

**A CALL FOR CIVILITY**  
**June 10, 2018 –Matthew 15: 7-20**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

So I was on the phone to my Mother's Long Term Health Insurance Company a while back, and they are very particular in the way you fill out the form in order to get reimbursed for your expenses. Downright Pharisaical, if I may say. And if there is even one slight, small error they return the form and I have to redo it. Takes 1 ½ hours to fill out the form once and I need to do this each month. So the first time they send me the letter that I need to re-fill out the form I am a Christian. The second time, still a Christian. The fifth, sixth time, still a Christian. But the seventh time, O that time, my frustration all kicks in, and I call the poor young man who is our customer representative on the phone and I am most unpleasant, to say the least. And he says to me over the phone, "Well, REVEREND Broberg I am sure it can be frustrating at times..." Ouch! What comes out of the mouth, REVEREND BROBERG, is what defiles a man...

Jesus is speaking to His disciples and He is noting that the Pharisees of His day, those people who sought to appear righteous on the outside, in point of fact on the inside were very far away from God indeed. So the Pharisees are criticizing Jesus, and criticism is what Pharisees do, and they are criticizing the disciples for not scrupulously following the dietary laws. They are putting foods into their mouths that according to the rules of the Pharisees shouldn't be eaten. And this, to the Pharisee, shows that Jesus and His disciples are not from God. Because if they were from God they would follow their rules. To this situation Jesus teaches and makes the statement which is our Bible verse for today –*"Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man..."* (Matthew 15: 11)

So Jesus then explains His teaching to His disciples. He reiterates: *"What comes out of the mouth comes out of the heart, and this defiles a man."* (v. 18) And then Jesus amplifies what he means: *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander, these are what defile a man..."* (vs. 19-20) See, it is important what we say and how we say it. Because when evil comes out of our mouth it reveals the true condition of our heart. No matter how good we try to be on the outside our words reveal what is on the inside of our thoughts and our heart.

Out of the heart flow the wellsprings of life, says the Bible. *"As a man thinketh, so he is."* says the Bible. The entirety of the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' teaching on the law that it is not enough to appear to be good; it is not enough just to do good actions; a Pharisee may think they are right with God because of how hard they try; but, no, our heart and our mind, have to be right with God as well. We can break the commandment *"Thou shalt not kill"* (Exodus 20: 13), not just by actually killing someone, but also by using our lips to harm someone. If you've ever been angry with someone, even once, then you've broken the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment. When the Pharisees gossiped about Jesus and the disciples they revealed the true condition of their heart –which was very far away from God indeed. And long before they actually nailed Jesus to the cross they revealed their heart and verbally did so...Their words revealed their heart and led to their deeds...

So if you've even once been angry with someone then you have broken a rather serious commandment according to Jesus. If you've ever gossiped or slandered someone, if you've ever bad-mouthed someone, if you've ever torn someone down in the church parking lot after church, then you are illustrating what Jesus is saying –Out of the heart proceed our words; out of our mind proceed our words. Our words give us a snapshot of our heart. And God demands not just our deeds, and not just our words, but our heart as well...

You might then be thinking –Then who can measure up? Then who can be saved?

Our nation is at a low point in terms of our civility with one another. The internet has allowed us to gossip and criticize people with wide-ranging impunity. I am a member of a group on Facebook that is about Calvinism and it is the most vicious of all things; people accusing one another of being heretics and blasphemers. But it reveals their heart, which is far away from the Lord. Decorum has been lost in the highest deliberative bodies. Manners, like those put forth in books like Emily Post, are no more. We relish the lowest common denominator, not the highest. We treat one another terribly and without grace, respect or dignity. It reveals the heart of the nation. Treating one another with respect comes from Christ, not from rules...

As we have turned our back on God, as we have thought we could construct our own reality apart from Jesus, our level of discourse has declined markedly. Anyone else see the correlation? See how as we are more and more running away from Christianity that our words and how we treat one another is in rapid, free-fall decent as well? It is not about trying to reinvent a bunch a rules to govern our civility. It is about amending our heart. It is not about trying to Pharisaically come up with Safe Spaces and politically correct language. It is about returning our heart and our mind to the Lord God Almighty.

So who can be saved? How can civility return to the United States of America? It seems impossible. But what is impossible with man is quite possible with God.

If you're tired with a lack of civility in the nation, if you even find yourself being sucked into the new reality of attack and be attacked and attack again, if you're tired of seeing people bad-mouthed and criticized and verbally destroyed and this is somehow seen as being (quote, unquote) "good" and the norm, then today turn your heart back over to Jesus. Ask HIM to take up residency in your heart and in your mind. Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. When Jesus Christ is again at the heart of our heart, and when Jesus Christ is again at the heart of the nation, then what proceeds out of our mouths will not defile us, they will reveal the love and kindness, the grace and mercy, the respect and the dignity of a people whose heart and mind are held captive by the love of Jesus. By the way, I apologized to that young man from the insurance company over the phone and what began poorly ended well. What comes out of our heart should ennoble us, not defile us. May it be so in Jesus' name. Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*