



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

September 5, 2021

Pastor James Enderle

15th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Deuteronomy 4:1, 2, 6-9](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 119c

Second Lesson: [James 1:17-27](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Mark 7:1-8, 14, 15, 21-23](#)

Jesus' Grace is ALL in ALL to Us... It Leads to Obedience from the Heart

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

One of the things I like to eat but I don't eat very often is fruit. I'm not very good at gardening and don't know much about plants. When I go to the market or the grocery store, a lot of the good fruit that I like is really hard for me to find. You look at it and think this one looks fine but maybe this one doesn't look so good, but maybe that one is ready. I don't know how to pick the right fruit. A lot of the fruit I pick looks really good on the outside but inside it could be rotten. That's what is really interesting about fruit. How it looks on the outside doesn't really tell you what it's like on the inside. I bought a pineapple just a few days ago and set it on our counter for a day to let it ripen and all of a sudden there was mold growing on it. I don't know how that even happens, but that's what happens when I buy fruit.

That whole concept of knowing what is on the outside, looking at the outside and maybe being deceived or seeing something that maybe doesn't look so good on the outside but on the inside, seeing that it's actually really good, is difficult.

Isn't that kind of how it goes with us and our hearts and our actions? People like to judge the outside. We see the actions. We see the words. And we think we know what the heart is like on the inside.

In today's text, Jesus is really encouraging each and every one of us to examine our hearts, to know that what matters more than just the outside is where our heart is. He encourages us in how to do that.

For the Pharisees, they were really lost. What were they so concerned about? When you get into the section that says that the disciples were eating food without ceremonially washing their hands, the Pharisees were so upset, so angry that they hadn't ceremonially washed their hands in the correct way. But did you notice what they were upset about? It says it several times. In Verse 3 and 4 it says ***(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)*** Then listen to what they say to Jesus in Verse 5: ***So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?"*** Are they upset about God's Word? Are they saying "You're breaking the Word of God"? They don't say that. They clearly know what they are talking about. They say, "Why do you break the traditions of the elders? Why do you not listen to the ways of these people that have gone before us?" Not the Word of God but just traditions, traditions made by their elders.

If you remember in our Old Testament Lesson, there is something very important that God says. He says, "Do not add to or subtract from my Word." This is exactly what the Pharisees had done. The Pharisees and the Jewish people at this time had 631 laws. They had added all these laws. They said "We don't want to break God's Ten Commandments" and maybe some of the ceremonially laws that He gave the Jewish people, so they made another little fence around that fence. They just kept making more and more fences around God's Word so that they couldn't do almost anything without breaking the commands of the words that their elders had made.

So one of the most important things for us to look at how we act in our hearts is we actually need to know what God says. We need to examine God's Word seriously. We need to actually know what God says is right and wrong. For the Pharisees, they added many things. I think we can do that with traditions. But it's very easy to subtract from God's Word as well. We can change it or people might say "The Bible said this. The Bible never said this." How do we know what the Bible says if we're not really examining God's Word seriously? That's where we learn about God and more than that, we know what He has done for us and His love for us. Yes, we're going to learn how to live, what is good and right, but without knowing who Jesus is and what He has done for us, what is the point of any of it?

We need to examine God's Word. We live in this world that when you think about words and definitions, people are changing them all the time. So we have to hold to the Word. We have to hold to what we know is true and right and actually dig a little bit deeper. "What do you mean by that? Where have you heard that taught? Where does that come from?" Just because someone says it's true, even as pastors up here, you need to continue to examine what we say and compare it to the Bible. It's good to dig into the Word. It's good to look at what the truth is. Why is it important to do that?

You see what the Pharisees had done. They added so many laws and what had this made them? What had this done to their hearts? In the section that we skipped, it talks a little bit about one of the examples that they were doing. They would give money to the church instead of giving money to help their parents, which was one of God's Laws. They would say "This is the right thing to do. We don't have to help our parents because we're helping God." What does Jesus say about this? He says in Verse 6: ***"Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.'*** ^(Isaiah 29:13) ***You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions."*** So one of the biggest problems clearly are these human traditions; things where we say "This is how we've always done it. Someone told me this is right." We elevate that above what God has said and especially above His Gospel and this loving one another, holding to this thing that we don't want to change that maybe can do something a little bit different to love and serve.

Why does this happen? Jesus goes on to explain. He says, ***"Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them."*** He says this because the Pharisees were so concerned about washing their hands and also eating unclean foods. At that time there was still the "clean" food and the "unclean" foods, so they said "If you eat these unclean foods, then you are defiled." Jesus uses that picture to teach something very, very important. He says, ***"For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person."*** Jesus is telling us to examine the dangers of our hearts and our traditions. He's saying they were so concerned about what they ate (making them unclean) that they forgot that their hearts had made them unclean.

Why is that? Look at this list. Sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly; these are things that come from each of us. Some of the worst things you could think of. It's not that others are tempting you to do it. These are things that we think of and we desire because of our sinful nature. We are born in sin and so we continually struggle. While the world often will say to follow your heart, if it feels good then do it, those are a lot of the motives that we hear. These ideas that if you think it's right or you feels it's right, then it can't be wrong.

What does Jesus say about that? He says we have to continually examine our hearts to compare it to God's Word because we know that what I think, what you think, we're not always thinking the right things. Why? So often what we want (look at that list) is filled with selfishness. We put ourselves first. We want these short-term pleasures and don't

even think about the consequences. Our hearts tempt us, they confuse us, and we continually have to examine them. That affects our motives (why we do things) because out of our hearts is selfishness, putting ourselves first and putting others down and judging others and judging their actions and motives. It paints a pretty bleak picture. For each and every one of us, this is what is inside, so where is our hope?

That's why we have to cling to His Word; that Word that we talked about that is so important to examine and to know and to know what it actually says because the most important thing found in His Word is that Gospel. We have to take that Gospel to heart and let it change our hearts to know we're loved and forgiven. When I make that same mistake that I make over and over and over again, I can look to Christ and say "I know He died FOR ME, for THAT SIN. I'm forgiven." When I've judged another person and said "Oh, look at their actions. They're not a Christian." When I pretend to do good on the outside but my heart is not in it. When I, like the Pharisees, am hypocritical, I need the blood of Christ to forgive me. Christ, who from His heart, put us first.

We so often can't put others first, and what did Christ do? He came to live for you. He came to live a perfect life, to not be led astray by temptation, and then to go to the cross to take His perfect life and give it as a sacrifice for you. Then He rose again three days later to show the proof of that salvation; to show us that we too will live again.

When we are stricken and struggle with the sins of our hearts and know that we have fallen short and as much as we try to do, we know it's not enough, we look to Christ, to His love and mercy, and we know it's not about us. Then as we see His love and His mercy, what He has done for us, as it changes our hearts, then we want to love others. We want to serve others and we want to put down those sinful thoughts of our hearts and we look to His Word to say "How can I serve? How can I serve God? How can I serve others? How can I look to others and defend others when others are attacked, when others are put down because people are judging them?" We need to look and know that our most important thing in our life is His grace; His grace that changes our hearts to serve Him and others.

So as you look at those different types of fruits out in the world and struggle to know if things are good on the inside or on the outside, we know that what is most important for us as Christians is our heart; a heart that clings to faith. A faith that knows we're saved and redeemed and a heart of faith that will lead to works of repentance; to obedience and a joyful heart of service. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ([Philippians 4:7](#).) Amen.