



REFLECTIONS

May 3, 2015

**"Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:
"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.'
You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."**

Mark 7:6, 8

Hypocrites

There was so much to learn. It would really take more than a lifetime to learn about life and how to live it; and time with the teacher would be limited to a mere three years. So the class was kept small. Only twelve were selected to walk with him. Much later the class would figure out that there was no greater teacher. He was the creator.

Time went by quickly in the course of those three short years with the Teacher. They dined with him, they laughed with him; and they prayed with him. They touched him and he touched them. They were ordinary men. Only their select relationship with the Teacher made them special. Otherwise they were just as committed to the traditions of men as the Pharisees. They questioned the Teacher when they found him talking to a Samaritan woman by Jacob's well. They admonished him for mingling with sinners; and they failed to understand his willingness to protect an adulterous woman from the punishment the law required. But these were only a few of his many lessons. *"If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone,"* He challenged.

Although his expectations of them were low, he rebuked them for not understanding. Once Jesus turned to one of them, and said, *"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."* (Matthew 16:23) No, the class wasn't perfect; yet these were the very men trained personally by the Teacher and commissioned to go into all the world to make disciples.

They did just that. They told the stories of his healing power, of his many miracles, and of the depth of his love. They told of their despair from his death and the hope from his glorious resurrection from the tomb. The message they carried was not about their own righteousness. It was that *God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.* (John 3:17)

Today our churches are filled with the unrighteous—hypocrites some might say and I am among the worst of them. Like the small class the Teacher trained, all too often we *honor God with [our] lips, but let go of the commands of God and hold to the traditions of men.* Hypocrites some might say. But righteousness is not the message we need to send. The message is one of forgiveness through his grace.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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