

June 24 preaching

In Mark chapter seven, the Pharisees come to see Jesus doing, they were sent to find anything that could place Jesus in a bad place. From verse 2 to 13, Mark recounts the Pharisees shamefully watching Jesus's disciples eating with their hands unwashed. This was a great dishonor as Jewish elders had the tradition of eating their food after having washed their hands. Finally, a negative aspect of Jesus's disciples to report back. However, Jesus responded in a way that they never expected. He went on and explained how traditions might not be the best ways to follow the word of God and therefore they were dishonoring God with their man based traditions. Verses 24 to 36 recount Jesus's work and his miracles. I decided to focus primarily in verses 14 to 23.

14 Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. 15 Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them."

17 After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. 18 "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? 19 For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

20 He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. 21 For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and defile a person."

Once again, this comes after the pharisees see the disciples eating food that has not been washed and eaten with dirty hands, just like today this is socially unacceptable according to our social norms. Of course, today we see someone eating with dirty hands or eating unwashed food and we think about all the health issues and maybe how unpleasant might be, we are quick to judge. Well I Jesus thought differently, he took away from the importance of such concerns into the idea of what really sickens people is what they have inside of them. Is not what they ingest because that will come through our digestive system and we will be done with it.

However, we might think, "well yes it will come out but it will cause you great sickness, it might cause you diseases that last you for your entire life spam or it might kill you right and there." But Jesus intend was for them and us to understand something different. What really sickens people and what is really unpleasant are their wrongdoings, their evil acts, their disrespect for their own life and those of others, their selfishness, their seek for power, their prejudicial and racist doings, their arrogance towards caring for their lives and not for mother earth, murder, rape, war, separation of families, genocide. Well in society we are taught that everything we know or mostly everything comes from being socialized into a diverse society, where there is good and bad. So the big question is; are those acts of evil doing being socialized or do they come within us the very day we are conceived in our mother's womb? We can argue about this for hours. Personally, the more I learn about war and genocide against communities around the WORLD, not just African and Latin American countries.

The more I come to think of what possibly goes into the mind of the people who commit such evil acts in this world. Those who rape women, who murder men in their families, who force children into becoming soldiers. Those who destroy communities by burning their homes to the ground. Or how about those who kill and incarcerate young black men, make black

women infertile. Those individuals who have made every possible challenge for Indigenous communities. Those individuals turning their face the other way to refugees and immigrants. Those might be society level social problems that DO start with each and everyone of us. The problem with society level social problems is that we think they are too big to solve, that they do not pertain to us because those are only governmental and organizational issues. However, those are issues in conjunction with individual issues. In my personal experience, I see racism every single day. Either I experience it or I personally and virtually witness it. I can go on with stories on how individuals have been unapologetic and apologetic racist. We know racism is socialized into individuals, societies were and are made to be racist and prejudicial towards those WHO HAVE THE MOST POWER (again). That kind of power that does not come with money or physical possession but rather comes from deeper parts of the universe. It is really hard to care enough about social diseases like racism to actually take action. If you see it on a big level. But if you see it on a small individual scale, there are a lot of ways to fight against social diseases.

Being educated now days is not enough. I have witness situations where two individuals one with a PhD and another with a JD have been unapologetic racist. The PhD woman, a teacher, asked her student why he came to a country where he knew he was going to struggle. I heard this saying again from a woman whose son had been murdered by an undocumented individual. She said, these families (referring to moms being separated from their kids at the border) know what they came to so if they are suffering family separation is all on them. Yes a diploma, even the highest education you can get will not educate you about racism and prejudice. Having merely compassion for those who experience racism and prejudice is not enough neither is making them victims. We need to take bigger individual steps to later go into community steps and then we can finally reach that big social levels.

The Mennonite church taught me something interesting that I want to cherish, which is to see Jesus and God as social and racial justice seekers and keepers. Through bible stories we witness how Jesus protects and understands those who are thought to be the most vulnerable. Those whom society has abandoned. In Mark chapter seven, Jesus reminds us how our actions can have such impact in the world. Even if we are the only ones doing something good for the other or for our mother earth, even if we think we might not make a big impact we actually are. Whether we are doing something to end racism, oppression and injustice or by recycling or planting a tree. The most important part is that we have recognized such social diseases and we must stand against it.