



WEEK 4 DEVOTIONAL

MARCH 20, 2023

Today, is the Fourth week of Lent.

Welcome to the table.

Take a moment to pause and breath in and out slowly.

Rest in knowing that God welcomes you to His grace filled table.

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“Dad, are you ready to be real?” Is something I often hear from my 20-something daughter.

When I do, I know to stop what I’m doing and look at her phone which by this time is poised to capture this moment in our lives.

She takes one with the selfie-back facing camera and then one with the front facing camera.

The social app, *Be Real*, has the tagline “a way to discover who your friends really are in their daily life.” When the random daily notification comes, you have two minutes to take your pictures. No staging, no likes, no prepping, no follower count and no faking. *Be Real* and let us see your life.

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How much energy do you put towards keeping up outward appearances of your life?

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Taking a step further, how much of your life is staged and rehearsed as opposed to being real?

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We join Jesus today, as He accepts the invitation to the table of a Pharisee. A religious leader. Someone who by all external appearances in that day and time, would have been looked at as being close to God.

As we join Jesus, at the table, listen for the perspective Jesus offers. A perspective that helps us realize where God is looking for us to be real in our own life.

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As Jesus was speaking, one of the Pharisees invited Him home for a meal. So He went in and took His place at the table. His host was amazed to see that He sat down to eat without first performing the hand-washing ceremony required by Jewish custom. Then the Lord said to him, "You Pharisees are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and wickedness! Fools! Didn't God make the inside as well as the outside? So clean the inside by giving gifts to the poor, and you will be clean all over.

"What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.

“What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you love to sit in the seats of honor in the synagogues and receive respectful greetings as you walk in the marketplaces. Yes, what sorrow awaits you! For you are like hidden graves in a field. People walk over them without knowing the corruption they are stepping on.”

“Teacher,” said an expert in religious law, “you have insulted us, too, in what You just said.”

“Yes,” said Jesus, “what sorrow also awaits you experts in religious law! For you crush people with unbearable religious demands, and you never lift a finger to ease the burden. What sorrow awaits you! For you build monuments for the prophets your own ancestors killed long ago. But in fact, you stand as witnesses who agree with what your ancestors did. They killed the prophets, and you join in their crime by building the monuments! This is what God in His wisdom said about you: ‘I will send prophets and apostles to them, but they will kill some and persecute the others.’

“As a result, this generation will be held responsible for the murder of all God’s prophets from the creation of the world—from the murder of Abel to the murder of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, it will certainly be charged against this generation.

“What sorrow awaits you experts in religious law! For you remove the key to knowledge from the people. You don’t enter the Kingdom yourselves, and you prevent others from entering.”

As Jesus was leaving, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees became hostile and tried to provoke Him with many questions.

Luke 11:37–53, NLT

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We are not used to Jesus speaking so strongly, so starkly to people. What stirs in you, as you hear Jesus speak these stern words to His host and those gathered around that table?

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When do you find yourself more concerned about what others think or make a good “show” of things, than you care about how your heart looks to God?

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Reflecting on that admittedly hard question, can you discern any patterns? Is the “show” for certain people? Does it happen when you feel stressed or overwhelmed?

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What is the Holy Spirit trying to show you in this uncomfortable but very formational question?

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To help us really hear the intensity and pointedness of what Jesus was sharing at the table, we will hear today’s Scripture again, through the perspective of the Message rendering of the Scriptures.

As you listen, where do you find this table in the ordinary moments of your life? Is Jesus encouraging you to notice where in your external life does not match your internal life?

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When He finished that talk, a Pharisee asked Him to dinner. He entered his house and sat right down at the table. The Pharisee was shocked and somewhat offended when he saw that Jesus didn’t wash up before the meal. But the Master said to him, “I know you Pharisees buff the surface of your cups and plates so they sparkle in the sun, but I also know your insides are maggoty with greed and secret evil. Stupid Pharisees! Didn’t the One who made the outside also make the inside? Turn both your pockets and your hearts inside out and give generously to the poor; then your lives will be clean, not just your dishes and your hands.

"I've had it with you! You're hopeless, you Pharisees! Frauds! You keep meticulous account books, tithing on every nickel and dime you get, but manage to find loopholes for getting around basic matters of justice and God's love. Careful bookkeeping is commendable, but the basics are required.

"You're hopeless, you Pharisees! Frauds! You love sitting at the head table at church dinners, love preening yourselves in the radiance of public flattery. Frauds! You're just like unmarked graves: People walk over that nice, grassy surface, never suspecting the rot and corruption that is six feet under."

One of the religion scholars spoke up: "Teacher, do you realize that in saying these things you're insulting us?"

He said, "Yes, and I can be even more explicit. You're hopeless, you religion scholars! You load people down with rules and regulations, nearly breaking their backs, but never lift even a finger to help.

"You're hopeless! You build tombs for the prophets your ancestors killed. The tombs you build are monuments to your murdering ancestors more than to the murdered prophets. That accounts for God's Wisdom saying, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, but they'll kill them and run them off.' What it means is that every drop of righteous blood ever spilled from the time earth began until now, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was struck down between altar and sanctuary, is on your heads. Yes, it's on the bill of this generation and this generation will pay.

"You're hopeless, you religion scholars! You took the key of knowledge, but instead of unlocking doors, you locked them. You won't go in yourself, and won't let anyone else in either."

As soon as Jesus left the table, the religion scholars and Pharisees went into a rage. They went over and over everything He said, plotting how they could trap Him in something from His own mouth.

Luke 11:37-53, MSG

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There are few things that keep us from God, than that of religious pride. With religious pride, we can't be real because we are looking down on everyone else and not looking up to God to transform us from the inside out.

C.S. Lewis put it this way, *"Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind...As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud [person] is always looking down on things and people: and of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you."*

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If Jesus sent you a spiritual *Be Real* request right now, what would your pictures capture? Would they capture you looking down on everyone or would they capture you looking right at Jesus?

How would your friends and family answer this question on your behalf?

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In these final moments today, you might be hesitant to come to the table and talk with Jesus because of the stern words you have heard Him share with the Pharisees in today's Scripture.

But recognize Jesus offers those stern words for those who have shut off their ears and hearts to Him. It's one of the last ways He was trying to invite them into relationship at His table.

So, for you today, you are here, you are listening to His words at His table. Jesus is eager to continue that conversation between friends at His table. Picture now the smile of Jesus as you share with Him what has stirred in you from today's table story.

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Come!

Come to the table!

Jesus is expecting you!