

Read Mark 7.1-8,14-15,21-23

You may like to use this material as a basis for discussion in your family.

Can you think of a time when you didn't tell the truth? Perhaps there was an occasion when you thought one thing but said something different. You may have thought that other people would like you better for what you said rather than what you thought.

Jesus says that God knows what we are thinking, and what is in our hearts. He says that our words and actions should reflect the good things in our heart. Jesus was in the middle of a discussion with the Pharisees when he said this. The Pharisees were a group who tried to keep every part of the Jewish law very strictly. Most of them felt that Jesus was not strict enough. The Pharisees were very concerned with rituals (in other words, a series of actions that must be completed in a certain order). In this discussion they were talking about washing hands before eating. They said that Jesus' disciples were not washing their hands properly and this was disrespectful to God.



We all know that we should wash our hands regularly. This has been very important during the recent coronavirus pandemic. It was suggested that we sang a song as we washed our hands – do you remember which song it was? Washing hands is a way of ensuring that we do not pass on germs and become ill. But for the Pharisees this was part of the law of Moses and had become a religious ritual.

Jesus was concerned that the Pharisees were too concerned with the action of washing their hands rather than thinking about God. Washing hands before eating should have been like saying a prayer before having a meal, but the Pharisees were thinking more about the actual hand washing rather than talking to God. They wanted everyone to see what they were doing and say that they were holy people. The Pharisees were so focused on the rules about keeping clean that they forgot about looking after the inside – their hearts.

Are we good at saying one thing to please people but have a different way of acting when people are not looking? God knows what is in our minds and our hearts. How do your words and actions reflect what is in your heart?

Activity



- Write a prayer on a small piece of paper. Make sure that it is something personal, something that is on your heart or mind at the moment. Use some play dough or clay to create a small heart shape and put your prayer inside the play dough. No one else can see your prayer – only God can see what is in your heart.

Prayer

Forgive us, Lord, for times when our words are not loving, our actions are not kind, and our thoughts are not caring. Help us always to live as you would have us live. Amen.