

Day 23 Devotion

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live¹ according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” He said to them,

*“Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,
‘This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.’
You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.”*

Mark 7:1-9

Shopping for a good melon can be a challenge. No matter how good it looks, it is hard to tell sometimes. So, I usually tap it, thump it, and if no one is looking maybe even squeeze it a little. Then I take it home, only to discover that I am not very good at this!

When the Pharisees were irritated that Jesus’ disciples did not wash their hands before eating – a violation of one of their traditions – Jesus immediately challenged them. He even calls them “hypocrites” and explained that what comes from the inside of a person is what “defiles” that person, not the other way around.

If we’re not careful, we can all too easily become absorbed with looking good on the outside and forget what really counts. In fact, when we get to the place where we are keeping all the “right” rules, we may become proud ourselves and judgement of others. But harboring bitterness, clinging to old attitudes, and thinking too highly of ourselves are the kind of defiling stuff that makes us ALL guilty of Jesus’ charge.

So, don’t miss the point. This Lenten season is yet another opportunity to build community with one another by keeping a check on what’s on the inside – your heart, your thoughts, your attitudes – that really matter.

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Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not take your Holy Spirit from me. And grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

From Psalm 51

RESOURCE: [Mellody Hobson: Color blind or color brave? | TED Talk](#)