

Lent Day 19  
Wednesday March 2

**Reading:** Mark 7.1-13

### **Reflection**

My wife, who is an oldest child, and I, who is a youngest (on my Mom's side) child, have noticed a rule from our childhoods. Youngest children often ask for things and get them, while oldest children don't ask, don't get them, and get upset that youngest's do. The difference seems to be in the reason for asking or not asking. For the oldest (my wife and my brother), they think they know what the parent (single in both cases) can and cannot afford, so don't ask. Whereas, the youngest assumes if it isn't affordable they'll hear "no." The oldest don't want to ask because they don't want to put their parent in the position of saying "yes" when they should say "no." From my perspective as a youngest these oldest's are just keeping themselves from a potential "yes."

Layers of protection! That's what our passage is about. Clean and unclean are important categories in the Jewish temple service. So as a means of making sure everything is clean traditions get built up; in this case ceremonial washing. Jesus' issue is with traditions which keep people from God. We recognize that these religious leaders are in the present moment missing what God is doing right in front of them while their worried about Jesus' disciples clean hands.

Well, they aren't the only people who keep themselves away from God with issues of clean or unclean. As I have encountered people as a pastor the usual response is "Yeah, I have to get back to going to church." Preventative measures! But, when probed the thing that keeps people away is that they don't feel good enough. They feel unclean. Maybe they are. I know I am. Jesus' point is echoed by the Lion Aslan in *Chronicles of Narnia, The Magician's Nephew*, "Oh, Adam's sons, how cleverly you defend yourselves against all that might do you good!"

Like oldest children we have pre decided what God will and won't find acceptable. So even though we want the relationship with God, or we want to be forgiven, or we want the new life through Jesus we decided we can't have it. Stop! God, the father, has already decided he wants you. Clean or unclean, he wants you. He has come to the earth in human flesh, died on the cross, was raised again all so you can have that relationship, that forgiveness, that new life — take it!

### **Prayer**

Father of the clean and unclean, thank you for your love and acceptance. You have made a way for us where there was once no way. Make us your children and keep us out of our own way. Amen.