

***“God’s Truth is Inside Out”***

Text: Mark 7:1-13

One day a gentleman was walking down the street and noticed that a man was washing a large plate glass window. There was one soiled spot which defied all efforts to remove it. After rubbing hard at it, using much soap and water and failing, he detected the problem. “It’s on the inside,” he called to someone inside the store.

What’s inside is much more important than what is on the outside. Many people are careful to keep the outward life respectable and presentable while inwardly they are full of hate, anger, envy, and greed. They are the 21<sup>st</sup> century parallel of those who Jesus said were whitewashed tombs full of dead men’s bodies. (Matthew 23:27)

Followers of God throughout history have been concerned with outward appearances. It was Jesus who said: “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16) What God desires of us is that we are not concerned with what others do, but rather hearts that respond to his love to us in Jesus Christ. The real truth is what he has accomplished for us and it is a truth that he has caused us to believe so that we can act and carry out our faith for others to see because-

**GOD’S TRUTH IS INSIDE OUT**

- I. It is not an outward display on our part**
- II. It is about what God has done in Jesus**

## I.

**A.1.** There is a part of piety that makes comparisons among people. It comes quite naturally to us. The Pharisees and teachers of the law illustrate this in our gospel lesson for today. The Pharisees were experts in the law. In addition to the Law of Moses, there were 613 other laws that they expected people to keep. They had built a hedge around the 10 Commandments. They had to pass a proficiency test in order to hold the status they occupied as guardians of the law.

Their complaint was that the disciples of Jesus did not follow the law by properly washing their hands before eating. This was more ceremonial than anything else. St. Mark tells us why they did this. They were really attacking Jesus more than his disciples and in the process springing a trap for him.

**2.** The world of today has the same attitude. If we are caught in a sin, people say, "And he (she) is a Christian!" Sadly, we even do this same thing to one another. Here is how subtle it can be.....We may be people who have grown tremendously in our faith. We have overcome addiction or another great problem is it drugs, alcohol, tobacco, sexual misconduct or addiction or something else. We then look at others and in a self-righteous way become like the Pharisees. I have a saying, "Never say 'I would never!'" Appearances are important, we have no right to offend others, yet as sinners we are in no position to judge the motives of others either.

Actually the conduct of the Pharisees had come from a good cause. After the return from the Babylonian Captivity, they resolved not to repeat the sins of their ancestors. They had pious designs, but their rules had taken precedence over the word of God.

**B.1.** It's always interesting to see how Jesus responds to accusations or questions in the gospels. On this occasion

he didn't waste any time: "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

They were going through the motions; their hearts were not in their worship or their lives. We call that the sin of formalism. Today we have the benefit of beautiful worship services here. As we do that it is important for us to focus upon Jesus Christ who is at the heart of our worship and life.

2. The Pharisees had a higher opinion of their traditions than they did in what God had to say in his word. Certain traditions are done for the sake of decency and order and are not wrong for that reason. Whenever they gain the upper hand, then we are in the same position as the Pharisees in our text.

## II.

A.1. This same Jesus who spoke the words of this text is the same one who paid the full price for our sins. In the Old Testament, God promised through Isaiah: "Come now, let us reason together, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson they shall become like wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

St. Paul adds: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (II Corinthians 5:21)

Following this text is the story of the Syrophenician woman. Her daughter was demon possessed and she sought healing from Jesus for her. Three times she was told "No." Finally as Jesus saw her faith, her request was granted. There was no greater example of faith in the New Testament, it even impressed Jesus.

2. As we look at our lives, we can see our sins. Our hope is not in what we do or if we consider ourselves better than others. Then there are those times when we feel as if

we are utter failures. Our hope and confidence is in what Jesus Christ has accomplished for us. It is true whether we are up or down, feeling guilty or rejoicing in forgiveness. It is not about us, but it is about Jesus.

**B.1.** Our quote from the Old Testament is a negative example of what to believe. The people of Jesus day placed more stock in what traditions they had developed. Instead of believing in God's promise, they had developed their own code and own religion. God says that their teaching is made up of human rules rather than the word of God.

I have often noticed that one of the hardest things to do is to let God's word speak. It is wonderful when we do that, but our own opinions sometimes get in the way. We want to interpret our faith and the truth of God by our own experiences rather than letting God speak. Jesus concludes by the example of "Corban" The Pharisees denied God's word by neglecting the care of their parents which was according to God's word. Instead they said they couldn't because it was money devoted to God.

**2.** What the Pharisees failed to do, we want to accomplish. This morning we prepare for a new school year with the rededication of our staff at Trinity Lutheran School and Trinity Learning Center. It is a time of celebration because we rejoice in the opportunity to teach God's word to children and our dedicated servants who do this in the name of Trinity congregation.

There is great purpose to this all, for we know the truth of God's word and want to teach that the central part of our faith. We desire outward conduct that is befitting to Christian people, but it must first come from inside. Inside is where the problem is as Jesus points out and inside is where faith is planted and grows from the inside out. In Jesus name. Amen.