

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
31st May 2022

READINGS

⁶ What shall I bring to the LORD, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to him? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased if I bring him thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer him my first-born child to pay for my sins? ⁸ No, the LORD has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.

Micah 6:6-14

¹ Some Pharisees and teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus.

² They noticed that some of his disciples were eating their food with hands that were ritually unclean—that is, they had not washed them in the way the Pharisees said people should. ³ (For the Pharisees, as well as the rest of the Jews, follow the teaching they received from their ancestors: they do not eat unless they wash their hands in the proper way; ⁴ nor do they eat anything that comes from the market unless they wash it first. And they follow many other rules which they have received, such as the proper way to wash cups, pots, copper bowls, and beds.) ⁵ So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law asked Jesus, "Why is it that your disciples do not follow the teaching handed down by our ancestors, but instead eat with ritually unclean hands?" ⁶ Jesus answered them, "How right Isaiah was when he prophesied about you! You are hypocrites, just as he wrote: 'These people, says God, honour me with their words, but their heart is really far away from me. ⁷ It is no use for them to worship me, because they teach human rules as though they were my laws!' ⁸ "You put aside God's command and obey human teachings." ⁹ And Jesus continued, "You have a clever way of rejecting God's law in order to uphold your own teaching. ... ¹⁴ Then Jesus called the crowd to him once more and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing that goes into you from the outside which can make you ritually unclean. Rather, it is what comes out of you that makes you unclean."

Mark 7:1-16 (Good News Translation)

REFLECTION

The week sees the formal start of the celebrations of the Queens Platinum Jubilee. We celebrate that Her Majesty has been on the throne for 70 years, the longest reigning monarch in the history of the nation. The Queen has a famous sense of humour and a notorious mischievous streak. Her Majesty is also reputed to not like people who are overly pompous.

One story told of Her Majesty takes place at a great banquet for the Commonwealth, with all the high and mighty of the land present in their best finery. Over the course of the banquet, one of those representing one nation of the Commonwealth made a bit of a social faux pas by using the wrong piece of cutlery at the wrong time. A few of the posh folk there noticed and sniggered. Her Majesty also noticed, and immediately she also picked up the same piece of cutlery as the guest had done and began to use that. And of course, her being the Queen, meant that everyone else had to do the same thing.

It was "against the rules" to use that particular piece of tableware at that point in the meal, but on that particular evening the Queen changed the rules in favour of a guest who was in danger of being mocked.

I have no idea if that story is true or not. I would like to think that it is. It shows that even a Queen can be caring and act to help someone save face. Even a Queen can put a person before a convention.

Jesus sets the example of doing just that. In our reading today we see that the convention, the rule, was that you had to ritually cleanse through the washing of your hands in order to eat. And when the very religious pharisees see that Jesus disciples fail to comply with convention they are quick to judge and condemn.

But Jesus will have none of it. Jesus knows the hearts of disciples, they mean no disrespect to God, they are simply hungry. They are devoted to God, and their devotion does not depend on following some set of rules.

Jesus knows the hearts to of the Pharisees and those who rush into condemn. He knows that they are no more righteous or good because they follow the customs of faith. Their actions do not make them any more devoted to God. Their practises do not mean that they listen any better to the call of God in their lives. Jesus says, ""These people honour me with their lips but their hearts are far from me" (Mark 7:6)

Jesus put the care of people over and above slavishly following a set of rules and regulations. So we too, in the way that we live in his world, should consider how we treat others as an example of the way that we treat God. We should look to care for people, to offer compassion, friendship, wisdom and kindness, no matter what convention says we should do.

How can you offer your love to God through your care of another this week?

Amen

PRAYER

Lord God Almighty,
King of heaven and earth and all that is
Heavenly royal majesty,

We give thanks for our Queen, Elizabeth
For her years of faithful reign
Her faith in you,
Her patience and forbearance
through difficult times and joyful times.

We give thanks that she has borne witness to your truth,
That every person matters,
Every person is valuable,
And every person is beloved.

Help us in the way that we live our faith
To show that same compassion for others,
And that same willingness to share your love.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

