



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 127 - From God's Eyes to Man's Hands (Matthew 9, 11 and 15)

Jesus' Lens

- If a person could look deep into the depths of your soul what would they see?
- What would they think of you once they saw it?

Most of us would be terrified to think of someone else seeing us as we are. But Jesus is always looking deep into our souls. He sees all our insecurities, our doubts and our fears. He knows our selfishness, our petty jealousies, our evil thoughts and impure desires.

- What reaction would you expect from a holy God who will come as our Judge?
- How does it feel to know that Jesus does not react to us with disgust, rage and fury, but with compassion, love, pity and mercy? He wants to show us grace instead of wrath.
- How does Jesus' willingness to take all our sins upon Himself and suffer and die in our place underline His great mercy and compassion for us?

Now consider how deeply Jesus can see into our souls—and *still forgives us*—with how little we can really see of each other. Jesus searches our thoughts and desires; we can only know those around us by their words and their actions—things which are easy to misjudge, since we can't see the motivation behind those words and actions.

- How can remembering Jesus is merciful toward us despite seeing the depth of our sinfulness help us to show mercy, compassion and forgiveness toward those who sin against us?

John's Question

John has been imprisoned for doing what the Spirit of God told him to do: he confronted Herod with his sin. Locked deep within Herod's prison, John knows he will never back down on Herod's guilt, and Herod won't turn from that sin. So it doesn't take a degree in probabilities for John to know his death is drawing near. He sends his disciples to ask Jesus a haunting question: "Are You the Christ? Or should we look for another?"

- What factors might be leading John to wonder if Jesus really is the Christ?
- What consolation does it give you in your doubts to remember that even John the Baptist needed reassurance of his faith in Jesus?

Jesus sends John's disciples back with eyewitness testimony: they have seen Jesus healing the crowds just as Isaiah said the Christ would. Then He ended with an encouraging phrase to John, "And blessed is the one who is not offended by Me."

- How might John have been offended by the way Jesus was establishing His Kingdom in Israel?
- How are people offended by Jesus' teachings today?

- What difficult experiences in life can lead even believers to question Jesus' love and be offended by the way He is choosing to answer their prayers?

God's Word or Tradition?

The experts in the Law and the Pharisees were offended by the fact that Jesus' disciples did not ceremonially wash their hands before eating. In Jesus' time these were oral traditions; later they were written down in a book called the Mishnah. An entire chapter was dedicated to washing hands. (To see how far these rules went, go to <http://www.torah.org/advanced/weekly-halacha/5760/emor.html#>. You can also do an Internet search for "Mishnah hand-washing.")

- Why do you think things like hand-washing became such an obsession for the Pharisees and scribes?
- Why would these obsessions cause them to be judgmental toward other Jews, especially those who didn't follow their traditions?
- What human traditions or customs are needlessly causing divisions in your home or church?
- How did the scribes' and Pharisees' attention to external observances and customs make it impossible for them to see eye to eye with Jesus, who doesn't look at dirty hands but searches people's unclean hearts?
- How did their growing outrage at Jesus serve to accomplish God's plan to save those people whose sinful hearts moved Jesus to compassion and mercy?