

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 29th, 2021



CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1
Church: 905-685-8294 Fax 905-685-7661
www.christlutheransc.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon
Bulletin Announcements: Please send to secretary@christlutheransc.ca.
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

Pastor: Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com
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Prayer: O Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us without all doubt to know Your Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life that, following His steps, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord who lives and reigns with You, and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Musician: Mayumi Munoz
Reader: Paul Mason

Summer Session: “Healthy Eating” https://youtu.be/DagoO_oSrDQ

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: Jas. 2: 1-13 Wed.: Zech. 7: 8-14 Friday: Heb. 2: 11-18
Tuesday: Matt. 10: 40-42 Thurs: Exod. 22: 20-26 Saturday: Jer. 2: 13-19

WORSHIP NOTE:

In compliance with Ontario Provincial Step 3, we can now offer in-person worship with allowances for social distancing.

- **Sunday Service will be live-streamed at 10 AM on Facebook:** (<https://www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC>).
- Following the service, a recording will be uploaded to YouTube – “Gathering the Scattered” at: (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3a4p6prdJGEyP5S-q-cNSq>).
- A PDF version of the order of service for each Sunday will also be posted on our church website: christlutheransc.ca.
- Archived videos of Sunday’s service will be uploaded to christlutheransc.ca – “Worship” page.

Any questions or concerns, please check out our church website (<http://christlutheransc.ca/>), contact Judy Slingerland (chairman.worship@christlutheransc.ca) or Pastor Todd (pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com) or phone the church office. May the peace of the risen Lord be with you all.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Georgia Hoeffs who turned 14 yesterday. The years fly by so fast and we thank our gracious Lord for all the gifts He has richly given.

CONGRATULATIONS to Kevin and Vanessa Koch for the birth of their son, Trevor Lawrence Koch on Sunday, August 15, new grandson for Michael and Sharon Koch.

THE OBITUARY for our dear Erna McBride can now be read on the website of George Darte Funeral Home. Although because of Covid restrictions it will be a private funeral, friends are still invited to attend and offer their sympathy at the Funeral Home visitations, which will be held at George Darte, 585 Carlton St. on Thursday afternoon September 9th from 2 - 3:30 p.m. and that same evening from 7 - 8:30 p.m. Covid protocol will be followed and guests are requested to wear a mask. Donations may be made in Erna’s memory to the Haiti Children’s Feeding programme which was so dear to her heart (having originally been started by her daughter Erin and heavily supported and carried on by Erna especially through her many fundraisers (*please make donations or cheques to Christ Lutheran Church and Karen will forward it on to the Haiti Children’s Feeding Programme*); or to Hospice Niagara where Erna spent her final days.

VOTER’S MEETING: **Sunday, September 19th, 2:00 pm** – Voters Meeting (tentative based on public health restrictions). Election of Church Council and ratification of Council decisions made under COVID-19 restrictions.



MOVING FORWARD - As we continue in Stage 3 of COVID 19 restrictions and the community is continuing to be vaccinated, we are still left with the Delta variant actively circulating in our community and elsewhere. We would like to ensure that the membership is comfortable with and still wish to move towards having two (2) services each Sunday with the eventuality of resuming activities and programs between services. Should you have a preference one way or the other, please share your views and preferences with either Pastor or a member of council. The first week for two services is presently scheduled for **Sunday, September 12th, 2021**. If necessary, this matter will be placed on the agenda for discussion at the Voter's meeting.

WE'RE EXCITED!!!! SUNDAY SCHOOL will be starting up again this Fall. Our plan is to meet for 2 (two) weeks each month. Stay tuned for more details next week.

Last Sunday Attendance: Aug. 22th, 2021 Attn: 10 a.m. – 54

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>	<u>+ or - (-)</u>
Current:	271,175.00	5,214.90	2,627.00	123,588.61	(48,503.22)
Missions	20,000.00	384.62	282.00	11,138.00	(1,554.31)
Property Improvement:			31.00	3,712.00	

FLOWERS FOR ALTAR: If you would like to place flowers on the altar, please sign your name at the back of the church or email: secretary@christlutheransc.ca. Cost is \$25/bouquet

THE CANADIAN LUTHERAN: The Canadian Lutheran is available to read online at: WWW.CANADIANLUTHERAN.CA

SUPPORTING YOUR CHURCH DURING THE PANDEMIC: It's important for members to keep in mind that expenses for payroll, utilities, maintenance, etc. continue to accumulate even when you are not comfortable attending service.

1. THROUGH EFT DONATIONS: Lutheran Church - Canada, East District Corporation continues to facilitate this service for us. To assist you in continuing your financial support to your church, we encourage you to fill out the form that is available for printing at:

http://christlutheransc.ca/?page_id=96 and then mail the form along with a voided cheque to:

Lutheran Church-Canada, East District Corporation
275 Lawrence Ave., Kitchener, ON N2M 1Y3
Attn: Darryll Holland

2. BY MAIL: cheques can still be mailed to:

Christ Lutheran Church
140 Russell Ave. St. Catharines, ON L2R 1W1
or dropped in the Church mailbox at the East entrance.

3. ONLINE VIA LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA: Lutheran Church-Canada has opened a web portal that allows parishioners to donate directly to their home church:

<https://lutheranchurch-canada.tng-secure.com/?pageId=donation-edit&categoryId=10972>

select "St. Catharines-Christ Lutheran-30950" from the drop down menu, enter the amount of your donations and LCC will transfer your donation to Christ. Donation is via VISA or Mastercard. Tax receipts will be issued by LCC (not Christ).

This opportunity will be in effect until the COVID-19 emergency is over.

PRAYER & PREACHING

LSB 2006 alt.

FIRST HYMN:

“Renew Me O Eternal Light”

**1. Renew me, O eternal Light,
And let my heart and soul be bright,
Illumined with the light of grace
That issues from Your holy face.**

**3. Create in me a new heart, Lord,
That gladly I may keep Your Word
let what you will be my desire;
and with new life my soul inspire.**

**4. Grant that I only You may love
And seek those things which are above
Till I behold You face to face,
O Light eternal, through Your grace.**

Words by Johann F. Ruopp public domain

SPOKEN SCRIPTURE SENTENCES:

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

This is the day which the Lord has made!

Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

From the rising of the sun to its setting,

The name of the Lord is to be praised!

Better is on day in Your courts, O Lord, than a thousand elsewhere:

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

Make me to know Your ways, O Lord,

Teach me Your paths.

Sanctify us in Your truth.

Your Word is Truth.

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

Let us now go to the altar of our God:

To God, our exceeding joy.

[Brief prayerful silence]

Eternal God, we confess that we have tried to hide from You, for we have done wrong. We have lived for ourselves. We have refused to help bear the troubles of others and have turned away from our neighbours. We have ignored the pain in the world and passed by all the oppressed and suffering. O God, in Your mercy, forgive us our sins and free us from selfishness, that we may do Your will and keep Your Word, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God is merciful and gracious, giving forgiveness to all who confess their sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ and by His authority, I forgive you all of your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT SONG

Based on Isaiah 12:2-6



1 Sure-ly it is God who saves me; trust-ing him, I shall not fear.
2 Make His deeds known to the peoples: tell out His ex-al-ted Name.



For the Lord de-fends and shields me and his sav-ing help is near.
Praise the Lord, Who has done great things; all His works God's might proclaim.



So re-joice as you draw wa-ter from sal-va-tion's liv-ing spring;
Zi -- on, lift your voice in sing-ing; for with you has come to dwell,



in the day of your de-live-rance thank the Lord, his mer-cies sing.
in your ver -y midst, the great and Ho-ly One of Is-ra-el.

Words: Carl P. Daw, Jr. © 1982, 1990 Hope Publishing Company. Used by permission.

<http://www.selahpub.com/Choral/ChoralTitles/410-844-SurelyItsGodWhoSaves.html>

Music: In Babilone (Dutch melody) - Worship Supplement 1969 Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, © 1969 US

SPOKEN GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY:

The Lord be with you: **And also with you.**

Almighty and merciful Father, in Your constant mercy cleanse and defend Your church. Guide her forever by Your grace because she cannot remain faithful without You. We ask this through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE WORD

The Old Testament: *Deuteronomy 4: 1-2, 6-9*

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!' For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today? But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children—

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Epistle: *James 1: 17-27*

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures. You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, ongoing away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing. If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Spoken Gospel Verse: *Psalm 15:1-2*

Alleluia! Alleluia! O Lord, who may live in Your tent?

Who may live on Your holy hill?

All who walk without blame and do what is right and good, and speaks the truth in their heart. Alleluia!

The Holy Gospel: *St. Mark 7:1-8, 14, 15, 21-23*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Mark, the 7th chapter:

Glory to You, O Lord.

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' He said to them, 'Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.' Then he called the crowd again and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.' For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'

Praise to You, O Christ.

SPOKEN RESPONSIVE SCRIPTURE SENTENCES:

Forever, O Lord, Your Word is firmly set in the Heavens.

Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.

Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.

Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.

THE APOSTLES' CREED:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life + everlasting. Amen.

SERMON SONG:

"King of Kings"

1. In the darkness we were
waiting
Without hope, without light
'Til from Heaven You came
running
There was mercy in Your eyes
To fulfill the law and prophets
To a virgin came the word
From a throne of endless glory
To a cradle in the dirt
Praise the Father, praise the
Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of
Kings
2. To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the cross
For even in your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake you died
Praise the Father, praise the
Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of
Kings
3. And the morning that You rose
All of Heaven held its breath
'Til that stone was moved for
good
For the Lamb had conquered
death
And the dead rose from their
tombs
And the angels stood in awe
For the souls of all who'd come
To the Father are restored
4. And the church of Christ was
born
Then the Spirit lit the flame
Now this gospel truth of old
Shall not kneel, shall not faint
By His blood and in His name
In His freedom I am free
For the love of Jesus Christ
Who has resurrected me
Praise the Father, praise the
Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of
Kings
Praise forever to the King of
Kings.

Source: *Musixmatch*

Songwriters: *Geoff Bullock*

King Of Kings lyrics © So Essential Tunes, Shout! Music Publishing, Hillsong Music Publishing Australia

THE MESSAGE:

NEW TESTAMENT SONG

Based on Rom. 6:9-11



Our Pas --- chal La--mb Who sets us free is
Sac -- ri -- ficed! Oh keep: ---- This Feast of free -- dom
Gal -- lant -- ly, let al --- le ---- lu -- ias leap!----

**Let all our lives now celebrate the feast; let malice die.
Let love grow strong anew, and great, let truth stamp out the lie.**

**Let all our deeds, unanimous, confess Him as our Lord.
Who by the Spirit lives in us, the Father's living Word.**

Words: M. Franzmann, 1907-1976, © 1974 Augsburg Fortress. Music: Land of Rest, www.hymnary.org LSB 673
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THE PRAYERS:

Heavenly Father: thank you for sending Jesus to be our Saviour and to bring us the words of eternal life. We pray for your people whose faith is weak or faltering. Strengthen us to stand firm when we are under attack from the powers of evil and from our own sinful nature. *Lord, in your mercy:*

hear our prayer.

Thank you for the gift of children Lord, and for adopting us as your children in holy baptism. Help all Christian parents bring their children to you each day in prayer and conversation, and by the example of a faith-filled life. *Lord, in your mercy:*

hear our prayer.

Thank you for your presence in holy worship, and for the freedom to assemble in your name. Protect our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world who are under attack for their faith. Keep them from bitterness and revenge, and help them to love and pray for their enemies. *Lord, in your mercy:*

hear our prayer.

We pray for community and government leaders, that you would direct them to stand firm against all that devalues human life. Equip Christians in public office to live out their faith, and bless our Synod and regional servant leaders. *Lord, in your mercy:*

hear our prayer.

Have mercy Lord on those who have no work, on those who have no rest, and on those who have no home. Protect all refugees and provide them with a safe home and a new life. *Lord, in your mercy:*

hear our prayer.

Comfort all who suffer loss with your presence and your love, and meet the needs of all those we know personally to be in want especially we remember those desiring intercession for healing, according to Your will....(names are read) *Lord, in your mercy:*

hear our prayer.

Lord God, we recognise we are a well blessed nation – despite the financial and health challenges we face. Please keep us from complacency and apathy as we consider those who are most impacted by the COVID virus – at home and abroad. Open our hearts to those who struggle. Continue to prompt your love to overflow in us to them. *Lord, in your mercy:*

hear our prayer.

Loving God, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. Hear our prayers and grant them according to your grace and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Lord, remember us in Your Kingdom, and teach us to pray:

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING:

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, Son + and the Holy Spirit, bless, protect and keep you always. **Amen.**

LAST HYMN: ***“Blessed Assurance”***

1. **Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.**

Refrain:

**This is my story; this is my song:
praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story; this is my song:
praising my Saviour all the day long.**

2. **Perfect submission, all is at rest;
I in my Saviour am happy and blest,
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love.**

**Refrain: This is my story; this is my song:
praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story; this is my song:
praising my Saviour all the day long.**

Words: Fanny Crosby, public domain

REV. TODD HOEFFS
PENTECOST 14 (series B)
Scripture: St. Mark 7
August 29, 2021
Traps of Tradition

The Pharisees were shocked^[a] to find that some of Jesus' disciples ate bread without first observing the Jewish ritual of hand washing before eating their meal...so Jesus says: Don't you understand that you are not defiled by what you eat? ¹⁹ For the food you swallow doesn't enter your heart, but goes into your stomach, only to pass out into the sewer."... "Words and deeds pollute a person, not food. ²¹ Evil originates from inside a person. Coming out of a human heart ... [The Passion Translation of Mark 7]

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Post pandemic life means 3 things to us we may not have thought much of before:

Social distance, face masks, and washing hands! Washing hands, that's been a part of our life in public places on and off for a long time now. Preventing the spread of germs and sickness is the primary focus. Even without a pandemic, generally it's good common sense prevention. That's part of the reason why God in His wisdom provided washing rituals. Keep them clean and sanitary as life in a sinful world can cause sickness and death.

Nothing in creation escapes the ruinous side effects of sin. This cleanliness set them apart from other cultures at the time, as not every people group observed cleanliness.

But they needed to be set apart for other reasons too. Being clean and healthy in one way kept them safe and alive. It also provided a readiness for the future as they held the promise of the Messiah. A seed from a woman would give birth to crush the Satanic serpent head. This Messiah hope was placed into their lineage as their reason for living. So throughout the Old Testament history God connected their washing health with Their religious, ritual washing for spiritual health.

So that if they are made right with God and each other, They will be in the right spiritual mindset to welcome the Saviour WHO WILL BE BORN FROM THEIR OWN FAMILY TREE.

God provided a decluttered life free of obstacles so long as they trusted That this is the SAME GOD Who opened the way for them to walk Way back in the Red Sea waters. Eventually, the ritual and the observance of washing [like other rituals] Got elevated above God's original intention.

No longer were they preparing to be ready for the Messiah as promised But a version from their own imaginations and personal history and felt needs. Certainly God never intended for the religious leaders To scrutinize people who don't follow the rituals religiously. There's many a time I've eaten on the go without washing hands. I surprised someone once when I told them

I never wash fruit before eating it, other than grapes and maybe strawberries. Never saw the need. That's changed! There was NO salvation in the ritual washing. Cleanliness isn't always next to godliness as the saying goes. This is why Jesus lets His disciples eat with unclean hands.

Following the rules doesn't earn a better seat in Heaven, Any more than just throwing away the rules earns you a smile from the Lord. Washing was a gift to make a people ready. And now, with Jesus in their midst, Had they viewed the washing and all the other rituals the way God intended,

They would be able to see Jesus IS the Messiah for them and for the world. But Jesus as a mere rabbi, allowing His followers to eat without washing, infuriates the Pharisees & scribes.

Remember, the Pharisees already criticized Jesus about His table fellowship. He welcomes too many to the table which the religious leaders feel don't belong. Pharisees want rituals to control Israel's cultural and spiritual identity. They're so very afraid that their religion and culture is slipping away.

Seeing religious faith as tied to cultural observances inspires them to force a strict ritual routine. No more so than with washing and eating. Access to food equals power. The sharing of food is as political as it is cultural. The ability to secure and share food, and the action of doing so, builds honour and status in the community. Washing hands and pots has the same sense. Washing takes time, money and energy.

In Jesus' day only the privileged had constant access to water for this extra washing. Those living in a state of poverty, who lack both resources and time, would have trouble following the rules and labeled as outcasts. The Pharisees policed this label. They were known sinners and would be seen as un-loved and un-blessed by God. They confused blessing with privilege.

Jesus turns this all upside-down. The heart of His expectation for anyone following Him is to: love God and love their fellow human beings. While this is a short list, it's still not particularly easy. Love God involves sacrificing the self for that He can fill you up with HIS life. Loving others means helping them in their time of need no matter what the problem is. We shouldn't think that Jesus came to let us off the hook when it comes to keeping God's commands. They don't disappear.

The ritual washing did not hold the same level of importance as the 10 commands.

Those are still important. Because we view them through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. They would've viewed them through the promise of their Saviour. Jesus doesn't make it easier for any of us to live the life of faith, he makes it harder! He desires that we "observe the commandments of the Lord our God diligently" Outlined in (Deut. 4:5-6) This is done by not only trusting in the Word of God But also the Spirit of the Law. This means God's Word tells us that we should never neglect meeting together For worship of God. [Hebrews] The spirit of the Law shows us that if we happen to miss a Sunday we are not in serious sin and have fallen into disfavour with our Lord. Even Martin Luther explains in the Catechism about the Sabbath day

That it is good for us to never neglect receiving God's Word in the public service of what the church offers. Receiving God's gifts here is good for us But no rule makes you come.

It is God's grace.

The Word and Spirit.

Jesus even shares the prophet's word that faith always includes one's whole life. All who profess faith show that faith not by strict ritual but by the way they LIVE as God's child!

Otherwise, it's as Jesus says, "lip service" (Mk. 7:6-7; quoting Isa. 29:13)! The Pharisees are wasting time and energy with human constructs that divide and diminish human life, instead of building the community, restoring relationships & giving easy access to God's grace.

When tradition takes over, No matter if it's new or old, when the ritual becomes more important than the gift, God's Word takes a backseat to human rules. True Cleansing comes from outside, from above, from God, from the Son of God who became our Sin in our flesh and died our death on a cross. That's why Jesus doesn't give in to blame. It's not what goes into the body that makes it unclean, but what comes out. Blaming things is easy. Gets us off the hook. It's not my fault I have weight around my middle, it's the burgers, fries, donuts and cakes that did it.

Sounds pretty foolish, doesn't it?! When you stop and think about it, Jesus' teaching is quite profound! The Jews believed morality sat in a person's heart. Food and drink goes in one end and out the other. Simple. Food cannot defile you. It never touches the heart. And we're not talking about cholesterol clogged arteries here. This about the heart as the seat of the will, where we determine what we will think, do, and say. God doesn't touch that. So Jesus lists all the sins from the 10 commandments which flow from a sinner's heart.

Fornication [porn]

Theft

Murder

Adultery

Avarice [covetous]

Wickedness [a character of derelict intentions]

Deceit [trick, bait, hidden subtlety]

Licentiousness [evil vices/habits]

Envy [evil eye]

Slander

Pride [Hebrew – to over shine]

Folly [ignorant or thoughtless due to pride]

They are all evil and come from within the sinful heart. We all do them.

Each one is bad in its own way, and collectively volatile. And when these traits take hold the good we do is diminished. Like when the ego of the ritual/habit/trait becomes elevated over the gift from God. Because we are letting what WE WANT dictate and we like to think it matches up with God. But it doesn't because the heart is not with God. The heart is with the prideful self. Do we like helping those in our midst or around the corner Or those far away we can't see if it makes us feel better? It's all too easy for our faith in Christ to become our personal religion of ritual without meaning or prayers without love for others. How easy for us to see a world we don't comprehend and long for "the way things have always been"— using God and Scripture to reinforce that tradition. God's word calls all societies and all cultures to recognize their profound failures & cling to the way of our Lord. The way you live your life demonstrates the quality of your faith. Life in Jesus means a shedding of the sinful load and freedom in God's grace. The plain truth is that authentic, God-given faith has always been about His grace. A way where Jesus' Gospel transforms your heart and mind so much that it changes the way you *LIVE*. It's not a matter of lip service, but of heart service. God-given, Christ-centered faith IS AUTHENTIC FAITH, flowing from a heart that's been changed by God's love and mercy and grace, a heart that can do no less than seek to make all of life about loving God and loving others. This is how Jesus gives. This is why He lets His disciples eat unwashed. This is why Jesus let His body be perfumed by a faithful woman before His night of betrayal. This is why Jesus washed His disciples' feet, so that they may have a part in Him. This is why Jesus' Body was bathed in sweat and Blood So that all our sinful stains could be washed away When His blood-soaked cross intersects with our Baptismal waters. This makes us a people washed into Jesus' lifeblood. This means we too are set apart Not waiting for the Saviour, But pointing to the future hope of Jesus' glorious return While at the same time witnessing in the here and now that HE comes now to forgive to restore to wash to feed to sustain.

For the food Jesus gives of Himself is a food taken into our bodies Which does transform. Because the food He gives has nothing to do with right ritual Or human influence Or cultural standing— But rather Right faith Right belief Right reconciliation Right trust Right honesty Right love Right welcome. Ritual helps, tradition helps, Because they prepare us to receive. Sometimes with dirty hands, But always with clean hearts. Amen.

