Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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"Did not the maker of the outside also make the inside?" (Luke 11:40).

Rom 1:16-25; Luke 11:37-41

Human beings are made opaque for a reason. The calm exterior of a person often hides inner turmoil, suppressed emotions, fantasies and the ongoing conversation about best intentions vs. raw impulses. Thanks be to God that other people cannot see what we are really thinking!

But God can. We are wonderfully made by the One whose love holds us in existence as we progress each day from immaturity to maturity. God sees everything and loves us unconditionally toward the holiness ordained for us before we were conceived.

Jesus also saw people for what they really were. He saw the innocence of children and the longing for integrity in sinners. He also had a low tolerance for hypocrisy, the smiling, sanctimonious masks of religious figures who inside were filled with pride and lust and avarice.

The Pharisees, supposedly public models of righteousness, criticized Jesus for not observing their intricate protocols for hand washing and cup cleansing. The confrontation occasioned Jesus' rebuke of their preoccupation with ritual purification of externals while ignoring the need for interior purity and sincerity of heart.

Writing a generation after these events and after the destruction of Jerusalem, the evangelits turned the Pharisees into stock villains of legalism and hypocrisy for opposing Jesus. But we miss the point of the Gospel if we don’t see ourselves in

Jesus’ challenge to focus on our interior lives. This is where the real work of spiritual progress (and mental health and self-awareness) takes place.

As we honestly assess the mess inside, we might despair if it were not for the patient, loving presence of the Holy Spirit. Like a parent teaching a child to straighten up the playroom, God is constantly encouraging us to be the same person inside and outside, an alignment that brings profound freedom and peace. What seems impossible for us is God’s gift to those who open themselves totally to God’s loving gaze and try each day to be the person God already sees them to be in the future.

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