# “Teaching Human Precepts as Doctrine”

Today in our Gospel reading Jesus taught us about what is wrong with the concept of introducing human practices into the worship of God. Jesus wants us to always focus on the inner intention of our daily actions. He wants us to always ask ourselves, are we doing the right thing for the right reasons even when we perform good deeds?

Sometime last year, there was a story of a woman Kate who ran out of gas and was out of money on I-95 in Philadelphia. She was approached by a homeless man, Johnny, a veteran, and former paramedic who told her to get in her car and lock all doors. He went to a gas station and bought her gas with the last $20 he had.

Kate was so moved by the gesture of the man that she and her boyfriend wanted to do something in return for Johnny. So they started a ***GoFundMe*** campaign which overtime, raised about $400,000 for Johnny.

However, this year, Johnny and his lawyer had to file a lawsuit in court to get the money raised for him. The lawsuit alleged that the couple spent most of the money on themselves and only gave Johnny about $75k. The court ordered them to surrender the money to Johnny’s lawyer so he could open a trust for Journey.

In this story, we can see that both Johnny and the couple did good deeds. Johnny did something out of the goodness of his heart probably because of the love of God, while the couple allowed the love of money to cloudy their good deed and render it useless in the eyes of God. In the end, their good deed was self-serving. Their hearts were not in the right place with God.

To the Pharisees who thought that by performing external rituals such as washing their cups thinking that would make them acceptable to God, Jesus told them that their hearts were not in the right place. Why? Because often their traditions contradict God’s laws handed on through Moses.

Jesus went further by taking the opportunity to make a more profound interpretation of the law. Jesus told the crowd that “Nothing that enters one from the outside can defile that person, but the things that come from within are what defiles. Well, Jesus gave us and them the go ahead to eat beacon, catfish, and any animal we want.

This news must have blown away the minds of the crowd, because according to Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 abstinence from certain food was required by Mosaic Law. The Lord told them in dietary laws about what animals they could eat and which ones they could not eat. They were forbidden to eat any animal that is cloven-footed or chews the cud. However, Jesus explained to His Apostles when they got home that what we eat is not what make us unholy, but it is what comes out of our heart that makes us unholy.

This teaching of Jesus reminds us that though our behavior is important, what is in our hearts is more important. The question is what should we have in our hearts? The answer is love. Love is what should be in our hearts; first, love for God and the second, like the first, love for each other because of God. That is what should be in our hearts.

The couple in our story started out with their hearts in the right place. But like in the parable of the sower in Mark’s Gospel, chap. 4:18-19, in which Jesus explained to His disciples, **“worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit.”**

The long list of things Jesus mentioned in our reading might scare us to ask the question who then can be saved? We get distracted during prayers, we get angry at other people, and we may feel envious, or greedy, or proud and might allow impure thoughts to hang around for too long in our hearts.

However, we must remember that Christ came to us not because we are perfect but because we need His help to get to God. Jesus will help us if we ask Him. All Jesus wants to do for us is to fill our hearts with is love so we can love God and because of Him, so we will always treat one another with kindness and lovingly. Jesus wants us to be like Him.

As we come to the table to receive His flesh and Blood let us ask Him for His help so we can be like Him.