

Sunday Message

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 2

THE TEMPTATION TO HYPOCRISY

MARK 7:1-8, 14-15, 22-23

אֲנֹכִי יי לא תרצח
 לא יהיה לא תנאף
 לא תשא לא תגנב
 זכור את לא תענה
 כבד את לא תחמד

Some Pharisees and scribes have come from Jerusalem to see Jesus. They have heard about him, and want to see why he is so popular. But they are shocked by what they discover.

They notice that some of Jesus' disciples are eating without having washed their hands. This goes against the tradition of the Pharisees and some other Jews who always wash their hands before eating so as not to be unclean.

The Pharisees and scribes are appalled by this behaviour and wonder about this man Jesus. How can he be a religious leader and a prophet if his followers do not even respect the tradition of the elders?

But Jesus' response to them is devastating. He calls them hypocrites. He says that they are more interested in keeping external rules and regulations than in living God's commandments. Their brand of religion is more about outward show than worship of God. They pay lip service to God while their hearts are far from him.

It is a danger we can face too – that our religion will be more about external appearances than really living out the Gospel. We need to make sure there is no gap between what we profess in church and how we live outside of church. ■

REFLECT

During Woodrow Wilson's time as president of the United States (1913-1921), he was often described as the great moralist. It was also how he saw himself. As a devout Christian and son of a Presbyterian minister, Wilson fervently believed in the primacy of morality in politics. After the devastation of the First World War, he outlined his grand vision for a peaceful new world order, where peoples and nations would have the right to shape their own destinies, and where colonial conquest and oppression would be no more. He proposed setting up a League of Nations to ensure that war and conflict would never happen again. The League would settle international disputes and protect

the interests of smaller, weaker countries. It was a noble idea.

But there was a major problem – Wilson's own moral blind spots. He ignored the plight of the small and weak people in his own country. He did nothing to tackle systemic racism or women's demand for the right to vote. He clamped down on free speech in wartime. A native of the Deep South, he was supportive of the Ku Klux Klan and was actively racist in his attitude to African Americans. Wilson's moral idealism did not apply to them or to women's rights, and so history has judged him guilty of hypocrisy.

There was nothing unique about Woodrow Wilson. Human beings have always been prone to hypocrisy. As have

SAY

“Lord, help me to practise in my life what I proclaim in church. Amen.”

DO

Because none of us is perfect, it is hard to always practise the faith we profess in the way that we should. Look up the commandments; think about the teachings of Jesus and how he has asked us to live. How well do you think you are doing? Is there any trace of the hypocrite in you?

PRAY

Pray for those who have been hurt by church people or by the scandals in the Church. Pray that nothing you do will ever give scandal.

LEARN

The Christian tries to practise what he or she believes.

The Christian knows that nobody is perfect.

Unless our worship comes from the heart, it is empty and false.

The Ten Commandments, referred to in today's first reading, are our signposts for living.

people in the Church. The clerical abuse scandals of the last thirty years have shocked Catholics to the core and left them wondering how so many priests and religious could have behaved in such a depraved and hypocritical manner.

The Church's credibility has been deeply damaged, because the gap between what those church people professed and what they did (or didn't do) was obvious for all to see. There was a clear disconnection between their words and their actions.

Whatever our rank in the Church, as Christians, our words and deeds must spring from a life lived in Jesus. There must be a clear consistency between what we say and what we do. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long.

O Lord, you are good and forgiving, full of mercy to all who call to you.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

God of might, giver of every good gift, put into our hearts the love of your name, so that, by deepening our sense of reverence, you may nurture in us what is good and, by your watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy. Moses said to the people: "Now, Israel, take notice of the laws and customs that I teach you today, and observe them, that you may have life and may enter and take possession of the land the Lord the God of your fathers is giving you. You must add nothing to what I command you, and take nothing from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God just as I lay them down for you. Keep them, observe them and they will demonstrate to the peoples your wisdom and understanding. When they come to know of all these laws they will exclaim, "No other people is as wise and prudent as this great nation." And indeed, what great nation is there that has its gods so near as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call to him? And what great nation is there that has laws and customs to match this whole Law that I put before you today?" The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 14

Response:

The just will live in the presence of the Lord.

1 Lord, who shall dwell on your holy mountain? He who walks without fault; he who acts with justice and speaks the truth from his heart. (R.)

2 He who does no wrong to his brother, who casts no slur on his neighbour, who holds the godless in disdain, but honours those who fear the Lord. (R.)

3 He who keeps his pledge, come what may; who takes no interest on a loan and accepts no bribes against the innocent. Such a man will stand firm for ever. (R.)

SECOND READING James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27

A reading from the letter of St James.

It is all that is good, everything that is perfect, which is given us from above; it comes down from the Father of all light; with him there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow of a change. By his own choice he made us his children by the message of the truth so that we should be a sort of first-fruits of all that he had created.

Accept and submit to the word which has been planted in you and can save your souls. But you must do what the word tells you, and not just listen to it and deceive yourselves.

Pure unspoilt religion, in the eyes of God our Father is this: coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Your words are spirit, Lord,
and they are life:
you have the message of eternal life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus, and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and the Jews in general, follow the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow; and on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes. So these Pharisees and scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?" He answered, "It was of you hypocrites that Isaiah so rightly prophesied in this passage of scripture:

This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. The worship they offer me is worthless, the doctrines they teach are only human regulations.

You put aside the commandment of God to cling to human traditions."

He called the people to him again and said, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand.

Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean. For it is from within, from men's hearts, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make a man unclean."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this sacred offering, O Lord, confer on us always the blessing of salvation, that what it celebrates in mystery it may accomplish in power. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

How great is the goodness, Lord, that you keep for those who fear you.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Renewed by this bread from the heavenly table, we beseech you, Lord, that, being the food of charity, it may confirm our hearts and stir us to serve you in our neighbour. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.