**Table Talk**

**Sermon Series: Table Manners – Wash What Matters**

**March 29, 2020**

**Introduction (7 min)**

Many of you may be sharing this devotional with your family or a small group. Begin by watching the video and sharing the story below, then open up the discussion with the questions provided. You are loved and prayed for! May the Lord speak truth and hope through your time in His Word!

Please remember you can use online tools like ZOOM and Facebook Messenger to host a small group through your phone or computer! On ZOOM, use the screen sharing feature to show the video or questions to the whole group.

**Table Talk Video: Table Manners – Wash What Matters**

Normally, when someone invites me to a meal I am super excited about it. I am good at a few things, but eating has to be near the top of the list. However, there are a few invitations I receive that if I am completely honest, I wonder how the meal will go. I know we will all survive it, but will our relationship? Some people just love to grumble and complain or tell others what to do. Not much ruins a meal faster than that.

Which is why it is surprising that Jesus would even attend the meal we are going to read about today. A Pharisee invited Jesus to dinner with a bunch of other Pharisees. The same Pharisees that just publicly tried to disgrace him, fussed at him for healing a demon possessed man, insulted him and said he cast out demons with demonic power, and who are consumed with appearances invited Jesus for dinner. And he goes.

Upon arrival, the Pharisees washed their hands with a special ritual cleansing that was thought to wash away their sins. They had been in proximity to sin in the marketplace and open streets and didn’t want that sin to contaminate their lives.

This may sound a little too familiar. If you have ventured out to the market, it was probably followed by a bath in hand sanitizer and burning your clothing. Ok, maybe that was a bit extreme, but so was this public washing ritual. The Pharisees were consumed with looking good before God and other people – yet when God showed up in the person of Jesus they fussed at him for not following their rules!

Their washing was supposed to symbolize their holiness, their cleanliness before God. If Jesus wasn’t willing to follow their rules he could possibly be a threat to their holiness! How misguided we can be when we trust in anything other than God himself!

- Pastor Reggie Phillips

**Prayer (2 minutes)**

God, help us to see you in the scripture today. Help us to hear your voice. Help us to see past our own desires and limitations that we might be transformed in your presence from a people who want to look holy to a people who are holy. We know that only you can do this, and praise you God, we know you desire to do just that! We pray in Jesus’ name, amen.

**Starting the Discussion (3 minutes)**

1. Religious routine isn’t bad in itself, but it can become a substitute for connecting with God. Have you ever been caught in that trap?

**Unfolding the Biblical Story (30 minutes)**

**Read Luke 11:37-38**

1. Why do you think a Pharisee invited Jesus to dinner in the first place?
2. Holiness is an attribute of God. It describes his uniqueness and his character. The people of God are called to be holy like their God (Leviticus 19:2). Can you imagine making derogatory comments to Jesus at your dinner table, thinking his presence made you less holy?

**Read Luke 11:39-41**

1. Jesus starts with a metaphor about a cup, but abandon’s it and speaks directly about the Pharisees as if to make sure they don’t miss his point. What is his point?
2. In Matthew 5:22, Jesus tells us not to judge others as fools or we would be in danger of the fires of hell, yet Jesus does that very thing to the Pharisees. Why is Jesus justified in doing so here? (John 2:25 may help your discussion)
3. How is verse 41 a direct prescription for their sin that Jesus pointed out in verse 39?

**Read Luke 11:42-44**

Jesus issues three “woes,” which are warnings about things that cause great sorrow or distress. These are personal rebukes. Let’s look at why Jesus was so direct.

1. The first woe starts as Jesus compliments their tithing, going above and beyond to give a tithe even on things the Law didn’t require, like wild growing herbs. But then he chides them for neglecting what one of their own pointed out as the greatest commandment (Luke 10:27). What sinful attitude does this woe point out?
2. The second woe is a bit more direct. What is sinful about these actions?
3. The third woe describes the effect on others of the Pharisees seeking holiness through religion rather than through an encounter with God. What is the result?

**Read Luke 11:45-52**

Jesus launches into a second set of woes directed at the scribes, or the experts in the religious law. If the Pharisees were the pastors of the day, the scribes were the professors. They knew the Law better than anyone.

1. Jesus’ first woe to the scribes is that they make the Law of God a burden instead of a help that invites us to know God. How might God’s Word be misused today as a weapon to rebuke or harm someone instead of to help them?
2. The second woe includes a prophecy of God’s judgment on the scribes. They may know the words of the prophets better than anyone, but they aren’t living accordingly. How might the church today be held accountable for knowing God’s word but not living it? (Choose to be humble, not judgy in your answers)
3. The third woe is similar to the one given to the Pharisees – the scribe’s are hurting their community. They are keeping people from knowing God, not pointing people to him. We live in a world hungry for hope right now. How might we use God’s Word to point people lovingly to Jesus instead of as a wedge to drive people apart?

**Read Luke 11:53-54**

1. Just before this table encounter, Jesus warns that people react one of two ways to the light: they accept and are transformed by it, or they recoil from it and plunge deeper into darkness. What dark journey do these religious leaders embark on?

**Making Scripture Personal (8 minutes)**

1. God desires consistency between our outward actions and inner attitudes. Have you ever tried to cover up a sinful attitude with good actions, or excuse bad actions because you had good intentions?
2. Jesus said the Pharisees should have practiced justice and love without neglecting the tithe, affirming that practice. How do these acts of worship coincide?
3. Spend a few moments allowing God to search your heart. If He were to sit at your table and speak a “woe” to you, what would it be about?
4. Have you allowed God’s rebuke of your sin to illuminate a path to reconciliation, or to become a sore spot creating resentment towards God? How in humility do you need to respond to God’s voice today?

**Prayer (2 minutes)**

Holy God, we live in a world where people wander around in darkness, unsure of what to do or of what really matters in life. But we are thankful that your light still shines and the darkness cannot overcome it. Shine brightly and illuminate the areas in our lives that we need to humbly confess and repent. Help us to not stumble at this, but to embrace the opportunity to find victory! Holy Father, forgive our sins and fill us with your Spirit that we may live a truly holy life, reflecting your love and justice to a world in need. In Jesus’ name, amen.

**Wrapping Up (2 minutes)**

See if anyone has lingering questions or insights to share from your time of study and prayer. Summarize the group discussion as a reminder of what you learned together.

**Scripture Challenge (3 minutes)**

For your scripture challenge this week, work with your group to memorize Luke 11:41. May the Word of God help you wash what matters, and give you a clean heart that desires to serve Him!

**A Note from Southside Church (3 minute)**

None of us knew COVID-19 was going to so radically change the way our Family of Families at Southside Church would worship and grow as the Body of Christ. But God knew. God loves you. God is with you. Jesus will walk through this with you every step of the way. Please reach out to your small group or to the pastors at Southside if you need help, and remember, God is taking the brokenness and working through it for our good and for His glory. God bless you!