

There are few things that'll turn someone off, quicker than hypocrisy. Our God hates hypocrisy... And the Lord Jesus, warns against hypocrisy, and He exposes the hypocrisy of religious leaders, over and over again...

Unsurprisingly, an excuse that **many** people give today, for rejecting Jesus, is "The church is full of hypocrites." ... And you know what??? In some quarters, it really is...

At times, I've heard a rather witty response to that statement: *"Well, there's always room for one more, so you can come to church too."* ...

And there was a time when I thought that was a pretty good, witty response because it identifies the fact that Christians aren't perfect – we're just forgiven... But now, as I read the Scriptures (such as today),,, I'm not so happy with that witty statement any more... If **I**, as a Christian, or **we**, as a church are known for our hypocrisy,,, there is something **seriously** wrong in our relationship with God...

Think about that for a moment:

If you or I, as Christians, or **we**, as a church are known for our hypocrisy,,, there is something **seriously, seriously** wrong in our relationship with God...

Most of us should be familiar with the phrase, "giving lip-service only"... It's where somebody says one thing with their words, but their actions (or lack of action), shows where their priorities really lie... *Our politicians and celebrities, are*

famous for giving lip-service, and I believe a later phrase might be “virtue signalling”...

Do you know where that saying “giving lip-service” comes from??? It comes from this Bible reading.

Jesus said, to the Pharisees and the scribes,

“Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

**“ ‘This people honours me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;**

**7 in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’**

**8 You leave the commandment of God and hold to the
tradition of men.”**

Lip-service... - it’s to honour God with our lips, while our heart is a long, long way from Him...

Today’s Bible reading, is about the difference between paying lip-service to God, as opposed to what true worship really is.... So, let’s set the scene:

- Jesus has just fed the 5000
- He’s walked on water
- He’s healed the sick

And so the Pharisees and the Scribes turn up:

- BTW, (the Pharisees were like a purity movement / holiness movement amongst the Jews) (the word Pharisee means “separated ones” – they would separate themselves off from **anyone** or any **thing** that they thought would make them unholy...
- And the Scribes – they were the more formal scholars (if you like) of the Scriptures – they were the theologians who studied God’s word, and knew the Religious Law...

Alright, so these religious leaders (the Pharisees and the Scribes), obviously heard about these miracles of Jesus, and it seems pretty obvious that they’ve actually come, not to embrace Him, but to: pick; pick; pick Jesus to pieces..... You do this wrong; You do that wrong; You’re not doing this; You should be doing that...

They’ve already had a few digs at Jesus in the past, over various issues:

- He healed people on a Sabbath;
- The Disciples rubbed out a bit of wheat and had it as a snack on the Sabbath;
- Jesus ate with sinners;
- He forgave people’s sins;
- His disciples didn’t regularly fast...

And all these things, the Pharisees saw as evidence that Jesus wasn’t a fair-dinkum prophet, because Jesus’ disciples kept falling **well** below their standards... And so, they were just pick; pick; pick... You do this wrong; you do that wrong... and it continues:

V² they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. ³ (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, ⁴ and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.)

Now, we all know, there are very good, hygienic reasons to wash our hands before we eat... *I should know this better than most – my good wife (Robyn), is an infection control expert, and in a hospital setting, trying to get people to wash their hands properly, is essential...* And living out here, with the ads we get on Imparja, we should **all** know the benefits of washing our hands before we eat, or before we nurse the baby...

Here's an example:

[imparja advertisement]

No germs on me!!!

Alright, for health and hygiene, it's important to have a bath, and it's important to wash our hands... But you know what? The old saying "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" – It's simply not true... The greatest picture of Godliness, is the last thing you want sitting on your favourite lounge chair, or walking across your favourite rug: The very messy flailed flesh, and the oozing blood of Jesus... Cleanliness has got nothing to do

with Godliness... Nowhere in the Bible does it say
“Cleanliness is next to Godliness”...

But for the Pharisees, hand-washing wasn't about hygiene – it was a religious tradition, that they claimed, kept them holy before God... They didn't even wash their hands properly: They just poured about 1.5 egg-shells of water over their hands, to satisfy the tradition...

So, where'd their tradition come from?

Well, under the Old Covenant (before Jesus), the Temple, was the place, set apart, for God... And the priests (from the tribe of Levi), were set apart, to be holy, to serve God **in** the Temple... And at various times, the **priests** had to have this ceremonial washing... Likewise, if somebody was made unclean by touching a dead bodyⁱ, or eating something they shouldn'tⁱⁱ, part of **their** ritual for cleansing, was a ceremonial washing...

But for the Pharisees, their whole national identity, was bound up in a perceived purity, gained by separating themselves, from the profane... Alright: They believed that they themselves were pure, from the inside out, and it was things external to them, that might physically contact them, that would defile them, and make them **unholy**...

And so, E.g. If they went to the market place, who knows who they might bump into... They might accidentally bump into a Gentile (someone who wasn't a Jew) (somebody who probably ate pork)... Oooh. And so they'd have to have a

bath when they came home from shopping, **just in case** they'd accidentally bumped-in to such a creature...

But in their eyes, it wasn't only the **Gentiles** who were unclean – **Anybody**, who didn't live up to their standards, they viewed as being unclean... To them, Jesus was unclean, because He ate with sinners. To them, the disciples were unclean (because they didn't properly wash their hands)

And these Pharisees refer to “the tradition of the Elders”.

....

Hey Jesus, “Why do your disciples **not** walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?”

Let's be really clear here: This was **not** a requirement of God – in the time of Jesus, it was an oral teaching, made up by man, and passed from man **to** man, and sometime after Jesus (about 100 years I think), it was written down in the Mishnah... And the tradition was solidified even further...

And Jesus calls this out for what it is: It's **not** a commandment of God. It's a tradition of men... And in the church today, traditions of men, can very easily, get in the way of what God's doing... And traditions of men, can make it harder for someone to connect into the church...

E.g.

- The requirement to wear a tie to church, is a tradition of man. It's not God's Law. But in some churches, it is a rule – if you're not wearing a tie, you can't fully

fellowship, and you certainly can't preach.

- It's not so much the rule now, but when I was growing up, All hymns had to be played on the organ... Choruses could be played with the piano (as long as it was done before the official start time of church, but once church began, the organ was the instrument to be used.... That wasn't God's commandment – that was the tradition of men...
- Same with the teaching of the Sabbath: God's word tells us not to work on the Sabbath, but the tradition of men says "You can't have a bit of fun by playing sport on the Sabbath either."
- In some churches, you'll be told "Unless it's the King James Version, it's not a real Bible"... Guess what:- that's another tradition of men

We have traditions of men here at this church (we mightn't even recognise them as traditions of men – it's just the way we do things), but I pray, that if any of our traditions put any kind of barrier up, that prevents a person from engaging with Jesus, I pray that we would recognise this, and do away with that tradition...

Somebody once said:

Tradition is the living faith of the dead;

Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living...ⁱⁱⁱ

Do you get what that's saying?

Some traditions are good: – they start out as a personal act of worship and faith, this is the living faith of somebody... E.g.

Tie to work, honour God with tie to church... And that becomes a tradition for that person, because it's an expression of their worship of God, And that's fine – it's a living faith...

But when their tradition becomes a rule, and it's no longer an expression of a living faith, well, that has no part in Christ's church.... Living by the rules of traditionalism, is an expression of a dead faith...

Remember how I introduced today:

If you or I, as Christians, or **we**, as a church are known for our hypocrisy,,, there is something **seriously** wrong in our relationship with God...

And you know what that wrong thing is? It's a dead faith... The actions of a living faith, spring from the Holy Spirit within... A dead faith, likes to have a list of rules and regulations to live by... And then we push the boundaries of those rules and regulations, and we look for loop-holes, and that, my friends, is the seed-bed of hypocrisy... Dead faith and hypocrisy, go hand in hand...

So, Jesus makes the charge:

8 You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."

The Pharisees did this in lots of ways, but Jesus gives them one specific example:

The 10 Commandments are very clear, that we should honour our father and mother... And in their culture, a very large part

of this honouring of parents, was looking after them in their old age... (takes commitment; time; money, to look after aging parents)

And I'm sure J&L and B&F are really looking forward to looking after me in my senility when I get old and start to drool... But I promise them, it's OK. I'm going to eat all the wrong things so I don't live too long...

But it seems that through the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, there was a bit of a loop-hole created, that prevented someone from looking after their parents... And it was this thing called "Corban"...

If they **dedicated** themselves and what they had, to God, (they didn't even have to physically **give** it to God) – it meant that nobody else had a claim on it... I and my things are dedicated to God, so I'm sorry, I can't help you... "I'm sorry Mum & Dad, I can't look after you in your old age, because I've dedicated myself to God..."

That was a tradition they made up, and it completely negated the commandment of God...

And Jesus is saying: You're worried that people aren't living up to **your** traditions... But **your** traditions negate the very word of God...

And Jesus goes on to show them how they've got everything the wrong way round... **They** thought that they were pure on the inside, and it was external things that made them unholy... But Jesus turns all that on its head...

V¹⁴ And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him."

Now, you and I might understand this very well, but for Jesus' disciples, this is something radically different to what their religion and their culture had taught them, for many years, and so they asked Jesus to explain it further...

What? Don't you get it either???

Can't you see, that what you eat, doesn't go into your heart... It goes through your stomach and your intestine and Bowel, and eventually you poo it out into the toilet...

Now, I hope no one's offended by that rather crass sounding translation according to Michael, I want you to know, that's what the Greek says. Our English translations, have sanitised it somewhat, and made it sound "less crass"...

When it says "stomach", the Greek word is κοιλίαν, (from which we get our word "Colon" (the last bit of bowel before the anus)) In the Greek, it actually means your belly or your gut – your innards – the whole lot – the whole digestive tract...

And when our English translation says "It's expelled", the Greek has another 3 words to come: εἰς τὸν ἀφεδρῶνα (eis ton ephedrōna) (Into the toilet). It literally means "goes out into the latrine^{iv}"...

I hope the language doesn't offend you too much, but Jesus was that blunt: What we eat doesn't make us holy or unholy. What we eat doesn't enter the heart – it goes through the gut and into the dunny...

V20 "What comes **out** of a person is what defiles him.
²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,
²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

You see, the Pharisees had it the wrong way around... They thought they were pure, and others were rubbing bad off onto them. *BTW, that's the perspective of many people today (including many sociologists and psychologists)* – All people are born good, and it's only circumstances that makes people bad... Rubbish!!! According to Jesus, the Human condition is: we are all **born** bad...

What's the evidence of this? ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

Where does it come from? It comes from the heart...

Jeremiah 17:⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?

That's the human condition...

Isolating ourselves doesn't save us from evil... You could cut yourself off from the whole world, and you'll still have evil thoughts... And if you ever get to that point where you're content that you've achieved righteousness:

- I don't covet anymore;
- I don't deceive anybody;
- I don't have evil thoughts anymore....

Guess what: You've fallen into pride... And your heart has deceived you...

It's true:

Jeremiah 17:9 **The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?**

We don't need isolation to make us holy. We need a heart transplant...

When we repent of our old, wicked ways, and give ourselves wholeheartedly to Jesus, He takes away our deceitful, desperately sick heart, and He gives us a new one – a heart that's controlled by His Spirit... – When we're born again, into Jesus Christ, He gives us beautiful, Godly heart...

Now, before we finish, let me just back-track a bit, because I did skip over something, that's actually quite significant... In V19, Mark adds a little note: **(Thus he declared all foods clean.)**

Under the Old Covenant, there were all sorts of cleanliness laws – things that the people of Israel were allowed to eat, or weren't allowed to eat; [do/not do; touch/not touch]... What would that mean for us today? If you and I were still living under the Old Covenant:

- we wouldn't be allowed to have Bacon for breakfast;
- We **would** be allowed to eat Yellow belly, because Yellow belly have scales;
- But we **wouldn't** be allowed to eat dew fish, because they **don't** have scales;
- Couldn't eat prawns or yabbies, because they don't have fins and scales...
- You wouldn't be allowed to wear a shirt made out of both polyester and cotton.

Keeping of the cleanliness laws, along with circumcision and the keeping of the Sabbath, was what distinguished God's people of Israel, apart from all of the other nations – It's what set them apart...

But through Jesus Christ, for us, this is no longer the case... "Keeping of the Law", isn't what sets us apart anymore... It's the indwelling of the Holy Spirit... In Jesus Christ, we aren't set apart by keeping the rules "Don't eat; Don't touch; "Don't wear"... the Holy Spirit, living within, produces the fruit of the Spirit, which is the righteousness of God...

You see, this is the difference between **trying** to be a better person, and **being** a better person – Jesus changes who we are...

So, let's come back to where we began:

If you or I, as Christians, or we, as a church are known for our hypocrisy,,, there is something **seriously, seriously** wrong in our relationship with God...

Disciples of Jesus aren't hypocrites – We've had a change of heart... And I mean this in the most radical of ways...

Often it gets said today “Oh, he had a change of heart”. – it just means “He changed his mind about something.”

But the change of heart I'm talking about here, is a radical, spiritual transformation, where God takes away, our old, evil heart, and His Holy Spirit lives within...

True worship, isn't lip-service only – it is a life, surrendered to God, and demonstrated by Godly living, that comes from the heart...

Now, some people don't understand this, and they continue to try and justify their evil, deceitful heart:

E.g.

In all of the debates over same-sex-marriage and even other moral issues, the argument that gets raised is this:

- *you eat bacon and prawns;*
- *you wear clothes made out of 2 different types of material;*
- *you plant 2 different crops side-by-side, and you cross-breed them;*

- *you work on the Sabbath...*

What's the difference? You Christians – you choose which parts of the Bible to believe, and which parts to discard...

Alright, they take the logic, that if the religious cleanliness laws have been done away with, why can't we also ditch the **moral law**???

Well, let me tell you something:

Jesus set us free from having to keep religious, cleanliness laws... But He never/ever negated His moral law... God's righteous decree of what is good and what is evil, cannot change...

But for Disciples of Jesus, even the moral law doesn't remain a set of rules and regulations we have to live by... That would be a dead faith, giving lip-service to God...

A life truly submitted to Jesus, embraces the righteousness of God, because that's what wells up inside of us... Isn't that so??? The closer you get to Jesus, the more righteous you want to live for Him... True???

A life truly surrendered to Jesus, and the Spirit living within, leads to a life of worship, that isn't merely lip-service...

- We **don't** say one thing, and do the other...
- We love Jesus;
- We love His righteousness; and
- we live by His Spirit....

It's more than lip-service....

ⁱ Numbers 19:13

ⁱⁱ Leviticus 17:15-16

ⁱⁱⁱ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984)
in Garland David E, *The NIV Application Commentary Mark*. Zondervan , Grand Rapids
Michigan, 1996.

^{iv} ESV textual note in Logos software