be told my efforts would be futile. Perhaps it was better for the steeping and flavour of the tea to leave it as it was?! But there it was . . . that desire for a real deep cleansing.

In several passages of NT scripture Jesus uses a similar metaphor as our teapot to describe the state of our inner selves and aims his remarks particularly at the Pharisees. As we read in Matt 23:27-29 he says: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy."

In our Mark reading today Jesus has major disagreements with the Pharisees that continue this theme and raises for us, several points of teaching. The first point is in regard to placing an emphasis on traditions and practices of worship whilst keeping our hearts from being touched by God' spirit and word.

This is played out in today's passage in a conversation where the Pharisees question Jesus about his disciples' carelessness in relation to ceremonial purity laws. The Pharisees were angered because the disciples didn't wash their hands as instructed by the law before eating food on returning from the market place. At the markets they could have been defiled by touching gentiles in the crowd. Believe it or not, a shadow from a gentile falling across a dish or a plate could have made the food unclean under these laws!

What lay at the heart of their dispute, was that they felt the disciples were flouting the oral tradition of their ancestors, in connection with the law. The oral tradition was the verbal commentary (handed down