

Let's start with a quick show of hands

Who has a dishwasher at home?

Who is in charge of actually manually washing up?

I am in my house – I actually enjoy washing up. I love to do it every morning as part of my routine – put on something to listen to, do the washing up – its cathartic.

Maybe my love of washing up is why I am always drawn to this passage I am about to read. It's in Matthew 23:25-26. Jesus is rebuking the religious leaders of his day – he tells them off in a number of different ways, but this one always strikes me.

He says, **"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside will also be clean."**

Now this is good washing up advice.

But we know that Jesus isn't actually concerned with washing up here.

He is rebuking the Pharisees for living in a way that looked really good – being well behaved, well dressed, doing all the right things to look very holy and religious – while having hearts that were full of greed and self-indulgence.

This is Jesus' constant gripe with the pharisees – their tendency to scrub up, look impressive – but inwardly still be rebellious.

See it's possible to look better and to behave better without actually becoming more like Jesus.

It's possible to be nicer to my boss without ever changing how I feel about them.

That's a cup with a clean outside, but a dirty inside.

More examples?

This is why Jesus says things like,

You have heard it said, 'Do not murder'; but I say anyone who is angry at another, or calls them a fool, is in danger of judgement.

That's a cup with a clean outside, but a dirty inside.

Or

You have heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery'; but I say anyone who lusts after another has committed adultery in their heart.

That's a cup with a clean outside, but a dirty inside.

Jesus is really concerned with our hearts – and he knows that real change, deep change, lasting change, has just got to be heart change.

I can only keep up a façade for so long – eventually what's in here will spill out.

I will only truly change and grow if it happens deep in my heart.

And that's good news because the Holy Spirit lives within – he is the one changing my heart so that it is more like Jesus – he has the power to work within me – and all I do is partner with the work he's already doing.

Washing the Dishes by Praying the Psalms

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside will also be clean.” – Matthew 23:25-26

Awareness – Honesty – Prayer

1. What’s going on in my heart?

Priorities – what am I putting first? *In reality?*

Values – What do I think is important? *In reality?*

Desire – What do I want? *In reality?*

Intention – What do I plan on doing? *In reality?*

Motivation – what is driving me? *In reality?*

2. Being honest with God (he already knows).

3. Praying – The Psalms gives us amazing language for these types of prayers!

Psalm 51:10-12

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence,
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of my salvation
and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

Psalm 24:3-4

Who may ascend the mountain of Yahweh?
Who may stand in his holy place?
The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not trust in an idol
or swear by a false god.

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 141:3-4

Set a guard over my mouth, Yahweh;

keep watch over the door of my lips.
Do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil
so that I take part in wicked deeds
along with those who are evil-doers;
do not let me eat their delicacies.

Psalm 143:10

Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God;
may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

Psalm 119:33-37

Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your decrees,
that I may follow it to the end.
Give me understanding,
so that I may keep your law,
and obey it with all my heart.
Direct me in the path of your commands,
for there I find delight.
Turn my heart toward your statutes
and not toward selfish gain.
Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
preserve my life according to your Word.