



Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Matthew 23:23-26.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier things of the law: judgment and mercy and fidelity. (But) these you should have done, without neglecting the others. Blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You cleanse the outside of cup and dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may be clean.

Matthew 23:23-26

Introductory Prayer:

Lord, I come to you again in prayer. Even though I cannot see you, I know through faith that you are present in my life. I hope in your promise to be with me. I love you, and I know you love me. Accept this prayer as a token of my love.

Petition:

Lord, help me to dedicate my life to weightier matters rather than mere appearances.

1. Tithed Up in Knots:

When God originally commanded his people to tithe, it was so that they would acknowledge him as the source of all the gifts in their lives. It was to be the recognition on their part that all they had was from him, that he is Lord, and that his law is the way to salvation. Yet it became easy for the Israelites to fall into legalism and forget the true purpose of the tithe. They observed the letter of the law and forgot the meaning of the law: acknowledge the sovereignty of God. In the end, all we are and all we have belongs to God. We have to use our talents, wealth and possessions all for him and his kingdom. Is there some area in which I do not acknowledge his sovereignty in my life?

2. What Really Counts:

What are the weightier matters of the law? Jesus speaks of justice and mercy and faith. When we neglect these, we are distorting true religion, for true religion is not a question

of formalisms and actions to appease God, but rather of turning our hearts to his word. We need to make our hearts more like his, in charity and mercy toward others. How many times do we miss the most important things and work only at side issues? How often do we try to please God in the wrong way, by supposing we are doing his will when really we are only doing our own will instead? How often do we forget the true essence of devotion to the law of God?

3. Interior Cleaning:

"First clean the inside of the cup..." We should tend to our soul and make sure the intentions behind our actions are holy motivations. We need to check our heart frequently so that we can work with purity of intention. Sometimes we work only to present an appearance to others, to appear virtuous and holy, but inside we are filled with negative judgments, such as lack of charity. Virtue comes from within the heart of a person, where the Spirit dwells and inspires as he wills. We need to be attentive to the Holy Spirit and follow his lead.

Conversation with Christ:

Lord, you know what is in my heart. Purify it and recast it in the image of your divine heart, so that I may love you and love others as you love them. Let me put aside all vanity and desire for appearances that does not give glory to you.

Resolution:

I will examine my conscience as to the motives of my actions each day, making sure I am inspired by mercy, justice and faith.