

February 16, 2020



First Congregational Church

Waterville United Church of Christ

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Waterville, ME 04901

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WATERVILLE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
WATERVILLE, MAINE
February 16, 2020
9:30 a.m.

Seeking to walk in the Way of Jesus, we are an Open and Affirming church, faithfully using who we are and what we have to serve those on the margins of our community. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Scripture Lesson: Mark 7:1-23

- ~ If you are a guest or visitor with us this morning, WELCOME. We thank you for worshipping with us. We invite you to sign our guest book, and include your mailing address.
- ~ Everyone is welcome to join us for coffee following the worship service.
- ~ Children age five up to 8th grade are welcome to attend our Church School, held from 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.
- ~ The offering envelopes in the basket on the table are for your convenience. If you would like your contribution credited toward your pledge, please print your name and number on the outside of the envelope.

- ~ Deacon of the week is Lora Downing.
- ~ Deacon for February 23 is Bill Lee.
- ~ Liturgist this morning is Nancy Godfrey.
- ~ Liturgist for February 23 is Pete Downing.
- ~ Ushers this morning are Margo Beach and Carl Daiker.
- ~ Ushers for February 23 are John & Jackie Dalton.
- ~ Fellowship time host is Jackie Kulik.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

The Oxford NRSV notes state: "As representatives of the Jerusalem religious establishment, the Pharisees and scribes cultivated *oral traditions of the elders* supplementary to the laws of Moses, in this case about processing and eating food." In this kerfuffle, Jesus calls them on it by pointedly quoting Isaiah 29:13, saying that they made this stuff up and now treat it like it came from Moses himself. To throw it back on them, he brings up that while the law tells people to "honor their father and mother," including looking after them in their old age (quoting Exodus 20:12 and 21:17), but they ask for *Corban* (Aramaic for "offering") from people to support the Temple, siphoning off what money might have gone to support aging parents. Note how Jesus says, "Moses said" (v. 10) and then, "but you say" (v. 11).

It is likely the parenthetical (Thus he declared all foods clean) in v. 19b is a later addition.

To fully appreciate this text, we need to look back just before it - Chapter 6:53-57 - where Jesus and the disciples are in Gennesaret, probably on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, and possibly Gentile country. Wherever Jesus and the disciples go there - "villages, cities, farms, and the marketplace" - people gather, and are healed. A Christian community is gathering here: both of the washed and, literally, the unwashed. The issue here is more around the preservation of strict social boundaries. If you wash the right way, you get to eat with the "right" people, and the "wrong" people, who don't wash at all, aren't allowed. Ched Myers, in *Binding the Strong Man* reminds us the Pharisaic rituals around food had nothing to do with hygiene: they were worried that the farmer might have worked on the sabbath, or the fruit might have not undergone the proper separation for tithes. In other words, they were worried what folks were eating might be like those cigarettes you could get on an Indian Reservation without the tax stamp - whoever was eating them hadn't "paid their dues" to the Temple! Also curious is the mention, again of "the marketplace" in v. 4: it is the place

where, in Chapter 6, the sick are laid and healed; in Chapter 7, it is a place the Pharisees are trying (and, because of Jesus, failing) to regulate. Hmm.

What Jesus is building is a community both of the washed and the unwashed, both what the Pharisees consider "pure" and those who aren't. It is their mixing together that is bothering the Pharisees, who are worried about becoming "impure" themselves, by contact. While the Pharisees and the scribes complain that "some" of the disciples don't follow their prescribed washing traditions, I'm thinking that's not really is issue here. Even the Greek word that is translated as "hands" in v. 3 isn't really clear. And isn't that the way, when you are trying not to appear prejudiced about someone, or something someone does, but you really are, and you are trying to find a socially acceptable way to say that? You hem and haw, and finally mumble something about "what they do," but it doesn't hold water. This is what Jesus is speaking to when he tells them, point blank: "the things that come out of you defile you," things like, "slander, pride, envy, and folly" (the Greek word translated as "folly" is from the root word meaning "without reason or reflection, senseless, foolish, stupid." The true site of purity isn't the mouth or the stomach, it is the heart.

You may have noted in Mark that whenever the opposition to Jesus's movement arrives, it always seems to be about what hungry people are allowed to eat. In Chapter 2, there's the controversy around Jesus and the disciples "eating with tax collectors and sinners," the issues around fasting (a luxury for those who had enough), and plucking grain heads on the Sabbath, because they were hungry. When the crowds (remember, the Greek word for "crowds" has the connotation of "people you wouldn't want to be associated with") gather in Chapter 3, there are so many "they could not even eat," and then the scribes come to accuse Jesus of having a demon. In Chapter 6, Jesus sends the disciples out with "no bread," and when they are welcomed into others' homes, thus making the movement stronger, it is then Herod Antipas fears for his

power, and John is beheaded. Right after that episode, again they are so busy "they had no leisure to eat." It is here Jesus feeds the 5,000 men (plus women and children). Exclamation point!

If you know your Bible well, or at least know where to look it up, you might notice that the list of vices in verses 21 and 22 include three that Hosea used as charges against Israel: "theft, murder, and adultery" (Hosea 4:2), and other crimes of power, like "deceit." Myers concludes by saying . . .

This story serves not only to legitimize the community's practice of integration with gentiles, who otherwise would have been excluded by the rules of ritual purity, but also serves to persuade poorer Jews that the very purity system that purports to "protect" their ethnic/religious identity is the system that exploits them. (223)

You can't make it up, can you? It's all right here.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Numbers Served last week: 159, Year-to-date 2020: 1,501

A few weeks ago representatives of the Maine branch of the **Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival** visited the church to talk about the movement and answer questions about its foundations, history, vision, and agenda. (Please see www.poorpeoplescampaign.org) **Today, at 10:45 am** (following the service), PPC folks will return to screen a 45-portion of the campaign's powerful new documentary, "We Cried Power," and continue the discussion. The screening is free, light refreshments will be served, and we hope you will join us!!

MESOM Sunday Feb. 23 . . . The Maine School of Ministry (MESOM), a ministry of the Maine Conference UCC, is asking churches to take up a collection to support the school on Sunday, February 23, designating it "MESOM Sunday." To honor this gift to the church, our own Sarah Mills, a MESOM student, will lead worship that day, and we will be taking up a special collection to support the school. Thanks for doing what you can to support theological education in Maine.

Church Office Hours – This week the church office will be closed on Monday and on Tuesday the office will be closing at 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday – Friday the office will be open 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon.

Coffee Hour Volunteers Needed – Please consider hosting coffee hour after the 9:30 worship service on Sundays. There is a sign-up sheet on the table near the windows. Please do sign up to be a host.

Items such as coffee, tea, and sugar are stocked, along with tableware, etc. You would provide any snacks and half and half. Teaming up with others is encouraged so that expense, setup and cleanup becomes easier. Thank you in advance for your help.

CHURCH STAFF and OFFICERS

Rev. Mark D. Wilson – Pastor and Teacher
Rev. Maureen Ausbrook – Minister of Visitation
Sally Melcher-McKeagney, R.N. - Faith Community Nurse
David Dean – Organist/Pianist
Nancy Flynn – Administrative Assistant
Sarah Mills- Sunday School Teacher
Sally Melcher-McKeagney – Diaconate Chair
Carl Daiker – Treasurer
Jackie Dalton – Assistant Treasurer
Mike Seavey – Financial Secretary
Mike Muir – Moderator
Mary Lou Ogden – Clerk
Bill Flynn – Custodian
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Our Church Life: This Coming Week
February 16, 2020

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| Today, February 16 | 9:30 a.m. Morning Worship 9:30 a.m. Sunday School 10:45 a.m. PPC film |
| Monday 17 | Office Closed/ President's Day 3:45 p.m. Yoga in Sanctuary 4:00 p.m. Weight Watchers 5:30 p.m. Weight Watchers |
| Tuesday 18 | 9:00 a.m. Weight Watchers 10:00 a.m. Office Closed |
| Wednesday 19 | 9:00 a.m. Essentials Closet 11:30 a.m. Study Group 5:30 p.m. Yoga in Sanctuary 6:00 p.m. Book Group at You Know Whose Pub downtown |
| Thursday 20 | 5:00 p.m. Essentials Closet |
| Friday 21 | 9:00 a.m. Essentials Closet |
| Saturday 22 | |
| Sunday 23 | 9:30 a.m. Morning Worship 9:30 a.m. Sunday School 10:30 a.m. Fellowship Time 10:45 a.m. Board of Deacons |