

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

January 5, 2020

“A Jesus Focus”

8:00 ~ Service - Communion is for all Christians

9:30 ~ Fellowship & Adult Sunday school

10:30 ~ Service with the King’s Kid’s - Communion is for all Christians

NEWS

Men’s Wild Game Night – January 31 at 6:30

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

Visit the website ~ www.myaletheia.com ~ Hear a sermon at

aletheiachristianfellowship.podomatic.com

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Emails: pastor@myaletheia.com, secretary@myaletheia.com, kids@myaletheia.com

Last week, I used an example. The single point of comparison in my example was the _____, not the individual and certainly not the specifics of each case.

It is unacceptable to God that we allow our personal opinions taint our love for each other.

Christ calls all people to a community in Him. We are repeatedly told that 1) we retain our individuality and 2) that we must be unified. We must love, accept, and live with, people very different from us. When we do – we are better.

In Matthew 15:3, Jesus responded to their charge by calling their entire form of _____ into question.

He was condemning their entire way of viewing God’s _____ and so their entire way of viewing God _____.

That’s the basic point of overturning the moneychanger’s tables.

Anytime a legalist meets religion, it becomes _____.

There's a difference between organized Christianity and organized legalism...

MATTHEW 15:10&11 ~ ¹⁰NASB After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand. ¹¹"It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."

Jesus did everything He could to _____ people know the Truth.

It isn't what physical, temporary, thing you ingest that corrupts your heart and soul. It's what comes _____ that defiles (Luke 6:45).

Your words, both spoken and implied, are the unmistakable and undeniable _____ of the person you are in reality.

"Don't believe what people tell you, believe what they do."

MATTHEW 15:12-14 ~ ¹²NASB Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?" ¹³But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. ¹⁴"Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

The dignitaries were seething with resentment, but they didn't have to react that way. Jesus gave them information that could have _____ their attitude entirely.

Jesus said that the Jewish leaders were blind when it came to what God actually _____ from people. So, to follow them, could never bring a person to where those blind leaders were not going _____.

“Let them alone” is a command. It’s two words, ἀφήμι (ä-fē-ā-mē), and αὐτός (ow-tōs)... αὐτός means “Self.” ἀφήμι, literally means to “Send from” – over 50 times in the Bible, it means “To forgive.”

The meaning here, is for the disciples to essentially _____ the Pharisees and Scribes as teachers and leaders.

The things the Pharisees did:

- 1) To teach doctrines based on human wisdom...
- 2) To focus on man...
- 3) To be dismissive of the people and their struggles...

Since the beginning, God has _____ men to mediate between Him and the people. Many who claim that role, are not His.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Does the leader:

- 1) Teach the Bible, or doctrines?
- 2) Do they focus on Jesus, or on humanity?
- 3) Do they love God as evidenced by their concern for people?

MATTHEW 15:15-20 ~ ¹⁵NASB Peter said to Him, “Explain the parable to us.” ¹⁶Jesus said, “Are you still lacking in understanding also? ¹⁷“Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? ¹⁸“But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. ²⁰“These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

Do not look at spiritual things through physical eyes. A human focus on human stuff, necessarily detracts from _____.

Salvation, like creation, belongs entirely to _____. Biblical Christianity is so difficult for people to accept, because it isn't about _____. It isn't what they do, it's Whom they trust. It's a total _____ to God in Christ.

 Check all that apply – detach and place in the offering or the prayer box

_____ I want to talk with the pastor about _____

_____ I want prayer for _____

_____ I want to volunteer to _____

_____ I want more information about _____

_____ Other _____

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Alêtheia ~ Matthew 15b ~ 010520

Welcome Friends

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
MATTHEW
A CLASH OF KINGDOMS

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

Last week, I used an example. I went to extraordinary lengths to say that it wasn't about the example, but only about the point of comparison I intended to make with it.

Several of you ignored my pleading and focused on the example anyway. Whether you liked the example, or disliked it, you did precisely what I repeatedly begged you not to do.

I'm confident that bringing it up today will make it worse. Those unhappy people will not become happy,

but it's a fair bet, that some of those happy people will become unhappy. Why do it?

After much wrestling with it, I'm doing it, because I Love God enough to love you more than I want your acceptance of me. My friends, it seems like I stand here and talk a lot on a variety of subjects, family stories, the Marine Corps, flying, science, geography, archeology, Greek, Hebrew, ancient culture, current events, psychology and even politics... I don't. It may seem like I'm talking about other things, but I'm only ever talking about Jesus. I use a variety of tools to help the Bible come alive, in order to make Jesus more real, for us to better relate to our King and Savior... But the point is always Jesus.

The single point of comparison in my example last week was the groups, not the individual and certainly not the specifics of each case.

I was comparing the Democrats, as a group, who detest Trump so much they will do whatever they can to get rid of him, and the Jewish leaders, as a group, who detested Jesus so much they likewise, did whatever they could to get rid of Him.

It had nothing to do with Trump, or Jesus – with innocence, or guilt – with good reason, or bad... It was solely about two groups of people, so adamantly opposed to an individual, that they would do anything, they possibly could, to eliminate that unacceptable person.

Related to that, it was about the groups trying to come up with something chargeable. Both groups fully believe the individual leader is wrong, bad, evil, and must go... But what to officially charge – how to proceed? Do not take my analogy, my example, my parable beyond where I intended it to go, because if you do, it's on you, not me.

The lesson to be learned is exactly what I've been trying to show throughout our recent study on Jesus' parables. When we go beyond His original scope – it's on us, not Him.



Putting Jesus above all else.

Even though I know it's likely that many people are newly grumpy at me, and others are freshly grumpy at me... We are Christians. It is unacceptable to God that we allow our personal feelings taint our love for each other. Get this. You cannot go find a church where everyone agrees with you and think you're a good Christian because you get along with them so well.

The reason the divide in our country is so vast is because we see those who disagree with us, not just as those with a different opinion, not just as the enemy, but as vile, evil, stupid sub-humans. I think real trouble is coming and I think we better figure out how to be truly devoted to each other before it does. The world

knows Jesus through the love we demonstrate to each other – when it's a challenge, not when it's easy. Who needs the Holy Spirit to get along with people who agree with you?

You cannot love people you see in that light. That's the road to separation, then isolation, then civil war and the inevitable atrocities that ensue – it is not Jesus. How dare any of us question the Christian love and devotion of another, because they disagree with our opinions. How dare we make assumptions about our Christian siblings without walking in their shoes and getting to know why they feel the way they do. Honor Jesus.



I also said last week that this sermon today is really part 2. It builds on the last one, and while it won't be a fair substitute, I'll give a quick review of the highlights.

A delegation of experts in Jewish thought and practice arrived from the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, specifically to confront Jesus. They came up with a charge against His leadership. Jesus, as the rabbi to His disciples, was either 1) unable to lead them properly, 2) or was teaching them wrongly, 3) or was Himself ignorant. Whatever the case, it made Him unworthy of the position... That was their line of attack.

The specific charge had to do with the idea that it was essentially impossible to go very long without your hands and feet becoming ceremonially unclean.

Again, nothing at all to do with dirt and germs – not physical grime, but the filth of the spiritually polluted world getting on your hands and feet.

Since people then, ate with their hands, it stood to reason that the food touched by religiously contaminated hands would, in turn, make the food religiously contaminated. Where did the food go? Right into the very center of a person's being, thus, logically, making the entire person ceremonially unclean.



Since people rarely eat with their feet, a simple handwashing before a meal was sufficient. Again, nothing to do with washing as we know it – this was just a symbolic splash of water... So really why not? Why wouldn't you do it? It was an acknowledgement that the world was corrupt and that, that corruptness could taint the individual, but that the individual devoted to God would do some small gesture to recognize His holiness.

Put it that way, and I have a problem with Jesus... Can you see that religiosity – the religious legalism of man-made rules can sound pious? Reread Colossians 2:20-23.



In verse 3, Jesus responded, not by defending Himself against that single charge, but by calling their entire form of Judaism into question.

He basically said, you say I break “Your traditions,” which is to say, your human man-made interpretations of God’s Word, but I tell you, that you break the crystal clear, black and white, Commandments of Almighty God with “Your traditions.”



He gave an example concerning vows and the Commandment to honor one's parents. It was not a specific charge against them in the same vein as the charge they made against Him – Jesus was giving just one simple example of what their form of legalistic religiosity produced.

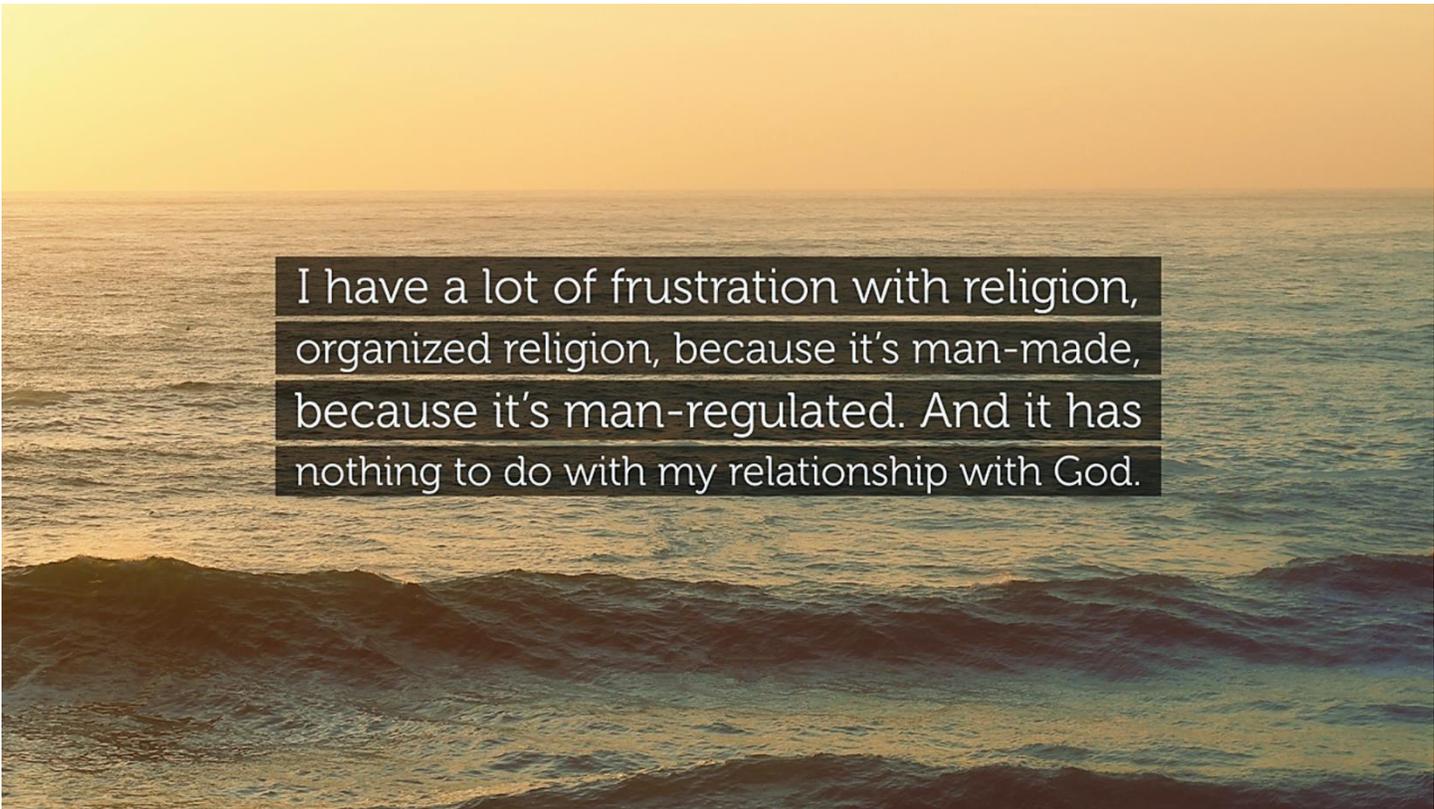
He was condemning their entire way of viewing God's Word and so their entire way of viewing God Himself.

That's the point of overturning the moneychanger's tables in the Temple – it was an overturning of their entire form of religious expression. Jesus called them "Hypocrites," meaning that while they purported to be

the pinnacle of, God loving, God honoring, God promoting people, they were just the opposite.

What they loved, what they honored, what they promoted, was themselves.

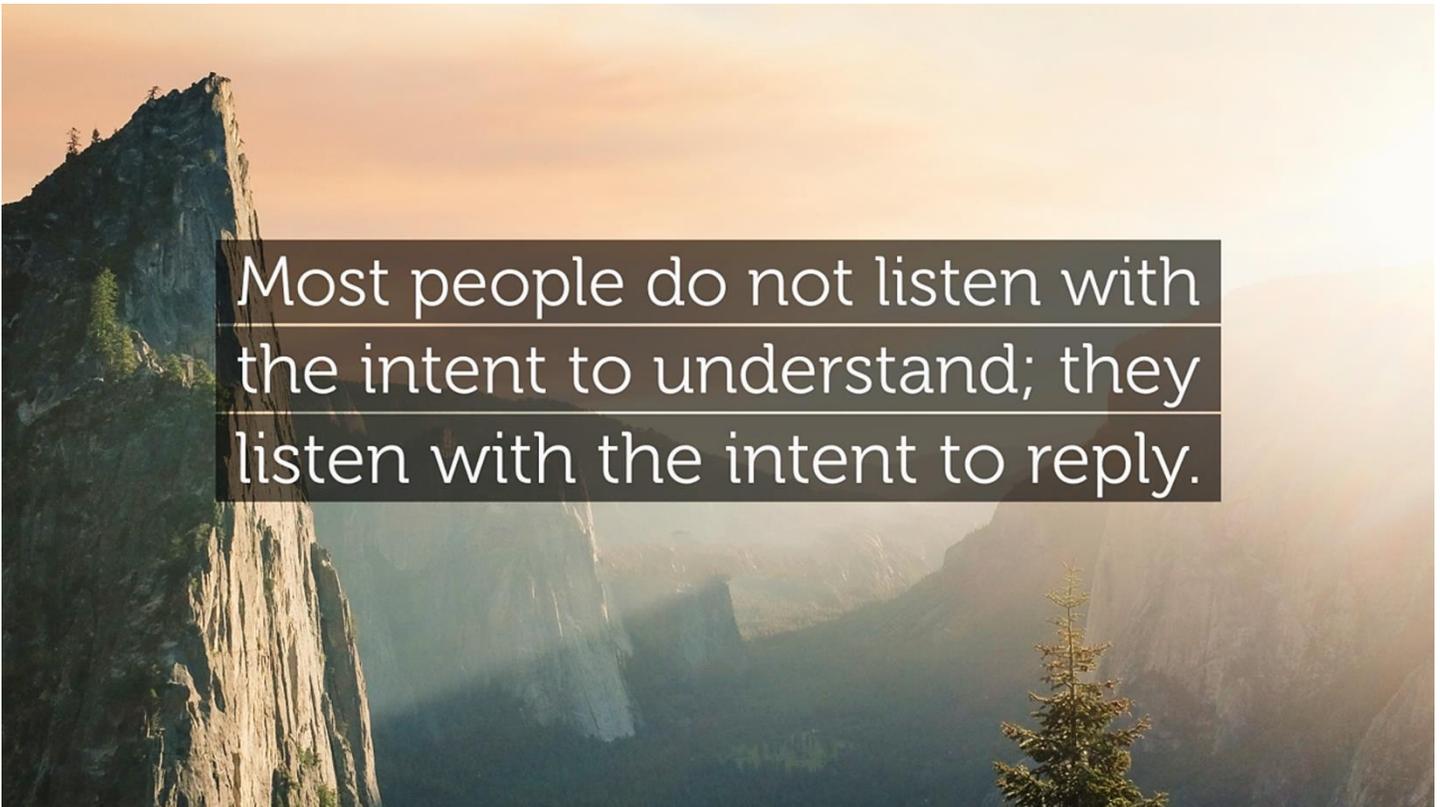
Then Jesus blasted them with the prophetic words of Isaiah. If you stop to think about that for a moment, you'll realize that those were the very words of Almighty God... The words He spoke through the prophet then, was the Word – it was Jesus... Jesus, now, was once again, speaking those same words – this time directly.

A photograph of a sunset over the ocean. The sky is a gradient of orange and yellow, and the water is dark blue with white-capped waves. A quote is overlaid on the image in a dark, semi-transparent box.

I have a lot of frustration with religion, organized religion, because it's man-made, because it's man-regulated. And it has nothing to do with my relationship with God.

The Pharisees were legalists at heart, and anytime a legalist gets a hold of religion, it becomes human. Human interpretation, human works, human ideas, human requirements, human judgment, human discipline, human punishment, human atrocities...

The quote here, seems good, but it makes a faulty assumption about organization. There is a difference between organized Christianity and organized legalism. Organized Christianity is man helping folks to better relate to God and to each other, not hindering it for personal power, or profit.



Matthew 15:10&11 ~ 10NASBAfter Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, “Hear and understand. 11“It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.”

As the delegation of officials from the Temple confronted Jesus the people fell back away out of ingrained respect and reasonable apprehension – no one wanted that group’s attention and certainly not their ire.

Imagine how much further the people moved away once things started getting heated. The Jewish leaders

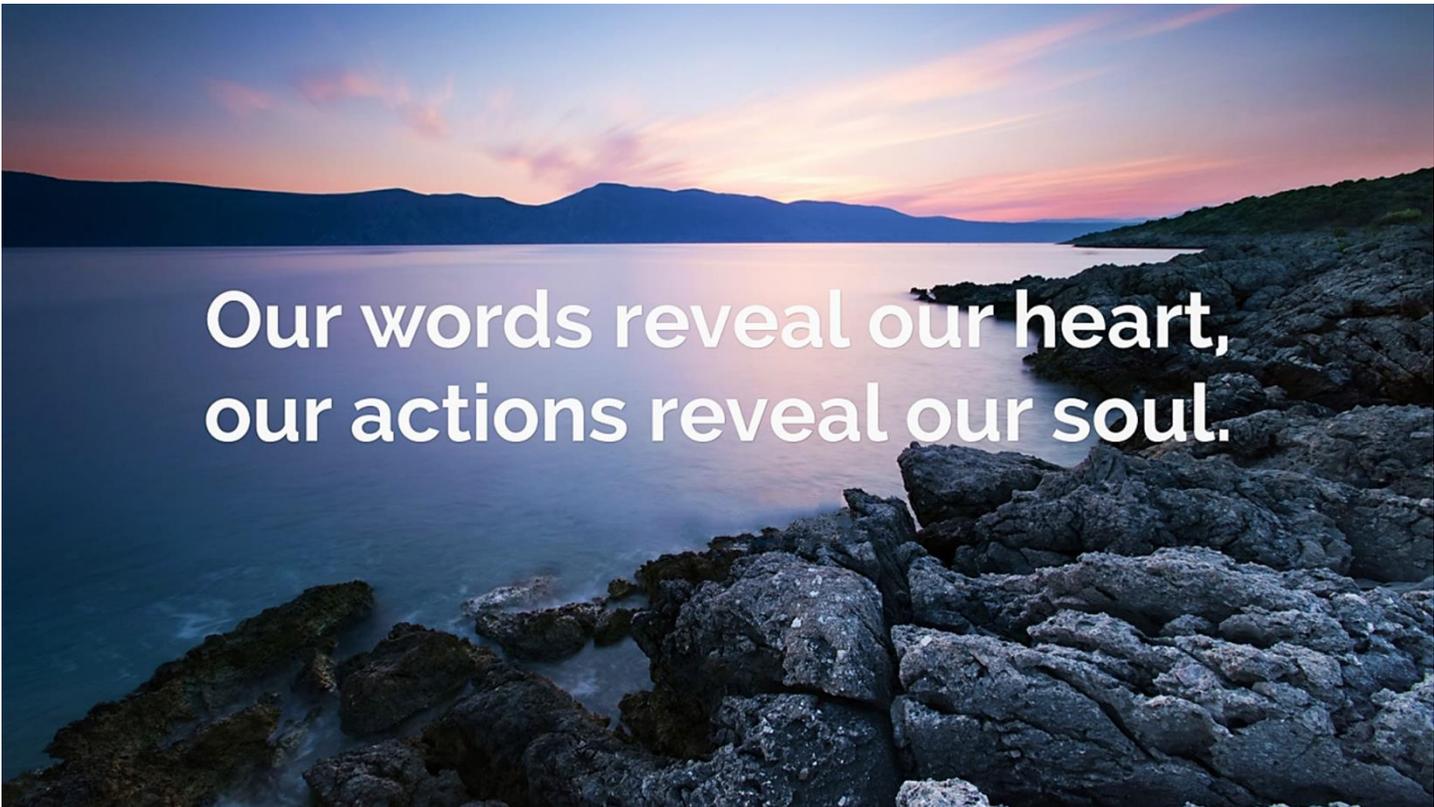
were being chastised by Jesus in a very bold and blunt way – this was not subtle. Jesus rarely did subtle.

As soon as the officials leave, Jesus actually calls the people near to Him so that they can “Hear and understand” what He wants them to know.

Please recognize in this, that Jesus did everything He could to help people know the Truth.

He plainly said that very thing. Both verbs, “Hear,” and “Understand,” are imperatives. Jesus was commanding them to pay attention, grasp what He was about to say and think it through so they would understand its meaning.

The legalistic interpreters who create human rules based upon human logic are completely wrong. Food goes into a person’s body and then it is quickly eliminated. It cannot cause you to be unclean before the God, Who made both body and food.



Our words reveal our heart,
our actions reveal our soul.

It isn't what physical, temporary, thing you ingest that corrupts your heart and soul. It's what comes out that defiles a person, because "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

The stuff that comes out of you... Your words, both spoken and implied are the unmistakable and undeniable proof of the person you are in reality.

You can protest all you want, Jesus clearly taught, in many places, and in many ways, that who you are, is demonstrated by what you do.

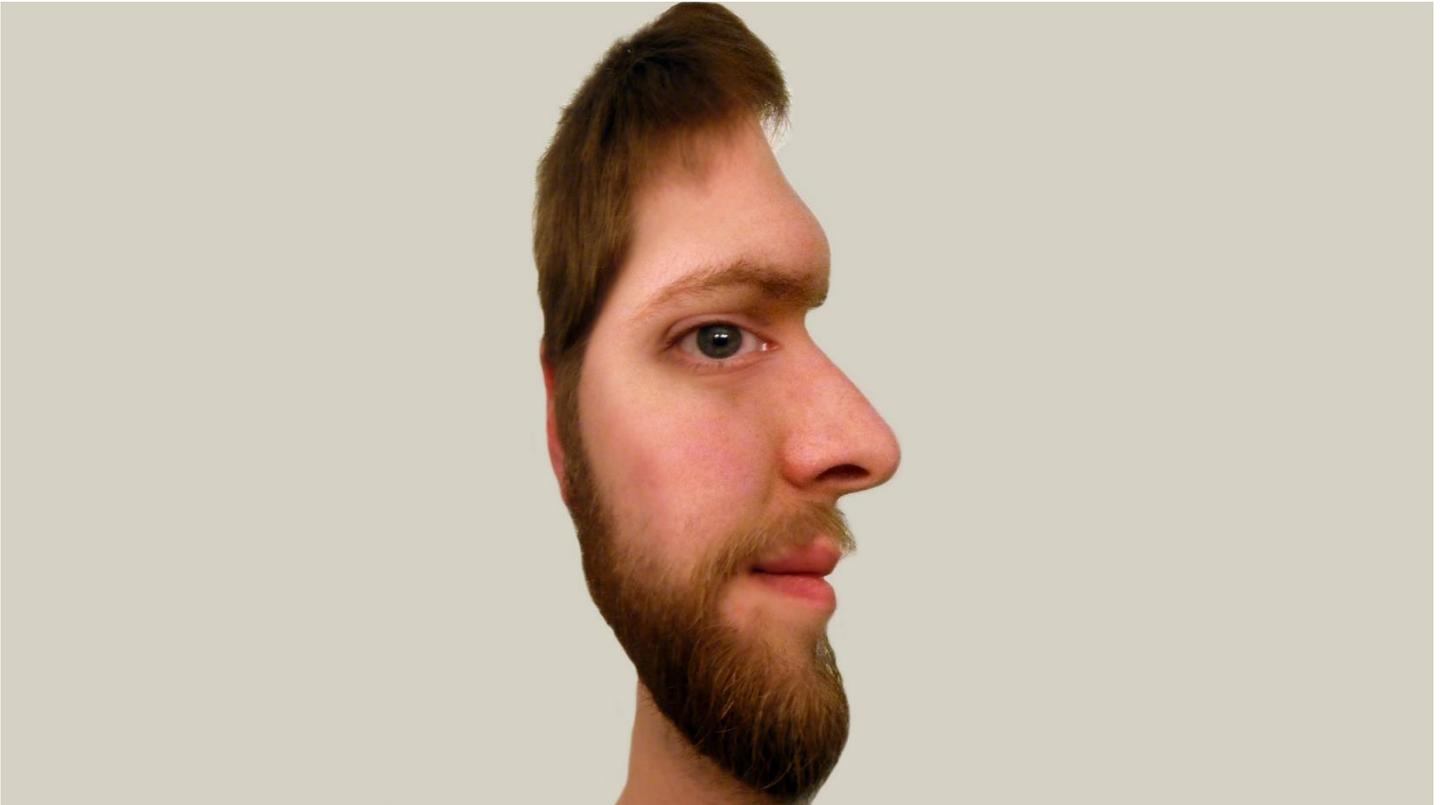
That's part of what I meant when I said your words, both spoken and implied. We often say words that are neutral, or perhaps even positive, but our tone and body language tell a very different story.

It is Pharisaic-like legalism to claim to have said the right words, when the intent behind them, was different. God is not fooled.

It is said that "Actions speak louder than words." Looked at another way, we can say, "Don't believe what people tell you, believe what they do."

If someone repeatedly treats you as unimportant, believe them, regardless of what they say, believe their actions.

Anyway, the point is, what we actually are cannot be hidden, at least not fully and not long term.



Matthew 15:12-14 ~ 12NASB Then the disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?” 13 But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. 14 “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

The disciples, ever helpful, once again share with Jesus the painfully obvious. I think Jesus knew.

But it confirms my point about looking beyond the outward appearance people present. For the disciples to say this, means that they thought the delegation's

negative reaction was hidden enough to be potentially missed.

The officials from Jerusalem, ever concerned about their image, no doubt departed with an air of dignity that the Disciples thought could be misinterpreted.

In reality, the dignitaries were seething with resentment and the disciples warned Jesus. What we shouldn't miss is that Jesus gave the Pharisees and Scribes information that could have profoundly changed their attitude about Him and about Judaism. If they had been open enough, they could have recognized the Truth of His Words and turned and been healed. Instead they chose to be offended... It's always a choice. You, being offended, is always your choice.

When we are convinced that we already know and that we're right – we don't listen.



Jesus told the disciples that the Pharisees and Scribes were not only not God's teachers, not only were they not God's representatives, they weren't even God's children.

That would have been profoundly shocking to any Jewish person. It would be like a Catholic teacher at Saint Mathew's telling her Catholic students that the Pope, Cardinals and Bishops weren't Christians at all. Beyond that, God would eventually destroy them.

They know their teacher, they trust their teacher, they want to believe their teacher, but what she just said

flies in the face of everything they have ever known before.

Blind people never functioned as guides leading other blind people through the obstacles neither could see. This is a colloquial, or axiomatic, saying – it's obvious.

Jesus said that the Jewish leaders were blind when it came to what God actually wanted from people. So, to listen to them – to follow them, could never bring a person to a place where those blind leaders were not going themselves.



Because of that reality, Jesus told them in Verse 14, to,

“Let them alone.” It’s a difficult phrase to translate, the NET is pretty good with, 15:14NET “Leave them!” It is a command and so an exclamation point works well. It’s just two words, ἀφίημι (ä-fē-ā-mē), and αὐτός (ow-tōs)... αὐτός means “Self” and gives us our word “Auto.” An automobile is self-moving, mobile by itself. The important word is ἀφίημι, which literally means to send from – a letter is something we send from ourselves. Very often – over 50 times in the Bible – it means to forgive.

Biblical forgiveness isn’t just ignoring a transgression; it’s the forgiving party casting the offense away from themselves as though it never happened. The sin never happened, from their perspective – that’s turning the other cheek.

I’d love to discuss that in depth, but we need to stay focused. ἀφίημι is to send something, or someone, away from you, and so, in the right context, it means to dismiss, or divorce.

The meaning here, is for the disciples to essentially divorce the Pharisees and Scribes as teachers and leaders. In other words, don’t follow them, because

where they're going, is not where they think they're going, and it is certainly not where you want to end up.



The things the Pharisees did was 1) to teach doctrines gleaned from Scripture and human wisdom, rather than simply teach what the Bible actually, plainly stated. 2) Their focus was always on man - what humanity had to do... Rules and regulations, ceremonies and ritual, hoops and hurdles, traditions and rites, chutes and ladders. Like all forms of legalism, it was about them. 3) They were completely dismissive of the people and their struggles, often looking down on them. Simultaneously, they were very concerned for their own privilege, position and prestige.

Jesus called them imposters, hypocrites, charlatans, false teachers – they claimed to be God’s mediating agents, but were only concerned for themselves. That’s as applicable today as it was then. I’m often amazed by Christians who exhibit so little discernment when it comes to who they follow.

Since the beginning, God has appointed men to mediate between Him and the people. The people have always had unencumbered access to God and now much more than ever before with the gift of the Holy Spirit and the wealth of information available at the touch of a screen, but people will always need someone to encourage, someone to assist, someone to guide.

Biblically, such preacher/teacher/leader types are called to that role by God. Many who claim that role are not. How can you tell?

Does the leader 1) teach the Bible, or doctrines? Does the 2) teaching focus on Jesus, or on humanity? Does the teacher 3) love God as evidenced by their concern for people, or do they love themselves by expecting to

be treated better than others, reverently addressed by their title, and honored as special?

We choose whom we will follow and so we will be held accountable for the choice we make. The only correct answer is to follow Jesus and so, those who point to Him. There can be differences in style, atmosphere and culture, but the more junk we put between people and Jesus the worse it is...



Matthew 15:15-20 ~ 15NASBPeter said to Him, “Explain the parable to us.” 16Jesus said, “Are you still lacking in understanding also? 17“Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth

passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? 18“But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. 20“These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

Poor Peter – it’s tough to be the leader. I doubt they didn’t understand what Jesus said in His brief explanation in verses 10&11 – it just didn’t make sense to them.

I guarantee you that some of the guys prodded Peter to ask for clarification and he, of course, opened his mouth. Jesus chastised him and really the rest of them.

It’s a fine line. There really are dumb questions. As a teacher you never want to shut down the search for understanding, but you also want to encourage people to think things through on their own.

It seems simple enough to us... How could ceremonially unclean hands make your food ceremonially unclean and then make your whole

person ceremonially unclean by eating? Of course, the food is just food – it does its job and is eliminated.

Jesus challenged the entire religious understanding and practice of the Pharisees and by extension, the basic understanding and practice of the average Jew.

While Rabbis disagreed and founded different sects within Judaism, they all adhered to the notion of ceremonial defilement. Why wouldn't they? The Bible deals with it extensively.

The Pharisees and, to a lesser extent, the common people looked at spiritual things through physical eyes. They understood the heavenly realm by examining it with human thinking. Nothing has changed.

We see the same kinds of things today. The Roman Catholic Church denied a girl first communion (which for them, is a salvific act. Please get this... If you're a Catholic who becomes eligible for Holy Communion and you don't take it, you are not going to Heaven) Why did they deny her? Well they wouldn't see it that way, but the little girl was severely gluten intolerant and requested a gluten-free wafer. The Church insisted that a gluten-free communion wafer was invalid. They told

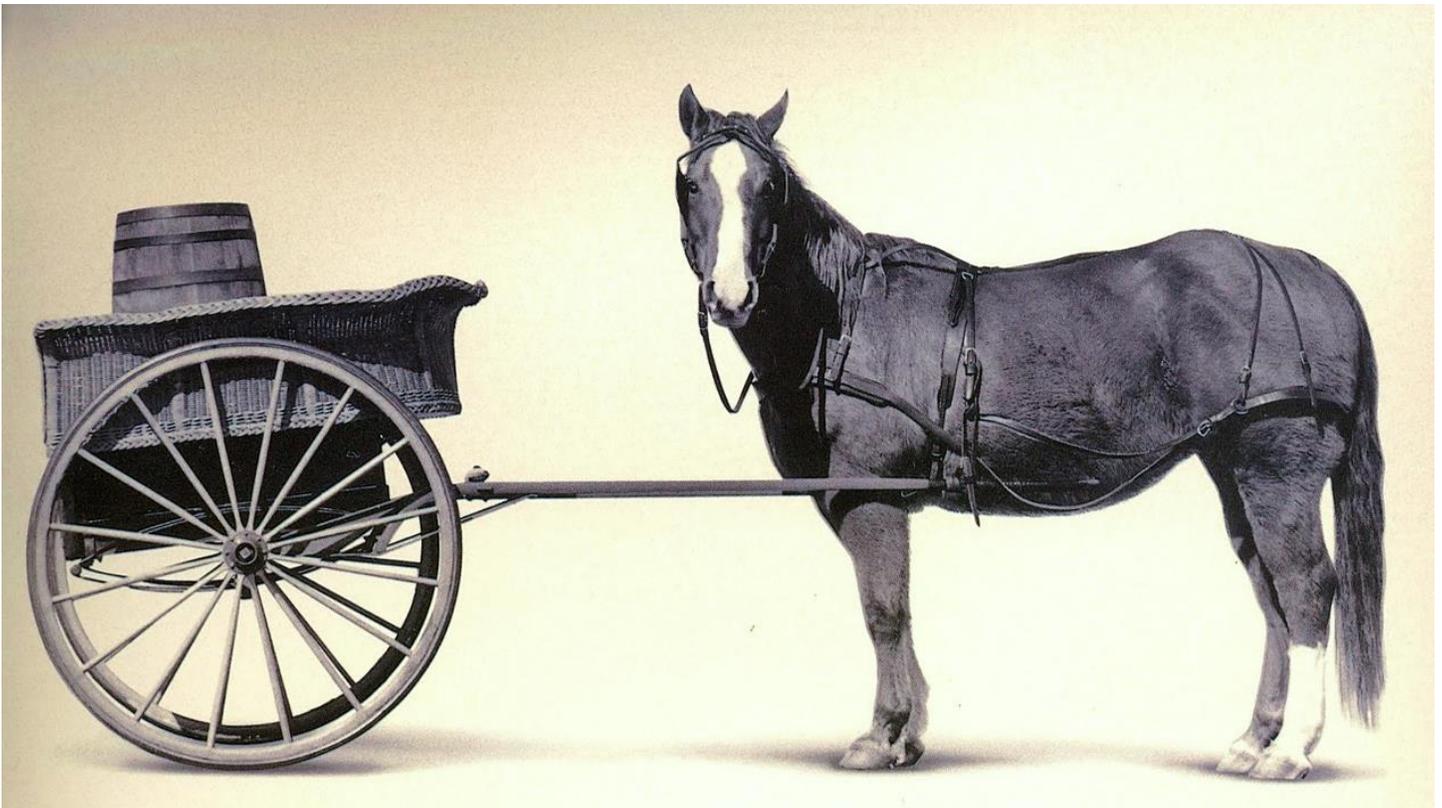
her, take the gluten wafer and trust God. So, God is pleased? He's like, "Right on Catholic Church, I hate gluten-free bread!"

Mormons use genealogy because they don't think that God can figure out which dead person is being baptized by proxy, unless a name and some details are attached to the surrogate getting dunked.

Some Pentecostal exorcists believe that a Christian can be demon-possessed and that the key in expelling them is to discover the demon's name. They think the Holy Spirit would then return. Because they believe the Holy Spirit can't be near evil, they think that He's getting a tremendous workout jumping into and out of Christians like a yo-yo. When you're as old as the Holy Spirit you need to keep your activity level up.

Some Christians are so adamantly Armenianist that they believe that Calvinists are unsaved anti-Christian false prophets bound for the fiery Gehenna and vice versa. I imagine that God's giving a big thumbs up saying, "Thank you for the division you cause in the Kingdom I'm trying to build – it would be too easy otherwise – I always appreciate a challenge."

It always has to do with a human focus on human stuff, whether that is in the arena of the intellect, the emotion or the physical , whether an emphasis on special experiences, supernatural power, or secret knowledge, it is all always human beings focusing on what human beings should be doing.



All religions on the planet, including much of what passes for Christianity is that and it is the exact opposite of Biblical Christianity.

That it is unlike man-made religions is a proof of God's fingerprints ON, and therefore the Truth OF, Biblical Christianity. The Bible declares that God is the

Everything. Salvation, like creation, belongs entirely to Him. Human beings are so utterly insignificant we can't even predict the weather on our own planet let alone make it what we want it to be.

Biblical Christianity is the most difficult thing for people to accept, because it isn't about them. It isn't what they do. Biblical Christianity is a complete surrender to God in Christ. Not just a yielding to live a truly Godly life, but to surrender to His salvation – recognizing anything I do to gain God's favor actually diminishes God.

He grants His favor through Christ – to fully gain that favor means to cease from human effort – to trust that He's got you, because of His goodness, not because of your goodness – He loves you, not because you're lovable, but because He is Love.

Cease and desist – trust and obey. Cease and desist from human effort and human experience and human wisdom to gain anything from God and simply trust Him fully – which is to obey what He commanded – “Believe in the One God sent.”

That is surrender – you must surrender and when you do you are reborn and your thinking, speaking and

activity begin to reflect that new reality. Don't do to be a Christian, be a Christian and because of it, do.

The craziest thing Jesus did on this earth was His ultimate surrender proving His ultimate trust. Jesus, being life itself, could not die. He had to cast His Own life from Him – ἀφίημι. While hanging on the Cross, Luke 23:46 records this, 46NASB And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last.

The Word of God made man, surrendered His life, fully trusting in the Father and the Spirit. In Him, we must do the same.