

Sermon Notes on Mk. 7:5-13, Trinity XVII

1. This text is found also in Matt. 15:1-20. It occurred shortly after the feeding of the 5000 in Galilee, just a year before Jesus' death. From Jerusalem the Pharisees and scribes came about 100 kilometers on foot to find fault with Jesus' disciples. The Pharisees and scribes were always finding fault with Jesus and His disciples. The Pharisees were a religious group. The scribes, Bible scholars, were a professional group.
2. About 600 years before Christ a Jewish commentary, on the basis of Lev. 15:11, suggested that people always wash their hands before they eat. They did that simply to avoid disease. But the elders made that a religious requirement. They taught that washing hands before eating makes a person righteous. The Pharisees and scribes gave lip-service to a tradition, making it a religious requirement, but it left their hearts sinful, far from God. They replaced God's Word with the traditions of men. But it's not what goes into a man that defiles him, but what comes out of him and goes into the toilet is what defiles him. Jesus applies this in vss. 20-23 spiritually. All human beings, also Christians, have sinful hearts which produce awful sins. See 21-23. Repentance and faith in Jesus cleanse the heart and give the strength to fight sin. Read all of Mk. 7 to get the true understanding of this situation.
3. Our text, vss. 5-13, gives a specific example of what the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes can lead to. What was their hypocrisy? They confessed a false principle which left their hearts far from God. This false principle followed the traditions of sinful men and in this way disregarded the commandments of God. Vs. 10 tells us that Ex. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16 required the people to honor their father and mother. And Ex. 21:17 and Lev. 20:9 said that the person who would speak evil of father and mother should be put to death. But the Pharisees and scribes told the people: "If a person says to his father or his mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban (that is to say 'given to God')." That means that a child could say to father and mother: "I don't need to obey you because I'm giving my service to God." That sounds so righteous but it is a flagrant misuse of the Word of God. Let's be more specific. When a child was told by his parents to help clean the house he could say: "No, I was asked to come to the Temple to do some work there." In this way the child was taught to disobey the fourth commandment. This led to refusal to confess sin and to believe the Gospel. That left the heart a source of all evil.
4. To wash the hands before eating is a good physical rule. But it is never a religious requirement. Washing the hands does not wash sin from the heart. Wearing nice clothing is a good thing when an occasion requires it, for example, when going to church. But that should not be made a religious requirement.
5. The Apostle Peter had been told by God in Acts 10 and 11 not to despise the Gentiles. He followed that rule when he went to Antioch to visit the church there, Gal. 2:11-14. But when some Jewish Christians came from Jerusalem to visit the Christians of Antioch, Peter played the hypocrite by separating himself from the Gentiles. He knew in his heart that to eat with the Gentiles was not sinful. But he withdrew and thus caused Barnabas and the other Jewish Christians at Antioch to play the hypocrite. On the basis of I Tim. 5:20 Paul publicly confronted Peter with his sin of hypocrisy. Read Gal. 2:15-21. It is very easy to fall into hypocrisy, that is, believing one thing but doing another. Human beings are in constant need of confession of sin, forgiveness of sins, fighting the sinful flesh and living a life which is according to the will and Word of God.
6. Read Article 26 of the Augsburg Confession, German-Russian edition of 1988, pages 97 to 105. The church must constantly beware of the sin of hypocrisy.

Theme: DO NOT REPLACE GOD'S WORD WITH THE TEACHINGS OF MAN

Introduction: This has been a problem in the Kingdom of God for thousands of years. Isaiah, who is quoted in our text (29:13) complain about this sin in 800 B.C. It happened at Christ's time. It was one of the reasons for the Lutheran Reformation in the 1500s. And it still happens today. This leads to false religion which leaves the heart far from God.

I-THIS WAS HAPPENING IN ISAIAH'S DAY. The book of Isaiah is a remarkable combination of warning and comfort, Law and Gospel. He has been called the Evangelist of the O.T. He warns the people about their many sins for which they were not repenting. For example, in chapter 1 he tells the people that they are sinful from the top of their head to the soul of their feet and that their sacrifices and religious ceremonies had become mechanical. Their hearts were far from God. In chapter 30 Isaiah warns them about their alliances with Egypt. They thought that human beings could help them. Read chapter 59. They were living in sin which they did not confess. They murdered. They lied. They were unjust in civil court. Isaiah warned them that if they did not repent they would be taken captive by the Assyrians and Babylonians. But there are also many passages of Gospel in Isaiah, directed to repentant people. The whole book is an example of people giving lip-service to God, leaving the heart full of sin. They replaced God's Word with man's commandments.

II-THIS WAS HAPPENING IN JESUS' DAY. In about 600 B.C. one of the elders had said, on the basis of Lev. 15:11, that people should wash their hands before they eat. That is good advice but not a religious requirement. Over the years the religious leaders of Israel had made this a religious requirement. Read vs. 2-4. And when Jesus' disciples did not follow these rules, the Pharisees and scribes walked 100 kilometers to ask Jesus: "Why don't Your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders? They eat their bread without washing their hands." Then Jesus quoted Is. 29:13. It was hypocrisy, a religion of mere human rules, not one which cleansed the heart by faith. See Acts 15:9. They had replaced God's Word with the teachings of man. Another example was the CORBAN rule. The religious leaders told people they would not have to honor their parents if they would say: "Corban. I'm going to give my gift to the Lord," Peter said (Acts 5:29) "We ought to obey God rather than man."

III-THIS WAS ONE OF ^{THE} MAIN CAUSES OF THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION. Read Article 26 of the Augsburg Confession, German-Russian edition of 1988, pages 97 to 105. The Church of Rome forbade the priests to marry. They told people which foods they could and could not eat. St. Paul calls this the doctrine of devils. I Tim. 4:1-3. They told people that they could become better in God's sight by doing good works, not by faith in Christ. They required the people to go to private confession before going to Mass. They told the people that fasting would make them better. They told the people that the lives of monks and nuns were better than those of the common people. All of this is replacing the Word of God with the teachings of man. Irenaeus said: "Disagreement in fasting does not destroy unity in faith." Mk. 7:21-22 tells us about the sinfulness of the human heart, of Christians too. How does one deal with this? Peter said that the heart must be cleansed by faith (Acts 15:9). That means that we confess our sins and flee to the Gospel which forgives us our sins. This cleanses the heart and causes us to obey the will of the Lord.

Conclusion: Is this still a problem today? Do religious leaders ever try to replace the Word of God with the teachings of man? Yes.

I Jn. 4:1 warns us: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." The worst false prophets are those who tell us that we can gain salvation by our own works.

Sermon Notes on Lk. 14:1-11, Trinity XVII

1. This occasion took place on a Sabbath Day. It was not uncommon at Jesus' time for Jews to have a feast on the Sabbath after the synagogue service, so long as the food was prepared on the previous day.
2. The text makes clear that host and all guests were Pharisees, except Jesus. Jesus was invited as a friend but they were watching Him closely as vs. indicates. They had much to learn.
3. Vss. 2-6 show how loveless these Pharisees were. The Sabbath Day was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. It was a day of rest to remind the OT Jews of the rest which Christ would give. It was a "sign". Ex. 20:8-11; 31:12-17. It was a type of eternal rest. Christ fulfilled the Sabbath. Col. 2:16. See Heb. 4:1-13. There remains a rest (eternal life) for us. The Sabbath was a day of mercy, not of rules to earn eternal life. The Pharisees viewed the Sabbath as a harsh day of strict rules and regulations. Jesus asked the Pharisees "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" The obvious answer was: "It is lawful." But that was contrary to what they believed. And so they would not answer. They remained silent. They had not yet entered the Kingdom of God. They lacked faith in Christ and love toward their neighbor. That is why Jesus spoke the three parables in vss. 7-11, 12-14, and 16-24.
4. Vss. 7-11 show us the sinful pride of fallen ^{attitude} human nature. Vss. 12-14 show us the loveless, selfish ^{attitude} of fallen human nature. And vss. 16-24 show us how these fallen sinners often refuse to repent and heed the call of Jesus to His great Gospel banquet in the church. Notice that each parable has an important concluding sentence. For vss. 7-10 we have vs. 11. For vss. 12-13 we have vs. 14. And for vss. 16-23 we have vs. 24.
5. Our text today is only one of the three parables, vss. 11-14. The principle enunciated in vs. 14 is one of the great laws in the kingdom of God. It is identical with Lk. 18:14. Compare Mt. 23:12 and similarly Mt. 18:4. For the thought compare Mt. 11:23; II Cor. 11:7; Jas. 4:10; I Pet. 5:6 and also Lk. 16:15; Rom. 12:16; I Tim. 6:17.
6. Sinful pride amounts to fear that we won't be recognized for our imagined greatness. But true humility has no fear. It trusts that God will provide, in His mercy, whatever is necessary. The Pharisees were Pharisees even among the Pharisees. They all wanted the most important seats. They were like the Pharisee in Lk. 18 who said: "God I thank You that I am not as the rest of men." That included other Pharisees too. Even in their own company it was impossible for the Pharisees to conceal their Pharisaic tendencies. They are a picture of all of fallen mankind. Natural man, like Adam and Eve, wants to be God. But, like Adam and Eve, he sinks very low and will be ashamed on judgment day unless he repents of his sin and believes in the Gospel. Read Php. 2:1-11. If the sinless Son of God humbled Himself so deeply, how much more must not we sinful, proud sinners do so! The Son of man came to serve, not to be served. Mk. 10:45.
7. By repentance and faith a sinner becomes a new creature. II Cor. 5:17. Old things have passed away. All has become new. He constantly cries "Lord have mercy on me, a proud sinner!" A Christian still has an old Adam, a sinful nature, but he confesses it and finds forgiveness in Christ. He begins to live in humility, putting himself last as Christ did. Our newness in Christ rules over our sinful pride.
8. Gal. 5:26 reads "Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." Sinful pride is the cause of all lies, false teachings and sinful strife. Satan is the father of lies, false teaching and strife. Jn. 8. It is impossible for sinful, human nature not to be puffed up by praise for self. Even Paul, who had the spirit of Christ, was kept from sinful pride by the thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. II Cor. 12:7. Lord have mercy on me, a proud sinner! Faith in Christ conquers the stubborn flesh.

Sermon Outline on Lk. 14:1-11, Trinity XVII

Theme: GOD RESISTS THE PROUD BUT SHOWS MERCY TO THE HUMBLE

Introduction: Our theme is taken from Prov. 3:34 which is quoted twice in the NT, Jas. 4:6 and I Pet. 5:5. Read all of Jas. 4 and I Pet. 5. Pride is a characteristic of a pagan person. Humility is a characteristic of a repentant Christian. That is a constant theme in the Bible. See the passages under #5 in the Sermon Notes. That's what Jesus meant when He said in vs. 11 of our text: "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted."

I-GOD RESISTS THE PROUD

- A-Who the proud are. The Bible describes the proud in various ways. But they all have one thing in common. They have no love or mercy for their fellow-man. They are described for us in our text in vs. 2-6. A man who had dropsy came into the dining room. Jesus asked the guests: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" They would not answer. Then Jesus used a simple illustration. If you have a child or an ox fall into a pit on the Sabbath, don't you pull him out? They refused to answer. If they had said: "No" they would have denied mercy. But if they had said "Yes" they would have agreed with Jesus. They refused to do that. Why? Their attitude toward the Sabbath was wrong. The Sabbath was a day of remembrance of rest, not of merciless rules which the Pharisees had made. They did not love their neighbors. They had impenitent hearts. They were still dead in their sins. They proved this by taking the first seats at a dinner.
- B-What will happen to them. Note carefully vs. 9 in our text. If a proud man takes a seat too high for him at a dinner, he will be shamed when the host tells him to take a lower seat. Jesus is not merely telling us where to sit at a dinner. He is talking about an incorrect attitude which leads to destruction. The proud man makes himself god. He wants to be lord over other people. He refuses to be a servant to mankind. Like the Pharisee in the temple he says: "God I thank you that I am not like other people." Unless he repents of his sin he will suffer great shame on judgment day. God resists the proud not only in this life but also in eternity. Pride cometh before the fall.

II-GOD SHOWS MERCY TO THE HUMBLE

- A-Who the humble are. They are like Jesus. Jesus healed the dropsied man on the Sabbath Day. He did not violate the Sabbath. God did not forbid deeds of mercy on the Sabbath. God never forbids deeds of mercy. He is a God of mercy and is merciful all the time, forever. Why was Jesus merciful? Because He was humble. He said: "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, to give His life a ransom for many." Mk. 10:45. Read Php. 2:5-11. Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to death. God wants us to be that way. The humble person is the person who confesses his many sins, his sins of pride too. Until death man is a sinful person who is proud. The humble man confesses his sins of pride daily as did David and St. Paul. He cries: "God be merciful to me, the sinner."
- B-What will happen to them. The Lord hears the cries of those who confess their sins. He shows mercy to the humble. For Jesus' sake He forgives the sinner. Such a person becomes a new creature. He glorifies God by living a new life of humility and love. Peter sinned greatly when he proudly denied Christ. But he confessed his sin and was forgiven. He spent the rest of his life in humility. The final exaltation will come at death when Jesus will take this humble man to himself in heaven. At death this humble man will lose his sinful flesh. Jesus will raise his purified body to life everlasting in heaven.

Conclusion: God resists the proud but shows mercy to the humble. Cast all your sins of pride on the Lord. He forgives you and helps you to fight your pride and to live the life of a servant to others.