

Collect: ALMIGHTY GOD, you have given your only Son to be for us a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of a godly life; Give us grace to receive thankfully the fruits of his redeeming work, and to follow daily in the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Lessons: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

Psalm 67

Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

Matthew 15:(10-20), 21-28

Sermon: Jesus is constantly being spied upon by the religious authorities or their appointed ones. They want to catch him committing an act they can use to get rid of him. He is a threat to them. He is changing tradition and the crowds following him is growing even larger. He is doing something they can't do, he is healing people of their sicknesses, driving out demons and forgiving people of their sins. He is doing this wherever people approach him and it is mostly outside the temple. Not only that, he is doing it and not requiring a sacrifice or sin offering.

This new itinerant rabbi that is roaming the country doing these things can lessen the impact of the temple on the lives of people and also cause some economic concerns. The religious authorities and the temple staff rely on the sacrifices to feed and sustain themselves. A portion of the meats, fowls, and grain is kept for the use of the temple staff while the larger portion is placed and burned on the altar as an offering to God. And of course, some of the money given is used to purchase items for the temple and to pay staff.

Less people observing temple rules or presenting sacrifices means, in today's language, less jingle-a-ling in the cash register.

Now I've covered a little background on how Jesus practices were affecting the temple. The real reason the authorities are concerned about Jesus is that he is changing tradition and the way the people are worshipping. This also affects the control and rule of law the religious authorities hold over the people.

In today's Gospel some religious authorities, the Pharisees, approached Jesus and asked why his disciples didn't wash their hands before eating. The rule was that a two handled cup was used to pour water on your right hand, two times, and then two times on the left. If the person was left-handed, then the water was poured on the left hand first followed by the right. As they washed their hands, they said a prayer and then they ate.

This caused Jesus to get into discussion with the Pharisees telling them there were times they even broke tradition. In doing this they made God's law null and void (15:1-9).

Jesus then spoke to the crowd telling them that nothing they ate, nothing that went into their mouth made them unclean or unfit for worship. He then spoke to them in a parable, afterwards the disciples asked Jesus to explain what he meant in what he had said to the Pharisees.

Jesus then told the disciples that what you eat, put into your mouth comes out as waste and into the sewer. What causes problems is what comes out of the mouth. These things have been thought about and reflect what is in the heart. Jesus then went on to list a few things the disciples were familiar with, and said, "These are the things that makes a person unclean (unfit for worship).

What Jesus said then holds true today. It is not what we eat that causes personal and society's problems, is it is what comes out of the mouth. Words can hurt, demean, rob people of motivation, destroy one's self-worth can cut just as deeply as a knife and even start fights/wars.

Perhaps you have heard, and I hope you haven't used: "You are nothing and will never be nothing. You are as dumb as a door nail. You are ugly and stupid. I am sorry I gave birth to you. You don't have sense to come in out of the rain. You think you're cute, don't you?! You ain't-----."

There are other words that can rob one of joy and destroy the feelings about oneself. I hope you don't do this and if you do—PLEASE STOP IT.

Jesus told us that we should love others as we love ourselves. This means we should treat others as we want to be treated. And of course, this means we should watch what we say to others.

Let us practice building people up and not tearing them down. Be kind and pleasant to everyone you meet, you don't know how much your kindness means to them. You also don't know what kind of house they may have walked out of, abusive, threatening, fighting, or controlling. Your greeting and treatment of them may be the (only) positive thing that gets them through the day.

Let us ask God to give us a clean heart, a heart that spreads joy, good feelings, good actions and a heart that respects the dignity of all people. A heart that allows us to treat others as we want to be treated. A heart that, as John Lewis said, "If we see something wrong going on, say something, do something."

If there are good thoughts in my heart, then my actions will be good. Amen