

“Outside Match Inside?”

08-23-15

Ever know someone who would promise to do something in order to gain praise but either never went through with the deed or went and did something completely different? Has that ever happened to you? Have you said you want to honor God and follow His path for your life and gone another direction? Today we have the chance to be forgiven, renewed, and learn how we can do what we say as God’s people.

Jaroslav Pelikan, one of the great minds of modern Christianity wrote: *“Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.”* Please know, Pelikan wasn’t knocking tradition. In fact, he was a staunch supporter of tradition. What he was knocking was a blind adherence to traditions by simply going through the motions without a heart commitment.

Open to Mark 7. In today’s Gospel Lesson, we find the same kind of situation. About 500 years before Jesus was born, there was a group of Pharisees and Scribes, whose interest was the letter of the law. As time passed, they wrote a detailed list of 613 rules that regulated Jewish life down to the smallest details.

They redefined God’s decrees according to their own way of thinking and demanded that everybody live that way. They accused anybody who didn’t follow these rules of not honoring God. By the time of Jesus, this had turned into traditionalism gone amuck!

They’d developed a very elaborate hand-washing law. Before they ate, 1½ egg-shells of water had to be poured over their hands. But this couldn’t happen in just any manner. It had to be done just so. This wasn’t a matter of hygiene, it was a matter of ritual. It had to be done in order to please God. Not to do it exactly this way was sin.

So when the Pharisees and Scribes saw that Jesus’ disciples didn’t wash their hands this way before they sat down to eat, they went berserk! They blamed Jesus! Verse 5, *“Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?”* Their target was Jesus and by saying this they implied that Jesus wasn’t from God.

Now let me ask you a question: What’s the real problem with the Pharisees and Scribes? I think it’s a heart problem. You see, their laws and traditions had become more important than what God was doing through Jesus Christ. Man’s laws were placed over God’s. At the end of the day, people were being misled and souls put in danger by man’s traditions. Because of this, Jesus spoke strong words of condemnation to the Pharisees. He called them hypocrites and whitewashed sepulchers!

Listen to these two verses from Matthew 23. Verse 13, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.”* Verse 15, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.”*

Pretty harsh, don’t you think? You see, the traditionalism and legalism of the Pharisees was costing people their very souls! And Jesus called them on it using

Isaiah's words! Look at Mark 7:6-8, "And he said to them, "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.' You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."

Jesus said this about the Pharisees of His time, but don't we find the spirit of the Pharisees alive and well today? A Congressman addressing House of Representatives was heard to say: "Never before have I heard such ill-informed, wimpy, back-stabbing drivel as that just uttered by my respected colleague, the distinguished gentleman from Ohio."

Even though we aren't Pharisees or scribes now, we sometimes get confused on how we live. Sometimes **We're Inconsistent.** We say we love everyone, but as we act, we put conditions on that love. Or we profess our faith here in worship, but nobody knows we're Christians the rest of the week!

We sometimes False Advertise. In our conversations with others we talk about how "God will supply our every need, according to His riches in glory" But we spend all of our time trying to get rich quickly. We say we know He'll take care of us, but we walk around depressed and confused. We tell others it's easy to believe but sometimes we're not too sure!

You know, we all have that sort of inconsistency going on in our lives. Mark Twain once said, "We're all like the moon. **We have a Dark Side** we don't want anyone to see." There's a side to each and every one of us that we don't want exposed. We would be mortified if what was deep inside ever saw the light of day. So we cover it up, afraid to show it.

But God Demands Consistency between what we say and do and what we believe. You see, things on the outside matter, but He's really interested on what's inside. **He's after Your Heart.** He wants the **Outside to Match the Inside.** And God's the One at work making the changes necessary to allow us to come to Him in true worship. God's at work changing hearts through the forgiveness that Christ won on the Cross and the empty tomb!

Open to Ezekiel 36. Ezekiel prophesied about God's people. That's us! Verses 25-27, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

Have you ever felt like you can't possibly measure up? Have you ever felt like there's no way that you'll be able to please God because as you take inventory of your life, it falls short? We need help. We need new hearts. And that's precisely what God gives us in Jesus.

Open to John 4. Jesus told His followers up-front. He said verses 23-24, "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Worship of God isn't about rules and regulations. Honoring God is about meeting Him on His terms. Worship's about coming to God to receive from Him new hearts!

Worship isn't coming together to do something for God, but gather so that God do something for us.

As you come in worship with a pure heart, God gives you His **Forgiveness**. He fills you with the perfect, holy **Righteousness** that Jesus won for us on the Cross. He does this only by **Grace** given you through **Faith** in Jesus Christ.

Jesus set us free from the burdens of the law. He's taken away the burden of having to live up to the demands of blind traditionalism. He's set us free to love and to serve. When we recognize this, God reshapes our hearts and minds and allows what's on the inside to honor Him by expressing itself in love for Him and for our neighbors on the outside. May your life an heart match! .