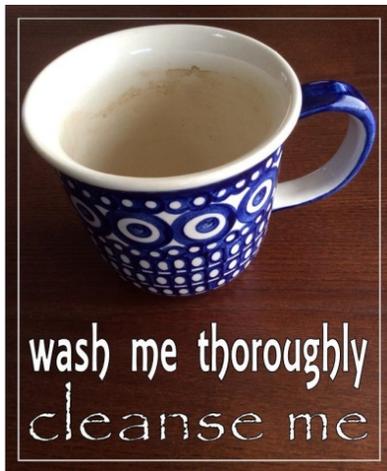


Wash Me Thoroughly - Matthew 23, Psalm 51:2



Pretty cup in the picture, well except for those stains inside, and the dregs in the bottom that I conveniently hid. It's still pretty on the outside, isn't it? It's a favorite gift that I received from my daughter one year. Hand-painted from Poland, the artwork and the richness of the color, well, I just love it! It makes me smile in the morning when I reach in the cupboard to grab it for my morning tea, but when I finish my tasty drink there's always this ugly residue that stains the inside and although the outside remains as beautiful and ornate as ever, the inside doesn't look inviting at all. Now, it most certainly would be silly to only try to wash the outside and stick it back in the cupboard, for even though the outside would look good, in order to use it, I surely would have to do something about the mess that is still stuck on the inside. Even though still pretty on the outside, there's no way it will be fit for use if I leave the dregs and stains on the inside.

You know, Jesus said some incredibly interesting words while He walked this earth. He always spoke right to the heart of the matter, and even addressed some with extremely strong words. In Matthew 23 we find just those kind of harsh words about a group of men whom He called "hypocrites". A word often said in connection with Christians. What does it mean to be a hypocrite? Let's look.

Hypocrite:

1 : a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion.

2. : a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings.

Simple Definition: a person who claims or pretends to have certain beliefs about what is right but who behaves in a way that disagrees with those beliefs.

(Merriam Webster Dictionary)

In speaking to the crowds and to His disciples, Jesus broaches the subject of those who are saying one thing and doing the opposite. He has instructions both for those who are speaking, and for those who are listening. We would do well to listen to both!

The scribes and the Pharisees were the leaders over the people of Israel that Jesus was referring to. And it's intriguing to me that even though Jesus lays into them in the rest of the chapter, He tells His followers that these are the men in authority and they are to obey what they are told by them, then He follows it up with a warning to not do what they are doing! "Do as I say and not as I do" has been around a very long time!

Jesus points out that these ones in authority **"say things and do not do them."** (v. 3) They are living out the very definition of being hypocritical. They instead **"do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels"** (v. 5). These men were far from humble. Drawing attention to their religious standing and self importance they forgot that the important thing is what's on the inside, not only what is on the outside. They need to be cleansed, washed thoroughly!

Before we are quick to put ourselves in the first group, that is just to heed the call to not do as they are doing, let's check our insides and see if there's cleaning we need to take place. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas where you are being hypocritical, because sure, we can look pretty on the outside, others may only see our pretty pattern, the color we show them, but we (and God) know what is truly

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on the inside. We know when our mouth says one thing and our behavior does the opposite. We know when we put on "religion" while we are not living in relationship with the Father. We know what it means to be a hypocrite. Like the scribes and Pharisees we need to **"clean the inside of the cup so that the outside may become clean also."** (v.26) And don't be blind as the Pharisees. All of us have stains. Every one of us act contradictory to our claimed beliefs.

Let's just think about that for a minute. What does that mean? It means, as believers, we have the ability to love every person, yet we don't. We are acting contradictory to the Spirit within us because He is love. Every one of us have the ability to trust God in every circumstance because He has, nor ever will, fail us. But we don't, we question, we fret and worry. Every one of us have the opportunity to be overcomers, for in Christ we are! But we don't live that way, instead we walk around in defeat. Dear one, that is hypocritical to who we are in Him. When we live any other way than in the victory we have in Jesus Christ; when we live under our own power rather than the power of the Spirit of God within us; when we try to put up a good front of religion with God and forsake our relationship with Him as our Heavenly Father, we are hypocrites!

The only solution is to be washed thoroughly. Cleansed. And He is just the One to do that.

King David wrote in Psalm 51 - ***"Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness, according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."***

Won't you allow Him to wash you? To wash your thoughts that are condemning, judgmental, ungodly. To wash the dregs of addiction, whether that's to self ego, food, alcohol, pornography, whatever it is that you hide from the rest of the world but are unable to hide from the omniscient One who sees all and knows all. Dear One, today, ask for His cleansing. He is here! His Spirit scrubs us clean and washes us 'whiter than snow' as the Psalm continues. At the first hint of repentance He is there to wash us thoroughly and to cleanse us. May our walk be as it should be and in no way be hypocritical, for it is His reputation at stake as we represent ourselves as followers of Christ.

Father, You alone are able to scrub us bare. To remove every stain and the dregs of sin that we have carried. Don't let us put on as if we are clean inside and out if there is sin remaining. Don't let us in any way look religious and yet hide the wretched stuff that keeps us from walking with You in honesty and truth. Thank You for Your mercy that brought Your Son to the earth so that we could have relationship with You. Help us to walk in the truth of who we are in Christ. Help us to be washed thoroughly and not hang on to any of the last vestiges of the sin of this world. May we only desire YOU! May we be washed so that we are useful for Your purpose. Praise You Lord God.

Read Matthew 23

Don't forget 1 John 1:9