

One of the things I love about this Gospel is that Jesus disciples eat with Jesus but do not wash their hands. We would be as disgusted as the Pharisees who question Jesus. But Jesus doesn't seem to care. Instead he responds very pointedly that those who wash their hands and utensils but do not follow the commands of God have defiled hearts which is more important to God than clean hands. Such people are hypocrites according to Jesus. Following the letter of the law so everyone can see is not holy, but doing good, loving mercy, working for justice, treating others with respect, that is holy even if no one sees you do it. These are the things that were important to Jesus and thus to God. Jesus quotes Isaiah: This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

So what is the modern day equivalent? Firstly, Jesus is often seen eating with and talking with outcasts. People who don't even know enough to wash their hands before they use them to eat. Jesus preferred the company of the least liked, those with the least etiquette but with the best hearts. Today we might say if we go to church regularly, sing in the choir, tithe well, but cannot find time to visit the sick, to welcome the stranger and immigrant in our land, to work to end oppressive systems, if you stretch your hands out to heaven but have not stretched your hands out to the poor, your praise is worth nothing.

John Dominic Crossan said it well:

In the Hebrew bible God says I reject your worship because of your lack of justice. God never says I reject your justice because of your lack of worship.

Amos said ²¹ [a](#)"I hate, I despise your feasts,

and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²² [a](#)Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,

I will not accept them;

and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,

I will not look upon them.

²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs;

to [a](#)the melody of your harps I will not listen.

²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters,

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Micah With what shall I come before the Lord
and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

⁷Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,

with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
⁸He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly^[a] with your God.