# “Supremacy of God’s commandments”

During the time of Jesus there were two types of traditions among the Jews. The “great tradition” of the elders practiced in the cities required external cleanness. The Pharisees and Scribes challenged Jesus for not enforcing this tradition among His disciples. Since, in the cities, water was easily available, it was easy to obey the traditions of the elders in the cities. In this tradition, not washing hands before eating was considered a sin, so were not cleaning the outside of cups and other cleanness things. It is like asking us to wash our hands at a picnic before eating hamburger or asking us to wash our hands before eating a hotdog at a ball game and should we neglect to do so, we have committed a sin. I think most of us will feel put off by such demands.

The other tradition called the “little tradition,” was practiced by the peasants who lived in the rural areas. They did not have easy access to water. This tradition was probably practiced by Jesus and the Apostles. Therefore the city sleeker Pharisees and scribes who came down from the big city Jerusalem were scandalized by what the apostles were doing because they did not wash their hands before eating.

However, Jesus the great teacher turned the table against the Pharisees and Scribe by accusing them of neglecting God’s laws in favor of their elder’s laws; laws that were not written in their Bible. Often their traditions contradict God’s laws handed down by 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 defile. Jesus just gave them the go ahead to eat beacon and catfish and any animal they wanted.

This news must have blown away the minds of the people 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. Jesus explained to His Apostles when they got home that what we eat does not 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. Love for God and love for each other which according to Jesus are the two greatest commandments. Jesus tells us that His hearers were doing the right things however; their hearts were not in the right place. Their hearts were not directed toward God and He quoted Isaiah to make this point “This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

The long list of things Jesus mentioned 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 in our hearts too long. 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 is to fill our hearts with is love so we can love God and treat one another in a kind and loving way. 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.