

We live in a world that pays attention to the externals. How nice is your house. Do you have the latest iPhone? How much money do you have? Do you have the latest model and coolest car? How do you look? And how do you look in that car? Do you keep up with the latest trends? Do you go to the cool new age church?

If Jesus were here today, he would be shaking his head, and rolling his eyes in disappointment. Not only because it is true- but because it was true yesterday, today, and will probably be true forever and ever. Amen

Jesus is engaged in a conversation with the scribes and the Pharisees over washing your hands. Literally. It sounds childish, like something children would argue about. MOM, Billy didn't wash his hands. Shut up You shut up. Well, its not quite so simple. There is a sacred ritual, handed down over generations, for spiritual cleanliness. Its important. To be in the presence of God requires a certain reverence and attitude- and the Pharisees are convinced that people need to go through these external theatrics to prove themselves worthy. Jesus calls them out. He calls them hypocrites- that their hypocrisy was foretold by Isaiah,. True spirituality isn't all about show. . The real you isn't what's on the outside. Its what is in the heart.

He calls the crowd on over to listen in on the conversation, C'mon over - hear this because this is important. Jesus gives us a two fold command – to hear and to understand. And as we all know – hearing doesn't necessarily lead to understanding.

To be unclean isn't a matter of external. Washing hands, dressing trendy, or acting like a Christian. The real you is what is on the inside. And washing your hands ain't goanna do much to change that. We can ritually wash, dress all trendy, pretend to care, quote bible verses as we judge others. We can be all arrogant, shop at whole foods and eat vegan, but that doesn't change who we are on the inside. What matters is your heart – and only God – and you – know your heart. Be careful, because sooner or later – what is in your heart is going to come out. And it may not be pretty. In First Samuel, The Lord said to Samuel as he was inspecting Jesse's sons – Do not look at his appearance, or physical stature. For a man looks at the outward appearance. God looks at the heart. Take a good hard look- What does your heart look like?

People were taken aback by this. Certainly the Pharisees were. They were offended. And they should be – this is years of tradition and law Jesus is simply discarding. But Jesus lets everyone know exactly who is who. Pay no attention to the men behind the curtain. Those wearing the robes, with their noses way up in the air- The Pharisees are blind. And the blind leading the blind will not end well. .

Peter, acting somewhat as a spokesmen for the disciples, asks Jesus to clarify. Can you explain this again. Jesus, probably rolling his eyes in disbelief, wonders – are you still without understanding?? The New International Version reads – Are you still so dull? We know Peter isn't the sharpest tool in the shed- but to give him some credit – Peter may be just shocked at what he has heard. Years of God's Law – Dismissed?

We heard – but do we understand?

It isn't all the ceremonies, or the rituals, or the resume of rules. It isn't in the appearances. What matters is the heart. The real you. If the heart is a toxic waste dump, sooner or later, that will come out. No amount of hand sanitizer will change that.

Jesus point is simple. Pay little attention to those things that matter a little. Take a good hard look at your heart. Now, no heart is pure as snow. We all have our little evils, hatreds, prejudices, and secrets . I know I have a few. I'm working on that. But are we confined by rules? Are we bound by the appearances of propriety, or success? Do we smile politely, pretend to be friendly, have paperwork and references of all our good deeds, yet have an aura that is cloudy and nasty?

Jesus calls us Not to dismiss the Law – but to see beyond it. Look beyond the rituals and ceremonies that serve to mask the pain, and take a good hard look at what is in your heart. It really is a matter of the heart. Make sure yours belongs to Jesus, and the real you will shine forth.