



# Purify Your Heart

*Mark 7: 14–15*

*Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “*

*Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.*

*Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them.*

*Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.”*

*August 30, 2015*

## Thought for the Week

Scriptures: Joshua 24: 1-2, 15-17, 18,

Ephesians 5: 21-32, John 6: 60-69

Humans today are now intelligent enough to invent a machine that will sweep your floor, move your garbage, and even build an automobile from the bottom up. That may sound like progress but with all the new inventions, humankind in the Twenty First Century has not yet learned to really communicate in a tolerant and respectful manner.

Just think of the wars that could be prevented, the Oceans and land that could be spared of depletion if only people across this planet were able to speak openly and intelligently to each other and thus settle their differences. Obviously, robots cannot stop wars, but intelligent human beings do not seem much better at it either. Think of the robotic drones that continue to kill civilians in Afghanistan!

Human communication is one of the greatest of all gifts God has bestowed upon us; it is a sign of our prominent place on the planet.

Interestingly, miscommunication has also been a problem that arises even in the scriptures? In the gospel a conversation is taking place between Jesus and his disciples. He is pointing out to them that he (Jesus) is the bread come down from heaven; even further, he insists that anyone who eats his flesh will experience eternal life. This assertion by Jesus becomes so distasteful to the disciples that some of them break company with Jesus and go their private ways.

It is obvious that Jesus was not speaking literally of eating his flesh. He is speaking allegorically, yes, even poetically. In fact, Jesus is trying to convey the notion that all he does and says is nourishment, bread of life and flesh for the soul.

As in several other instances in the gospel, Peter comes to the rescue. Jesus asks him if he, Peter, is also planning to give up on their friendship. Peter finds himself against the wall. ‘To whom else shall we go,’ Peter says, ‘You have the words of eternal life.’ Little did he realize that he himself was using the language of allegory.

It occurs to me that most Christians, whether they realize it or not, use the language of allegory every day in their prayer life, their conversation with their God. That is perfectly reasonable, of course; what other option do we have? All prayer, all God-talk is symbolic, parable, metaphor, even or especially story. One might go so far as to say that all our God-language is personal, despite all the books on prayer that have been written over the centuries. Only we individually know how to speak to God; in some sense, God has given each of us a personal insight on how to be on track with Him. There really

is no standard prayer except the Lord's Prayer. All other prayer is personal, incommunicable to others. Any form of words or language we choose to use is perfectly ok; in fact, it is the only option we have. In some sense, and in many instances even silence itself is prayer. God knows the silent mystery of our heart.

Now, with regard to those robots we spoke of earlier: they may be able to build a Porsche or mop your kitchen floor, but it is a sure bet that they will never help us speak to our God. I so hope that I am never proven wrong in all this.

*Happy Birthday Pat D.(8/30)*

## Prayer for the Week

Often I hear 'Let us uphold (this person) in our thoughts and prayers'. There is also frequent comment and discussion among the Community of Christ about different approaches to prayer. There are some people whose prayer takes the form of petitions addressed to a personal God who may or may not intervene to bring about the desired change.

I receive invitations via the Internet to sign this or that petition. We are given some information and so we have an outline of the issue in our mind. What is required of us is almost effortless. All we have to do is click on the button that says 'sign petition' and our concern and support for the petition is instantly registered. Even one signature creates a tiny ripple. That is the power of the individual. A small group of individuals clicking on the button creates a bigger ripple. A large group of individuals creates a wave.

Prayer can be like that – an almost effortless process. We often say 'God knows'; in other words, we accept that the power of God has total knowledge of everything in the universe.

In contrast, the power of the computer and the Internet is derived from our discovery and application of the relevant laws of nature. All natural laws, including those that bring us humans into being, are surely part of the total all-embracing Divine knowledge. Human consciousness seems to work rather like a computer. There's the consciousness of the individual, like a single computer, and there's a collective consciousness, like the Internet.

If we want to make an effortless, well-targeted, prayer then all we need to do is draw back the bowstring, take aim and let go. 'Centering down' in silence to simple, effortless consciousness is like drawing back the bow string; bringing the person or concern briefly to mind is like taking aim; and letting go is like the simple motion of clicking on the button. We have used the power of God that is within us, and the universal natural laws of the almighty power that we call God will do the rest.

The transcendent God within us is to be found in the silence beyond thought. The immanent God within us is the God within all things, to be found by our senses and expressed in thought and speech. Any prayer requires both; but the prayer launched from the transcendent will, like the signature on the Internet petition, reach its target in an instant.

## Stewardship Thought

### To See Opportunity, You Need A Clear Mind

I love the old tale about the two shoe salesmen going to a remote part of Africa. One, completely discouraged by what he saw, called his company and said: "It's a complete waste of time, bring me home, they don't like shoes here". The other, bursting with enthusiasm said, "Get a shipment ready, you are not going to believe this, there is no competition here. Nobody has any shoes."

To really see opportunities we have to step away from our paradigm, the believe system we have

created through our past experience. We have to clear our mind of any prejudice. Only then can we really see what is laid out before us.

*"The golden opportunity you are seeking is in yourself.  
It is not in your environment; it is not in luck or chance,  
or the help of others; it is in yourself alone."*