

JESUS SAID WHAT?!!

18th July 2021 – week 3

HillSide's Minister – Rev' Allan Booth

THE KEY TO LIVING A PURE LIFE.

*The world says: Try every sin, just don't get caught.
Jesus says: Make a radical break with sin in your heart.*

Matthew 5: 27-30

Adultery

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'^[a] ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Some thing we must get our minds around, is that sin same into the human experience very soon after the beginning. As the creation story reminds us, and men love reminding women; sin began when Eve took that bite of an apple. That simple action is the root of sin. So there it is... don't eat apples and you will be pure enough to march straight into heaven. Of course none of us is that naïve... at least I hope not. The mother of all sin is the thought that we can be equal to God. This leads us to thinking that we do not have to take God seriously, that perhaps belief in God is an illusion that we do not have to participate in. Which in turn means that we do not have to worry about sin and consequences; except for when something is done against us personally, but then we have lawyers to take care of such matters.

The trouble with not taking God seriously, and therefore sin, is that it is such fun to act without fear of consequence. The events of the last week in KZN and here in Gauteng have sprung from a well of disrespect of authority; the misguided belief that the state is powerless. This is not the place to unpack the tragedy, it is enough to remind ourselves that defiance of the law ignited the flame that has burnt through our national infrastructure. It is true that when we lose respect for God, we lose respect for authority. It is also true that followers of Jesus are called to uphold the laws of the land they live in. Therefore in which ever way we can, we must live as examples of the transformative presence of Jesus within us.

However today we are dealing with a higher call on our lives, that of living a pure life. If we could ever be sin free, how do we get there? I could list the obvious guidelines like avoid been in places where you might give in to temptation. Or deal decisively with deception, in other words don't be a sucker, treat every situation with discernment. Eve could've said no thank you. But I want to take a different line...

A friend of mine works in the field of Emotional Intelligence, a fairly recent but more accurate way of measuring human behaviour. Something that has become evident is that in any personal crisis six seconds is enough time to modify your initial reaction. For instance a client might say something particularly unreasonable, your initial reaction might be to tell him he's being an idiot. But six seconds

allows you enough time to gather your emotions, consider the consequence, and then tell him there might be a better way of understanding the situation in which you can both move forward. In other words pause, consider, clarify then respond.

When we apply that understanding, along with today's gospel portion we discover a key to growing toward a pure life. Jesus as he often does is using exaggeration to teach us that sin is a very serious thing, never to be taken lightly. Imagine the first hearers response to 'it is better to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.' Shock would be reasonable. However if it was meant as it is written there would not be a follower of Jesus with all limbs and eyes in place. Jesus also implies that even the thought is sin.. does that mean we must stop thinking too?

What Jesus teaches about sin is that we should never diminish it's consequence and we should take every effort to avoid it. With emotional intelligence we can add think before we act. Acknowledge the situation you find yourself in, think it through to all the consequences of your actions. Then choose to follow Jesus in your response. To use Biblical characters as example lean more toward a Joseph in Potiphar's bedroom than a David on the roof of the palace.

A pure life is beyond our ability as ordinary men and women in the 21st century, however we can draw heavily on the presence of the Holy Spirit in each of our lives. The Spirit of the living God will nurture and encourage us toward the Godly pure life we are all called to.

Let's ask for the help we need:

Precious Holy Spirit we are just ordinary people living in a sinful world; we do not have the strength nor resilience to live a pure life. We are in desperate need of your strength, discernment and guidance every moment of every day. Fill us again, renew us yet again and lead us toward perfection we pray. In the name of the father and of the Son and in yours Holy Spirit. Amen.