

## When Jesus Ate with Dirty Hands

### Small Group Discussion

Luke 11:37-54

#### Opening Question:

- ❖ *(Leaders: the goal of these introductory questions is to help break the ice—they give everyone the chance to “loosen their tongue” by answering a safe, non-threatening question, that also begins orienting to the topic at hand).*
- ❖ Who is one “reformer” in history, whose life and work you especially admire?
- ❖ Begin your time together with a moment of silence, then pray and ask for God’s Spirit to shape us through his word.

#### Discuss: Background

- What immediately comes to mind when you hear the word “Pharisee?”
- Were you surprised to learn, in this week’s sermon, that the Pharisees were reformers who brought about positive change in the Jewish world of the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century BC and 1<sup>st</sup>-Century AD?

**Read** Luke 11:37-54, then discuss the following.

#### 1. What Discipleship is Not

- What can you gather about the host of this dinner scene? Who else is present?
- Review the custom of ritual handwashing that is at issue here. (Recall that this is not good hygiene, but rather an extra-biblical law that the Pharisees had added in an effort to ensure that they did not become contaminated by any kind of ritual impurity).
- Pastor Josh stated that Jesus’ refusal to wash before the meal amounted to a social insult. What do you think of this fact? Why couldn’t Jesus just play along, and “do as the Romans do,” in the home of his host?
- In vv. 39-42, we see a summary of the problem of Pharisaism. How would you paraphrase this problem, in your own words?
- Try to summarize the three “woes” that Jesus proclaims about the Pharisees in vv. 42-44. These are “symptoms” of the heart problem that he is attacking.
- The “teacher” who speaks up in v. 45 is a scribe, an expert in Jewish law who is likely also a Pharisee. In response to him, Jesus proclaims two more “woes” in vv. 46-52. Try to summarize, in your own words, the problems that Jesus is bringing to light here.
- We observed on Sunday that **being a disciple of Jesus is NOT external religiosity.**
  - Do you think this statement accurately reflects the passage at hand? Why or why not?
  - How do you feel about this principle?
  - How do good, religious practices become empty legalism? What happens in that process?
  - Are there any such practices in your life, or our church culture, that have crowded out true discipleship? How can you start to address this problem during Lent?
- Pastor Josh also pointed out, in this passage, that **discipleship is also not just private faith.**
  - Where do you see this principle in the passage?
  - What does Jesus mean, that we should not neglect “justice and the love of God?” How might vv. 29-32 inform our understanding of “justice?” (“Judgement” is the same word as “justice” in Greek).

## 2. What Discipleship *is*

- Pastor Josh claimed that **discipleship is being so saturated with the love of God, in Christ, that our outward acts are authentic expressions of that love.**
  - Do you think that this principle accurately reflects Jesus' teaching here? Why or why not?
  - In today's passage, what pointers to you see to Jesus' ultimate sacrifice of love for us?
- What would it look like for you to "soak" up the love of God, in Christ, in a special way between now and Easter? Are there some practices that would help you to do this? What has helped you with this in the past?
- Pastor Josh pointed out that when we understand discipleship this way, we're able to avoid three pitfalls. Discuss:
  - *Being motivated by the praise of people* (v. 43).
    - How have you seen this pitfall in your own life? How does our understanding of discipleship guard us against it?
  - *Giving people obligations without the resources to fulfill them* (v. 46).
    - Do you think there are specific ways we fall into this snare in our church culture?
    - How does our understanding of discipleship help with this problem?
    - What are some practical steps we need to take as a result?
  - *Pushing people away from Jesus* (v. 52).
    - How does our emphasis on external religiosity push people away?
    - Is it also possible that an over-emphasis on private faith could have the same effect? How?
    - How does our understanding of discipleship guard against this pitfall?

### Sharing/Prayer

- As always, take some time to share areas where you need people to pray for you.
- Depending on your comfort level, include a time of confession in your prayer time, confessing ways that you have focused on external religiosity to the neglect of the heart.