

Week Beginning: 24th March 2019

Worship Series: #4 in series



lifegroups
live life abundantly

living sharing growing

Theme Verse

The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:7b

Remember This Week

Jesus is never after acts of religiosity, but genuine love, compassion, mercy and service that overflow from a deep relationship of love with him. He throws the spotlight on your heart, not to condemn you, but to cleanse you, so that the beauty of his love may be completely reflected in your life and draw others in his presence where they can take refuge forever.



At the
TABLE

A place of
TRUST



Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

Psalm 62:8

Lord God, from the very beginning, you have desired to have a relationship with your people, stopping at nothing to make us yours forever. Strip away all those things we put our trust in that replace simply just being in your presence. Give us the same commitment, the same vision, the same passion that you have for us that this place may be a place of grace and trust that enables all people to live boldly in your presence. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

1. *Share your highs and lows since you last met with one another.*
2. *Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?*
3. *What behaviours of invited guests do you find really hard to deal with?*
4. *What are some of your family traditions? What is their purpose and why are they important for you?*
5. *What faith rituals are really important to you and why?*

You would think it would be customary for party or dinner guests to act per status quo -- as in being polite -- but when you get people together around a table with food, things can often go wrong. There's the 'always late person' who comes when they are ready, your family's version of Uncle Bob who drinks way too much and wants to give everyone a kiss! There's the 'food critic' who is quick to offer advice on how they would have cooked it, the raconteur who dominates the floor and thinks they are Jerry Seinfeld or keen to impart the knowledge gained from their latest intellectual reading. There's the 'the wine spiller' or the one who doesn't know when to leave! It can leave the host wishing they had never invited the person in the first place. Today at the table, Jesus is that guest, who makes the meal one that the host and other guests will never forget...for all the wrong reasons. We'll explore that today as Jesus speaks a hard word; a word that may even offend, a word that takes aim at those who take refuge in ritual, rote, resources or routine rather than finding a place of trust in the only relationship that matters.

Read Luke 11:37-54

6. *How do you think you would have felt as a guest at this dinner?*
7. *What brought about the confrontation and why didn't Jesus hold his tongue?*
8. *What does Jesus say is the problem with the Pharisees kind of religious activity in verses 39-41?*





9. How did holding to those traditions hurt them spiritually?
10. Looking back on these verses, what are some of the ways people still are acting like the Pharisees in our day?
11. What was motivating the Pharisees according to verse 43? In what ways is this temptation still dangerous?

The words that Jesus speaks are hard words; words that may even offend us. But whenever anything gets in the way of our relationship with Jesus then we need to stop and take stock of what we are putting our trust in. Jesus wants the beauty of his love and life to be reflected in our lives so Jesus points out six ways that the Pharisees had lost focus and ways that we can also lose focus today. He says that their religion

- * had become legalistic (11:42) – more concerned with ticking boxes and majoring on what is minor (Isaiah 1:10-18; Micah 6:8; Amos 5:21-24).
- * was arrogant (11:43) – wanting the praise of others more than the glory of God (Matthew 6:1-18)
- * was toxic (11:44) – it defiled people without their knowing it. They were too scared to walk anywhere, to live because they might do something wrong, walk over an unmarked grave!
- * crushed the people of God (11:46) – it was joyless, loveless, lifeless and graceless – unlike a relationship with Jesus (Matthew 11:28-30)
- * despised the Word of God (11:47-51) – the prophets brought God's word and were killed for it. Jesus is the Word of God and the constant theme that comes through the prophet's message is that they will kill him (Luke 20:9-19)
- * obscured the truth of God (11:52) – by not focusing on Jesus who unlocks truth for all people.

12. Which of the above do you think we most need to be vigilant of in the Church today?

13. in which area does this text convict or challenge you?



Remember Jesus throws the spotlight on your heart, not to condemn you, but to cleanse you, so that the beauty of his love may be completely reflected in your life and draw others in his presence where they can take refuge forever. So spend some time in quiet reflection and confess those areas where your faith has become a religious exercise rather than an overflow of a love relationship with him. Begin by praying the following Psalm

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life (Psalm 139:23-24).

Then ask yourself the following questions:

- * Where have I not wanted to hear the truth in my life?
- * Where have I been overly critical of someone lately?
- * Where have I been quick to take offence, because someone has done something or said something?

Then hear Jesus' own words to you: 'You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you' (John 15:3) Now go and live fully in your relationship with him, reflecting his life wherever you go.



- * Praise God for shining the spotlight on our heart so that we can see where we need his grace. Thank Jesus for showing us what a life of 'integrity' looks like. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us grow a deep trusting relationship with God where our outward actions are a reflection of our inner love for him and what he has done for us.
- * Pray for our newly elected LCA NSW Bishop Robert Bartholomaeus and Assistant Bishop Pastor Richard Schwedes as they lead this District in living our God's will for us.
- * Pray for the recently elected NSW Government that their words and actions may be congruent and all people cared for with the policies that are implemented.
- * Pray for the Church that we may never put ritual or routines above relationships of grace, love, forgiveness and mercy.

Turn to the person next to you and make the sign of the cross on the palm of their hand or forehead as you say:

Name, may you reveal Jesus to the world. Amen.

