

The religious leaders had developed quite a complex system of observances which they placed on the same level as the Word of God (and sometimes above it). This resulted in serving God with their lips, but their hearts were carried away by their traditions.

to say to you.” And he replied, “Say it, Teacher.”

“A certain moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred days’ wages, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them will love him more?” Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have weighed and discerned correctly.”

And turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And He said to her, “Your sins have been forgiven.”

And those who were sitting at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this man who even forgives sins?” And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

DAY NINETEEN 19

WATER WALK

Matthew 14:22-15:21

And immediately He made the disciples get into the boat, and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. He then went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. But the boat was already many hundreds of yards away from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out because of their fear.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!”

And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “You are certainly God’s Son!”

And when they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. And when the men of that area recognized Him,

This conflict with the religious leaders gets more intense and Jesus begins to point directly to their hypocrisy.

The Jews had hyper laws about avoiding contact with dead bodies, so when Jesus told them they were like pretty, painted tombs on the outside, but dead on the inside, he gave a solemn picture of the condition of the Jewish leaders' hearts.

they sent into all the surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick; and they began to earnestly ask that they might just touch the fringe of His coat; and all who touched it were cured.

DECISION TIME

Mark 7:1-37

The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered together around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of His followers were eating their bread with "impure" or unwashed hands. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, observing the traditions of the elders. And when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves. There are many other things which they have established to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.)

And the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?" And He said to them, "Isaiah was right when he foretold of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching as truth the teachings of men.' Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."

He was also saying to them, "You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death'; but you say, 'If a man says to his father or his mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by is unavailable because it has been given to God,' you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; and in so doing invalidate the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down. You do many things like this."

He called the multitude to Him again, and began saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a man which going into him can pollute him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. If any man has ears to hear, let him hear."

After leaving the multitude He entered the house, and His followers questioned Him about the parable. And He said to

The Jews had been given specific health laws and ceremonies to set them apart and to keep them healthy and pure. This was being twisted by the Jewish leaders into a system of man-made religious purity.

Jesus declared "all foods clean" and in effect undercut a significant part of the leaders' influence over the people.

This Gentile woman recognized the humbled position that her sin brought upon her. This amazed Christ, because the people who should have understood this didn't. Here was a woman far closer to the Kingdom of God than even a thousand religious and self-righteous Jews.

them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from the outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" In doing so He declared all foods ceremonially clean.

And He was saying, "What proceeds out of the man is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and pollute a man."

VISITING THE GENTILES

From there He went away to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know about it; yet He could not escape notice. But after hearing He was there, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race.

She kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs." And He said to her, "Because of this answer go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." Going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, and the demon had left her.

And again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. And they brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they prevailed upon Him to lay His hand upon him. He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva, and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, "Ephphatha!" which means, "Be opened!" And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly. And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. And they were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He even makes the deaf hear, and the non-speaking able to speak."

DAY TWENTY 20

Herod was a Jewish puppet-King for the Roman Empire. They basically allowed him to be in power as a part of the pesky business of managing the troublesome Jews. This made Herod a distasteful, powerful ruler.

Jesus was masterful when choosing metaphors and examples. Often water, food, drink, and relationships became carriers for principles that would project timeless pictures for men and women from every nation and race in every century. After all, who can't relate to being hungry!?

FEEDING FOUR THOUSAND PEOPLE

Mark 8:1-38

In those days there was a huge group of people and they had nothing to eat. He called His disciples and said to them, "I feel compassion for the multitude because they have remained with Me three days, and they have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their home, they will pass out on the way; and some of them have come from quite a distance."

And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able to find enough food to satisfy these men with bread in such a desolate place?" And He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." And He directed the multitude to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving the food to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. And there were about four thousand people with Him; and He sent them away.

And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples, and came to the district of Dalmanutha. And the Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, asking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him. And sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation look for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation."

And leaving them, He sailed again to the other side. And they had forgotten to take bread; and had no more than one loaf in the boat with them. And He was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." And they began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.

And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember, when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they

Wherever you see the name "Christ" it means "Deliverer" or "Messiah." It comes from a word that means "to smear" - in this case Christ's blood is smeared over the doorposts of our hearts, just like during Passover when Moses brought the Sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

This story is found in the book of Exodus.

said to Him, "Seven." And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

They came to Bethsaida and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. And taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes, and laying His hands upon him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I am seeing them like trees, walking around." He again laid His hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he began to see everything clearly. And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT I AM?

And Jesus and His disciples went out to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." And He continued, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Messiah." And He warned them not to tell this to anyone.

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He was stating things plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter, and said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."