

Mark 7 14-23

10<sup>th</sup> February 2021

May I speak in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Here again we have Jesus telling his disciples something that they don't understand and need repeating. This is a good reminder to us that Jesus doesn't expect us to understand everything first time, but to ask Him and talk to Him until we DO understand, recognizing that this may take a while. In our gospel reading today, Jesus tells His disciples again, that food cannot defile a person, only the thoughts of our hearts.

In Acts 10, 9-17, we discover that it took the disciples YEARS to realise that the food laws in Leviticus were part of the Old Covenant and Christ's atoning death on the cross is the New Covenant.

It is in Acts that Peter is on Cornelius' roof and has a vision of a sheet falling down from heaven with all animals, reptiles and birds on it, and he hears a voice commanding, "Arise Peter, kill and eat." Peter indignantly replies that he would not dream of doing such a thing, and he has never eaten anything "profane or unclean." The voice tells him "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." This happened three times, and then the sheet was taken back up into heaven.

So, what has God been telling us three times, or more? Time and again our Gospel theme has been stay awake, pay attention, check that everything you hear or read is Biblically accurate. God expects our attention from us. We are not expected to be A star students, He knows our abilities better that we know them ourselves.

The prophet Micah ch 6 v 8 in the New Revised Standard Version tell us God's demands are clear and simple. "He has told you, O mortal, what is good and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" The English Standard Version changes "O mortal" to "O man" And The Message says "But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do,

what God is looking for in men and women. It's quite simple, Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love. And don't take yourself too seriously – take God seriously.”

The Jews had lived with their food laws for centuries – Leviticus was gradually written over a period spanning 538 to 332 BC. Then Jesus appears and the old has passed away, as 2 Corinthians 5, 17 tells us “the old has passed away, and the new has come.” We have mentioned in our Bible Study that one way to discern that it is actually God's voice we are hearing is that He will tell us something so obviously not from ourselves that it will stop us in our tracks. Which is exactly what happened to the disciples when He told them that all foods are clean, v 17 “Do you not see whatever goes into a person from outside CANNOT defile a person” basically, because it is just passing through. Jesus lists the things that defile us, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice (which can be described as greed on steroids, it's not only wanting everything and more than others have, it's also keeping the excessive amount for yourself), wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride (and we can be ticking this list off on our fingers, I don't do that, I don't do that either,) then Jesus stops us in our tracks with “folly.” Folly? I do daft things all the time, I sometimes think I've got better with practice.

The Oxford Dictionary defines folly as “lack of good sense, foolishness” ummm, does that include an innocent mistake then, is that folly?

The Bible defines folly as the act of a fool, and Psalm 53, v 1 reads “The fool says in his heart “There is no God”” So it is unbelief and the lifestyle choices that stem from it that defile a person. Whew! Breathe out! We can all act daft again!

So when the world tells us one thing and the Bible has a different opinion on the matter, we need to heed the advice in Proverbs 3 v 5 “Trust in the Lord, with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.”

Amen

