

Introductory

This reading is a continuation of an incident that began in last week's reading. Last week's and this week's text have a parallel reading in Matthew (15:1-20). In the TLH one year lectionary, none of that material is appointed to be read on any Sunday. LW's three-year lectionary treats last week's and this week's readings in a convoluted manner.

While they treat the material from last week and this week as one single unit, on one, not two Sundays – that's a good thing – they leave out huge chunks of verses. We must once again rhetorically ask them what's the rush? What's the rush, that we can't take the extra thirty seconds or so to read this particular Word of God in its entirety.

Why else would the pastor be compelled to read a sort of Readers' Digest condensed version of this incident, except to shave a little time off the hour to hour and ten minute event that is God's Divine Service to us? What parent would read a story to a child in that manner? What pastor randomly skips a paragraph here and there when preaching?

Of course not! You might miss something, something important, so we read the thing in its entirety. How much more ought we to read the Bible story in its entirety. If the first part of this incident, from last week, talked primarily about the goings-on outside of the body, then this week we are going to be looking at what goes on inside of it.

Beginning in 7:1, and we saw this last week, we find that Pharisees and "some Scribes" had interjected themselves into the work that Jesus was doing. After v. 13 they are no longer mentioned; they seem to have disappeared. It seems that they who had traveled far to take shots at Jesus have returned to the place from whence they came.

Why did they go? It was going to be great fun to verbally show Jesus up, but it was not so much fun to be on the receiving end of the verbal beat-down that He had just administered to them. Those left now to hear Jesus are "the crowd," and later on in this text He will take aside "the disciples" and speak to them.

Textual Notes

14. Last week, we watched as the religious leaders came to Jesus. They were on a fact-finding mission, seeking evidence to be used against Him, Whom they had decided to kill. Now, Mark tells us that Jesus chooses a different conversation; "προσκαλεσάμενος πάλιν τὸν ὄχλον – having called to Him again the crowd," now speaks to them.

The religious leaders had interrupted Him to point out the dereliction of hand-washing on the part of His disciples. They had decided to kill Him, and are looking for evidence that would enable that. He quotes from Isaiah, calls it like it is, “hypocrite,” points out that they don’t take care of their parents, and have replaced God’s Word with their own.

Their interruption and interlude is past, and He will now speak to people who are actually interested in and listening to what He has to say. And “ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς Ἀκούσατέ μου πάντες καὶ σύνετε – He was saying ‘all of you, listen to me and understand.’” The verb ἔλεγεν is in the imperfect tense; He both began to speak to them and continued to speak.

The verb “Ἀκούσατέ – listen” is an Aorist verb in the Imperative mood, indicating a sense of urgency and of seriousness. Is it a command or an invitation? I suppose this is what people mean when they talk about the “Gospel Imperative,” God commanding you to do something that will be good for you, like listening to Him.

That admonition is followed by another verb in the Imperative, “σύνετε – understand” what He is saying and will say. The same degree of urgency and seriousness is indicated. He is telling them to listen, and inviting them to understand, and He is about to say words that will help them to do just that; to understand what He says.

This verb “συνίημι - to understand” appears twenty-six times in the NT, but it only occurs in the Imperative mood here. It’s the word that describes having a mental grasp of the things of God. For example, in Matthew (13), Jesus says that parables are to help the believer to better *understand* the Kingdom.

But that the unbeliever will not be able to gain that better understanding because he does not *understand* God. It’s one thing to know facts, and facts are good things to know, and it is another thing altogether to be able to put those facts together and to come to an understanding of the meaning of those facts. This is true also about God

A lot of modern Americans seem to think that they can and should know everything. To be sure, with the Internet and the like, we have much more access to information than ever before. The saying is true; the more you know, the more you know what you don’t know. How much more is that true when it comes to God?

I have never used the term “Gospel Imperative,” and I think that’s a good thing. My understanding of the term is; It means that God commands us to do something that’s good for us. But doesn’t that imply that God might command us to do something that’s bad for us? To put it another way; aren’t all God’s commands to us for our good?

And isn’t the Law always the Law? Here, for example, Jesus commands or invites His hearers to listen to Him and to understand what He’s saying to them, which is a good thing. It’s also the Law, and the Old Adam in us rebels against that. It’s one of the reasons why people don’t come to church on Sunday morning or read their Bibles.

People will even refuse to come to church when the preacher is interesting and the liturgy well-done. To use a biblical metaphor, when the mother tells the children to come to the table for supper, that's the Law, isn't it? So also, when God commands us to feed on Jesus the Bread of Life, that's the Law, and not everybody eats that bread.

I hereby remove the term "Gospel Imperative" from my vocabulary.

15. Speaking to people who are there, and who by definition have obeyed His command and invitation, He takes the issue that had been brought up by the Pharisees and Scribes, the issue of clean and unclean, tweaks it just a little bit, and runs with it, using it to teach the truth that things on the outside matter little, but things on the inside matter much.

He tells those who have chosen to be there to listen to Him, "οὐδέν ἐστιν ἔξωθεν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτόν ὃ δύναται κοινῶσαι αὐτόν – there is nothing from the outside entering into a man that is able to defile him." Just what is it that enters into a man? Thing like air, light, and various perceptions from the five senses enter a man.

If we look ahead (19), we see that He has in mind here food, which is a good thing, which enters through the mouth, and is digested, and then exits the body. The food at their disposal was all natural and healthy, unlike much of what is thought of as food today, and the cigarette as we know it will not be invented until the late Nineteenth Century.

He is speaking here to the specific issue brought up by the Theologians, the one about eating food with ceremonially unwashed hands. Jesus is not your ceremonial mother, and whether or not your hands are ceremonially clean or not is not to Him a big deal. What is demonstrably a big deal is the food put into the mouth with those hands.

Cutlery is a product of the Industrial Revolution. We have drawers full of silverware we've collected over the years, but for most of human history, people have eaten with their hands. People from India still do, and the Industrial Revolution is getting to them, and in our lifetime we may observe the shift to cutlery in India.

He continues, "τὰ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκπορευόμενά ἐστιν τὰ κοινῶντα τὸν ἄνθρωπον – the things coming out of the man defile the man." Just what is it that comes out of a man? There are not many choices; number one and number two. Vomit, maybe. Sometimes blood. But He's probably not talking about blood here.

You can't talk about number one and number two from the pulpit. Nor does Jesus. Three years ago, I opened with a story about the child with the dirty diaper who comes to his father and tells him he made it "for you." I also talked about "that stuff on the ground in the hog house or feed lot," and went back to the diaper for conclusion.

As I get older and perhaps wiser, and as I practice exegesis and get better at it – practice is how you get better at most things, isn't it – it strikes me increasingly striking that Jesus often takes whatever subject is at hand, and turns that subject into a teaching opportunity. It's what parents often do with their children, and teachers always like questions.

In this case, the subject brought up by the Pharisee/Scribe contingent is clean and unclean food and hands. Okay, let's go with that. Besides and in addition to that, He changes the conversation from one about OT law, and one's outward obedience to it, into a conversation about the individual person's inward, spiritual condition.

To be a Christian is not about observing outward ceremonies, and to be a Christian is especially not about observing outward practices that are made up by men and not commanded by God, but about the inner condition of fallen man. In this way also, the Christian religion is different from every other religion known to man.

And finally, assuming that the Pharisees and some Scribes focus on the Law and one's observance of it is about getting salvation by observing those things (and isn't that always what it's about, bottom line), he makes it clear that the problem of sin goes much deeper than whether or not one's hands have been ceremonially washed.

He instead declares that the problem runs so deep that makes it impossible for one to save self. When one reaches the point of realizing the futility of saving self, then he is ready for the Gospel. One time, one of my Confirmation students put it this way; so you're saying that we're screwed. That's exactly what I'm saying. But not from the pulpit.

Verse sixteen is included in several English translations, including the KJV, NASB, ISV, and ASB. The verse is omitted from several others, including NIV, ESV, and RSV. For a complete listing of inclusions and omissions, go to this verse at www.biblos.com and click on the "parallels" tab to see about twenty English translations of the verse.

A perusal of the critical apparatus in Nestle-Aland reveals that whether to include or omit the verse it is a sort of textual critical jump ball. There is evidence for both including it and for omitting it. It looks to me more like something a later copyist would add than something a later copyist would omit.

16. The phrase, "If anyone have ears to hear, hear" – it's in the imperative – is an idiom, and there were apparently several other ear and hearing idioms around at the time of Jesus, and some of them are in the Bible, like; "their ears have grown dull of hearing" and "hearing you will hear, and not understand."

We too have "ear" and "hearing" idioms, like; "clean out your ears," and "his ears perked up at that," for example. Idioms are sayings that are known and understood by a particular culture, but they likely will not make any sense at all to somebody from a different culture. We use them all the time, and so does the Bible.

Sometimes idioms come and go, and what may have been to one generation a common idiom, may have faded away almost completely by the time their grandchildren come along, to be replaced by others. The saying “call a spade a spade” comes from the shovel, and there’s nothing wrong with it, but I don’t use it. Choose another idiom.

We have talked before about the problem of people from modern America trying to discern the meaning of a phrase that is by definition known only to that a time and place, and far removed in space and time from us. If you were to say to Guy at Wal-Mart “If anyone have ears to hear, let him hear,” he would probably look at you funny.

How do we know what it means? Well, we see how it was used in the extant writings of the day, including how it was used the six times that it was used in the NT. If you have the *Phrase Concordance of the Bible*, you can very quickly see where those six times are. Or just type “he who has ears” into search at www.biblos.com and see what comes up.

If you do that, and you’re working with the Greek, you may notice that not everybody uses the exact same sentence structure as others every time in the NT for this idiom, but we get it. When people today don’t use the exact sentence structure as we use for an idiom, but we get it. When the German guy says “You’re pulling my legs,” I get it.

And the book *Idioms in the Bible Explained* by Lamsa doesn’t. I bought the book, because the author is from the Middle East, but I don’t ever look at it. He tells us what we can already figure out, but doesn’t really add anything to it, and maybe time rather than location is the greater factor in idiom. Take “call a spade a spade” for example.

17. Now Jesus is on the move, change of location, and Mark uses two locative prepositional phrases to describe the movement of Jesus; “Καὶ ὅτε εἰσῆλθεν εἰς οἶκον – And when He went into a house.” As is the case with most houses, the house effectively cuts Him off from direct contact with the crowd.

In fact, His movement into the house is said to be “ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου – from the crowd.” Going into the house is for Jesus anything but a random act. The reason why Jesus goes “into a house” is to be away “from the crowd.” It is not uncommon for Jesus to seek refuge from the crowd, often because He is wearied by their constant clamoring.

But this time the reason seems to be that He wants to spend some one-on-twelve time with His disciples, and “ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ τὴν παραβολήν – they were asking Him (about) the parable.” Whether or not that was the *purpose* of His movement, the *result* is that they were asking or questioning Him about what He had said.

The word that I have translated “questioning” is “ἐπηρώτων,” an imperfect form of the verb “ἐπερωτάω.” The word indicates a serious, not a casual asking of questions by

people who want to hear answers, like when Pilate ἐπηρώτησεν Jesus in Matthew 27:11, and the imperfect tense used here indicates that there were follow-up questions.

18. Because they were asking Him questions about “the parable,” and perhaps because of the nature of those questions, Jesus perceives that they don’t quite get what He is saying, and now Jesus says to them, “Οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοί ἐστε – are you also without understanding?” Does He sound maybe a little bit annoyed?

He is chagrined that they understand so little about the thing that ought to be so clear; simple biological bodily functions like eating and the like. It seems like a pretty simple concept; it was something they all did every day. It’s the same word “understanding” used earlier, only with the alpha negator.

The question is begun with the negative particle “οὐ,” meaning that the speaker (Jesus) is expecting an affirmative answer, “Yes, we do understand that. Of course we understand that.” What the men actually said in response to the teaching of Jesus is not actually recorded, and He forges on ahead.

19. He continues on with His explanation of this thing that needs no explanation, reasoning that when things (food) enter into a man, those things (food) do not enter “τὴν καρδίαν ἀλλ’ εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν – the heart, but into his belly.” Those two body parts; the heart and the belly, have a long and rich history in the Bible.

Metaphorically, the heart is the seat of the spiritual, and what’s in a person’s heart define the ethos – good or bad – of that person. The word “belly” can also mean womb, but clearly not here. The man who lives by his belly is going on base instinct, directed by the Flesh; his ethos will look a lot like the ethos of an animal. You know of these people.

He completes the thought by taking us through the gastro-intestinal tract, noting that after the things (food) go into the belly, it comes out “εἰς τὸν ἀφεδρῶνα – into the toilet.” The noun ἀφεδρῶν means literally “a place of sitting apart,” and it occurs only here and in Matthew 15:17, the parallel verse to this verse.

As usual, WIK is a good starting point for a study of the ancient toilet, but thankfully such a study is not necessary at this time. The way mankind deals with human waste has changed over the years, but human digestion has remained stable. The point is that the thing that defiles a man is what comes out of a man, not what goes into a man.

The thing that defiles a man is the substance that goes into the toilet, which has different characteristics from its beginnings as food. Jesus talked in private to a group of men about toilets and what goes into them. As we have mentioned before, He took them deliberately into a private place to talk to them about this.

He finishes the thought by noting that the movement of the bowels serves as a “καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα – cleansing of all the food,” revealing a knowledge of

rudimentary biology, which should not surprise us. Food in, the GI takes what the body needs, then expels the waste from the body, and it “goeth out into the draught” (KJV).

20. Jesus now articulates in all clarity the point of comparison of this “parable,” saying “ὅτι Τὸ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκπορεύόμενον, ἐκείνο κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον – that which out of the man goes forth, that defiles the man.” Using almost the exact same words, He will say the same thing in v. 23. Excrement, or a dirty diaper, or manure is a metaphor for sin.

The Internet seems to think this metaphor to be not uncommon in the OT and NT.

2 Samuel 10:6, “(T)he children of Ammon saw that they stank before David...” Later, the New Living Translation puts the rebellion and disobedience of God’s people in perspective when it renders Isaiah 65:5, “These people are a stench in my nostrils, an acrid smell that never goes away.” The Holy Spirit suggests this same idea in 2 Peter 2:20-22 when it likens the Christian who goes back to sin to “A dog that returns to his own vomit,” and, to “a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”
www.letthebiblespeak.com

There was a practical, as well as a symbolic reason for using incense in Temple.

21. Shifting gears now, He compares the heart of man with his bowels, “ἔσωθεν γὰρ ἐκ τῆς καρδίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων οἱ διαλογισμοὶ οἱ κακοὶ ἐκπορεύονται – for from within, out of the heart, the evil thoughts go forth.” The word διαλογισμοί is a word that connotes conscious thought, reasoning, and deliberation.

Those evil thoughts come out in the form of evil words and actions; we call them sins. These evil things do not just happen in a vacuum; when these things happen, they are the result of a conscious, deliberate decision on the part of man to do them. At some point a man makes the conscious decision to commit adultery, decides to steal, etc.

While man may rightly protest, “the devil made me do it,” the fact of the matter is that you didn’t *have to* do it and could have decided not to do it, and so you *are* responsible for your actions. The man with an ethos generated by a darkened heart will act like that man; his outward words and actions will reflect what is found within.

Then He names some of those specific evil thoughts; πορνεῖαι, a general term for sexual immorality indicating any and all kinds of perversion, κλοπαί, taking what does not belong to you, φόνοι, a specific kind of killing that we would call “murder,” and given the context we would call this pre-meditated murder, and μοιχεῖαι, simple adultery.

We note here that Jesus here uses both πορνεῖαι and μοιχεῖαι, and He uses them to separately, not synonymously. The “exception clause,” which appears twice in Matthew, allows for divorce in cases of πορνεία; if a spouse is involved in a homosexual or bigamous or incestuous relationship, then the marriage partner may divorce.

22. He continues with a laundry list of nine specific evil things that come out of man. While the list does not correlate exactly with the Ten Commandments, it certainly does correspond very closely to them. They are all in the plural, as were the words in the previous verse; it's not one sin here and there, but it is pervasive and repeated.

23. He then repeats what He had said in v. 21, "all these evils from within go forth and defile the man," and with these two occurrences of essentially the same saying, He book-ends the articulation of the sins of man. If there were any doubt – when they went into privacy – about what He meant by His words, that has now been removed.

Law/Gospel

Understand/Understand – Jesus commands us to listen to Him and to understand Him. We are unable to do either thing perfectly, and yet, in spite of ourselves, He sends to us the Holy Spirit, working in His Church in Word and Sacrament, who through those things enlightens us, and leads us into all truth, including the way of salvation.

Food/Food – There is a food that enters into the body, and that nourishes the body, but also contains waste. There is a food that enters into the body, and that nourishes the soul, and that contains no waste. That food is Jesus, the Bread of Life, who comes to us in, with, and under the bread and wine in the Sacrament.

Defiled/Undefiled – We are sinners, who have been defiled from conception with the sin of Adam, and who continue to defile ourselves with our sin. Jesus is sinless, conceived without sin, and who never once defiled Himself with sin. He took our defilement on Himself on the cross, so that we might be presented to the Father as spotless and clean.

Sermon Titles

What Defiles a Man?

What Cleanses a Man?

Food for the Soul

Jesus is not your Ceremonial Mother

The Disciples Struggle in School

Hymns

Chief of Sinners Though I Be – LSB 611

Jesus Sinners Doth Receive – LSB 809

Salvation unto Us Has Come – LSB 555 – A couple of weeks ago, we sang all ten verses of this hymn, and not as a communion hymn, but as the opening hymn, and nobody died or even passed out. It's a matter of expectation.

Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness – LSB 563

By Grace I'm Saved – LSB 566

If Your Beloved Son, O God – LSB 568

Just as I Am, without One Plea – LSB 570

And more, in the *Justification* section

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Resources

ACC – Manlio Simonetti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Mark).
Intervarsity Press, 2002

BAG – Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Translated by
William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1979

BCLY – William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark..* The Westminster Press, 1975

FGG – James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*. Concordia Publishing House,
1993

MGM – W.F. Moulton, A.S. Geden, H.K. Moulton, *A Concordance to the Greek
Testament*. T & T Clark LTD., 1978

MM – James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek
Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982

ODCC – F.L. Cross, Editor, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford
University Press, 1978

RNK – Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan, 1976

RSV – Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, 1965

UBD – Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, 1977.

WP – A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Baker, 1930

VINE – W.E.Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984

WIK – www.wikipedia.com

BIB – www.biblos.com

GBO – www.greekbible.com

Digital Classics Library - www.perseus.tufts.edu

Internet Classics Library – www.classics.mit.edu

Christian Classics Ethereal Library - www.ccel.org

Project Wittenberg - www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html