**9/1/24**

**Extra! Extra! Read all about it!**

**Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 (NRSV)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSV) (2) **Amen.**

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Jesus’ disciples messed up yet again! This time they got themselves into some real trouble folks because they forgot to wash their hands before eating! They just simply do not follow the rules of the elders! These guys are just never going to learn! How many more times is Jesus going to allow these disciples to embarrass him? Isn’t Jesus tired of getting in trouble with the Pharisees and the scribes? When is enough just going to be enough? Keep shaking your heads at all of their unbelievable acts’ folks! Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Get your papes here folks for the good ole price of just six quarters and a dime! Yes, of course I calculated for inflation!

I mean you could really imagine a newspaper boy announcing these kinds of things from the street corner in an effort to get you to purchase a pape and read the headline article of the day? I unfortunately only have a perception of this due to one of my favorite movies, which also awkwardly enough happens to be a musical as well. For those of you that have not figured it out by now, the title would be Newsies! Now, if you have ever seen the movie, or maybe even caught the musical, then you can fully picture this scene in your head rather easily. However, if you have not seen either then the thought or image of this is quite frankly almost kind of unimaginable. Of course, the times of paperboys out on the street corner simply went by the wayside over time due to the continued advancement of TV, and then eventually the internet. The headlines and our daily news today seemingly bombard us at every turn now as we open up Facebook, an email, an app, an internet browser, or practically any program. There still are newspapers out there of course, but the feel and the stories just are not as genuinely and creatively sold like they were by the Newsies oh so many years back. To put things into a little more perspective here, I am also quite sure that this Gospel Reading we are focusing on might as well have ended up with more than one front page article as the story played its way out for sure. However, I will leave the rest of the headlines up to your imagination for now!

I again want to thank all of you for joining us today on the conference call and out there in the pews. The true stories and acts of faith are created by each and every one of you playing your part in this very community, and that very community outside the doors of the church and your homes. We come here as if we were going to the big-time editor and ensuring our very article has the right direction and feel before it gets published. We come here to ensure that our story is true and right, and that we are being genuine with our headlines. Thanks be to God for allowing us to have a community to come to and draw from and in!

So, before we get moving back in the direction of my outline, let me share a pretty cool little story with you that I found during my research. “A downtown business man liked to have his shoes shined every day, and he always had the same little boy do it. The shoe shine boy always did a good job. One day the man asked him, ‘How come you are so conscientious about your work?’ The boy was quite pleased with the compliment. In answer to the question, he looked up and said, ‘Mister, I’m a Christian and I try to shine every pair of shoes as if Jesus Christ were wearing them.’” (9)

That story there made me realize that today’s Gospel Reading could unfortunately have us focusing on the caution signs and all the proverbial red lights, and not actually focusing on love and mercy. If you think about things then we find it very easy to get caught up in what people are doing wrong, let alone we see others judging one another, we even hear about people getting caught up in all the rules or the laws, and to top it all off we even hear about them feeling as if they have some sense of importance or hierarchy. However, the Pharisees and scribes were not fully wrong here as they were simply following the customs in utmost respect of the law set down before them, and they felt they truly were being honorable and doing right. However, what we do see is that their application was completely wrong, and their hearts were in the wrong place. They were not drawing people in; they were pushing them out and exhibiting a mightier than thou complex. In their very effort to preserve the faith and customs they were creating something that truly was not. They were missing the very call and commission put on them by the elders that Jesus was reminding them of in our Gospel Reading here. Jesus is also trying to ensure that he imparts that very same message on each and every one of us as well.

As I said before, that is the good thing about having our big-time editor ensuring our very heart and lives are going in the right direction before we are just out there on the street corner and in the marketplace sharing things. We want to make sure that our headlines and our actions are indeed genuine. We also need reminded of at times that the big and bold headlines that catch everyone’s eye are not to draw attention onto you, but onto Jesus.

We are doing that when we precisely realize that we are called daily to recommit and resubmit our focus to loving God and our neighbor with our entire heart! This is the mercy principle here folks! We are to give and also receive that very mercy that Christ shows us day in and day out. We are not to hold a grudge, or not focus on the wrongdoings of others. We are not to worry about the letter of the law that creates a barrier, or even a false sense of importance. I am in no way saying that it is not vital to honor the rules set forth by our very elders and those that have gone before us, but what I am saying is that if those very rules manage to allow us to lose our focus on loving and caring for one another despite the odds or circumstances then the way we act and live really needs to be reexamined.

We actually realize that Jesus calls for this very reexamination here as “Jesus calls them hypocrites and says that they abandon the commandment of God for the sake of human tradition.” (5) The commandment of God here is obviously to love, respect, and care for one another above all things. We are to treat others exactly like the shoe shine boy, and act just as if everyone we are encountering is actually Christ. Hand washing and ensuring what we consume are purposeful, but they are not the end all be all. The people back then were so focused on the outward actions that they actually did not see or realize that their actual outward actions towards others were wrong despite following the so-called letter of the law. Their hearts were not right, and they were living a so-called pious life in the community, but behind closed doors or away from the limelight they were not doing right at all. This is precisely where Jesus called them out, and told them to truly focus on themselves, and to focus on their hearts.

This is also where we get to feel uncomfortable as well as Jesus calls us hypocrites and says we too abandon the commandment of God for the sake of human tradition. “Jesus tells us to beware when piety gets in the way of fulfilling the heart of the law: loving God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and loving your neighbor as yourself.” (5) Jesus tells us to examine ourselves from within and make sure that we let go of all the earthly pleasures and focus on him and making ourselves right out in the public square as well as behind closed doors. We do not need to be the ones judging others unless we truly desire to be judged harshly ourselves. We just need to show love and compassion, and let God do the rest.

What the Pharisees and scribes, and all the people back then needed to realize was that their loving God called them to examine themselves, revealing their hidden shortcomings, and drawing themselves into closer relationship with Godself and humankind. Yes, they were called to wash their hearts and minds in the faith. They were called to search their souls and find the ugliness that lied deep within and get rid of it. They were called to honor and love God the way the scriptures actually told them to do, and not focus so much on all of these other rules and rituals that would mean nothing in the very end. In all of those very efforts this is precisely what would draw them closer in despite what they thought about dirty hands. A dirty heart was not going to allow them to have the true repentance and forgiveness they were seeking by upholding these very laws. A dirty heart was not allowing them to be inviting or welcoming to others. A dirty heart was pushing them further away from God than they ever thought or desired.

Oh wait! Again, this is not where I am just talking about the Pharisees and scribes back then, but I am putting ourselves in those very shoes today. For this is indeed the Living Word folks, and we come to realize that “Our loving God calls us to examine ourselves, revealing our hidden shortcomings, and drawing us into closer relationship with Godself and humankind.” (4) This is precisely where we can even go back to the story of the little shoe shine boy I shared with you earlier. For he “knew of the special relationship he had with Jesus. He knew doing his best was following the love Jesus had for him. He knew of that special relationship he had with Jesus; a relationship established on love not law.” (9) That is how simple and heart felt and consistent our actions need to be day in and day out. We need to show care and love to impart the very mercy and grace provided to us through Jesus’ death and resurrection. We need to make sure what is in our hearts is pure and good, and how we act towards others is consistent and right. We also need to make sure that we love ourselves first in order to be able to show love to others, and as we come to the very realization that love has been shown to us from our very creation and creator then we no doubt are drawing in to a closer relationship with our Triune God.

So, I want to leave you with some parting thoughts here. How can we reimagine things? How can we exactly do our part to actually rewrite the headlines daily here folks? What are we getting excited about and exclaiming outside of these very doors? What good news are we going out to the street corners and in the marketplaces sharing with others at no cost? Are we ensuring that all know that they truly are invited and that they are welcome? Are we exhibiting that authentic kind of faith that we are called to and reminded of? The call and commission is to daily recommit and resubmit our focus to loving God and our neighbor with our entire heart! If we are truly doing that then the news headlines will be the best ever, and the Newsies will undoubtedly have the best headlines and the best papes to go out there and sell as they proclaim from the top of their lungs Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

Amen and Amen.

**References & Study Points**

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 September 1st, 2024

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(2) Bible.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

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 Paul Scott Wilson

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 Abingdon Press

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 Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Have we kept kind regard for others at the center of the traditions to which we are

 beholden?

 September 1, 2024

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 Courtney V. Buggs

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 Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 In the Gospels, it seems that Jesus saves his sharpest words, his most pointed

 criticism, for the most religious.

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 Elisabeth Johnson

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 Jesus explains where evil comes from—and though straightforward, it is disturbing.

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 Matt Skinner

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 Three things right off the bat:

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 Commentary on Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

 Henry Langknecht

(8) SermonCentral.com

 Jesus Crushes And Cures Your Quest For Cleanliness

 Contributed by Joel Pankow on Sep 18, 2003

 Scripture: Mark 7:1-23

 Denomination: Lutheran

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 Am I A Religious Or A Christian Person

 Contributed by Tim Zingale on Aug 28, 2006

 Scripture: Mark 7:1-23

 Denomination: Lutheran

**Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 (NRSV)**

 Mark’s gospel depicts Jesus as challenging traditional ways in which religious

 people determine what is pure or impure. For Jesus, the observance of religious

 practices cannot become a substitute for godly words or deeds that spring from a

 faithful heart.

 1Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from

 Jerusalem gathered around [Jesus], 2they noticed that some of his disciples were

 eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. 3(For the Pharisees, and

 all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing

 the tradition of the elders; 4and 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.) 5So the Pharisees and the scribes

 asked him, “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders,

 but eat with defiled hands?” 6He 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;

  7in vain do they worship me,

   teaching human precepts as doctrines.’

 8You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.”

 14Then he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and

 understand: 15there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but

 the things that come out are what defile.

 21“For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come:

 fornication, theft, murder, 22adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness,

 envy, slander, pride, folly. 23All these evil things come from within, and they

 defile a person.”

**Theme Statement: What is God doing in or behind this text?**

**(Active verb, saving or empowering action, complete thought, and a simple short sentence)**

We are called daily to recommit and resubmit our focus to loving God and our neighbor with our entire heart!

**Four Page Method**

**Page One (Trouble in the Text) (Characters Only)**

“Jesus calls them hypocrites and says that they abandon the commandment of God for the sake of human tradition.” (5)

**Page Two (Trouble in the World) (Us Only)**

Jesus calls us hypocrites and says we too abandon the commandment of God for the sake of human tradition.

**Page Three (Grace in the Text) (God & Characters)**

Their loving God called them to examine themselves, revealing their hidden shortcomings, and drawing themselves into closer relationship with Godself and humankind.

**Page Four (Grace in the World) (God & Us)**

“Our loving God calls us to examine ourselves, revealing our hidden shortcomings, and drawing us into closer relationship with Godself and humankind.” (4)

**Sermon Unity Elements: The Tiny Dog Now Is Mine**

**Text (41-42):** Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 (NRSV)

**Theme (42-48):** Closer Relationship and Love of Neighbor

**Doctrine (48-50):** Mercy

**Need (50-52):** Repentance and Forgiveness

**Image (52-56):** Dirty Hands

**Mission (56-57):** Ensure all know that they are invited and welcome!