

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

WASHING

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Ritual cleanliness and true purity (Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23)

Six weeks ago our lectionary journey through Mark's Gospel reached the end of Chapter 6. For five weeks our attention has been on John's discourse concerning the bread of life. Now today's Gospel reading picks up Mark's narrative at the beginning of chapter 7. Jesus' radical attitude toward the Jewish law had already brought him into open conflict with the Pharisees on several occasions. In chapter 2 the Pharisees accused Jesus of disregard for the sabbath when his disciples plucked ears of grain. Now the Pharisees accuse Jesus of disregard for the ritual laws of washing. Jesus replies that a clean heart is more important than attention to the ritual laws of washing.

Our image to stimulate reflection on Jesus' teaching about purity is *Washing*.

Core extract from the Gospel (Mark 7: 1-3; for reflection throughout the week)

When the Pharisees and some of the scribes
who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus,
they noticed that some of his disciples
were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them.
(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews,
do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands,
thus observing the tradition of the elders.)

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you call your people to
pure and holy lives.
Wash from us all that defiles
that we may serve you with clean hearts;
now and always.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

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

The Tradition of the Elders

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' He said to them, 'Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

“This people honours me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.”

You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.’

Then he called the crowd again and said to them, ‘Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.’

For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.’

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (Mark 6: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23)

Begin exploring Mark's account of Jesus' teaching about ritual cleanliness and true purity by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What do you make of the Pharisees' concern with handwashing?
- Why is Mark drawing attention to 'many other traditions they observe'?
- How do you understand Jesus quoting from Isaiah?
- What do you make of Jesus' teaching about true purity?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Read the missing pieces from Mark.

- Mark 7: 9-13, 16-20

Compare similar themes in Matthew, Luke, and Acts.

- Mark 15: 1-10, 16-20
- Luke 11: 37-39
- Acts 10: 9-10

Explore the roots from this teaching in the Old Testament.

- Exodus 20: 12-17
- Isaiah 29: 13-14

Exploring online

Widen your exploration of Mark's account of Jesus' teaching about ritual cleanliness and true purity by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Ritual purity in the Old Testament
- Jesus' teaching on purity
- Hand washing

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Mark's account of Jesus' teaching about ritual cleanliness and true purity is *washing*. Draw on your different experiences of washing. For example:

- When has it been difficult for you to wash your hands?
- Have you tackled (or seen other people) tackle difficult washing jobs?
- What are your varied experiences of washing cars?

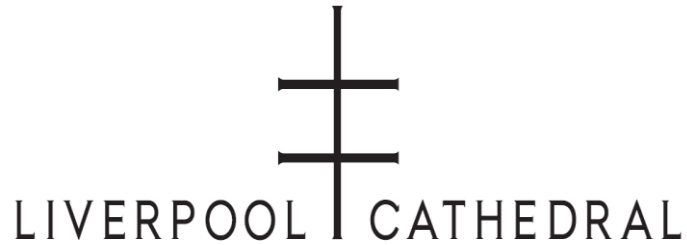
What have you learned about washing?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Mark's account of Jesus' teaching about ritual cleanliness and true purity.

- Make a display about hand washing.
- Create a collage of different washing activities.
- Make a display of adverts for washing products.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of washing.

Proper 17 (Year B) Sunday 29 August 2021



EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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