

St Marc, Grenoble
Sunday 29th August 2021
Mark 7: 1 - 8, 14,15, 21 - 23
James 1: 17 - 27
‘Inside Out - NOT Outside In’

Good Morning, and welcome everybody - especially to our guests joining us this morning AND those joining us on Zoom.

PRAY

When we have a ‘busy’ service as we have today, it’s a challenge to get the right balance between ‘time’ and teaching - especially when we’re celebrating the sacrament of Baptism - the beginning of people’s Christian Life journey.

It’s made more difficult by today’s readings – especially the Gospel - a selection from a long teaching by Jesus; dealing with ritual uncleanness, and the conflict between what humans have created, and believe to be important, and what is really important to God. It highlights the conflict between man made ‘tradition’ and true FAITH.

Jesus challenged the Pharisees, the super religious Judeans, who were bound up by tradition more than anyone else, He said: “Isaiah had a word for you – Hypocrites, the lot of you!” ‘You abandon God’s commandments and keep human tradition.’

He quoted from the prophet Isaiah: ‘With their lips this people honour me, but with their hearts they turn away from me; All in vain they think to worship me; All they teach is human commands.’

I want to try and avoid labouring the issues of faith versus tradition this morning – it is tempting to get drawn down that track, because in a church like ours, with people from many different places and backgrounds it can be difficult to satisfy everyone’s traditions and whims!

It is sometimes hard to disentangle the differences between Jesus’ teaching and the habits and traditions we have had built into our religious life.

It’s vital that we hear what Jesus teaches as truly important in our Christian faith and life; especially as we begin to consider our vision, responding to God’s mission in our growing church family, in the coming months.

Later, when Jesus was talking to his disciples, He explained that what we eat, or wear, are not important – they’re external, ‘window dressing’ if you like. What is crucial is what goes on in our hearts. Are we self-willed, bound up in

selfishness and evil? Or, God focussed, prepared to do things God's way? God looks at the real us, He looks at what's going on inside our hearts!

The issue is not about tradition, or ritual, or clean or unclean; the real issue is about how we, as individuals, relate deep down to God, and to His family.

How we relate to God is demonstrated in the way we reflect His love to those around us. Our families, the people we meet day by day, our neighbours, our colleagues, school friends, or people we meet at the shops.

When asked, 'which is the most important commandment?' Jesus said (paraphrase) 'Love God with everything you've got; and love your neighbour as yourself.' It sounds easy, but we all know it is far more difficult to do ...

Our true faith is demonstrated in the simple actions of our daily life – What comes from the inside out; not just what appears on the outside.

In our epistle reading from the letter of James, this morning, we heard :

(v.17) 'Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes down from above, from the father of lights. His steady light doesn't vary. It doesn't change and produce shadows. He became our father by the word of truth; that was his firm decision, and the result is that we are a kind of first fruits of his creatures.'

And (v.22) 'Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.'

These are the faith indicators we must develop within ourselves, and they're also the things we all need to be teaching to these little children, who we're baptising, who we're welcoming into our church family, this morning.

And, of course, the best way of teaching is by our own example! And, believe me, the children will be the first to spot when we're 'faking it'!!

I don't know about you; but that really challenges me to confess my inadequacy before God! We struggle to do it on our own, leave alone teach the children to do it!

We need to ask for God's good and perfect gifts to help us - every single day!

Let's Pray ...