

The older my godson, Kingston, gets (now 5.3),  
the more active he is and the more time we get to spend together.

We've enjoyed a summer full of activities:

reading stories, drawing, painting, swimming lessons,  
playing xylophone, PedalHeads bicycle camp,  
Social Group that meets twice a week at the UW's EEU,  
and most of all, riding Seattle Streetcars -  
on every alignment & every color.

All of that to say

that the repeating words from his momma, when he walks in is,  
"Before you do anything, go wash you're hands"!

Stop germs, stay healthy, wash hands often for 20 seconds...

is the King County Health campaign sign posted in every Streetcar.

He is her heart & the center of her love & life - this is just one way she shows it.

At the core of the Jewish tradition is the double commandment  
to love God & neighbor.

As generation succeeded generation,  
many ancillary traditions were created

to adapt this love of God & neighbor to new situations.

In theory, these traditions are always secondary to the center,  
to the loving heart of the tradition itself.

They are evaluated by how they correspond to this center & heart.

However, in practice, these traditions became functionally autonomous.

They took on a life of their own.

The distinction between the center & the periphery,  
the heart & the lips was obscured.

So, the valid question of embodying the center & the heart  
is reduced to an obsession with externals.

Also, the center & the heart are inside.

They cannot be observed & measured directly.

The traditions are external behaviors and often deal with objects:  
certain foods, cups, pots, bronze kettles....

These are able to be seen and scrutinized.

The heart may be hidden, but hands are available for inspection!

Those who see themselves as guardians of the tradition  
are prone to police them.

They ask trivial questions

because they have forgotten the important question.

They no longer know the difference between

God's commandment & human customs.

But Jesus, the Son of God, lives out of the heart & center.  
He prophetically confronts their hypocrisy,  
their inability to to adequately hold together  
the inner love of God & neighbor  
and the outer ways that love should be embodied.

Jesus is concerned about moral defilement -how evil comes into the world.  
This happens in the exact opposite way of ritual impurity.  
Defilement begins & develops in the human heart,  
in the cultivation of evil thoughts, intentions, & imaginings.  
People/we work from the inside out -  
and if our minds are full of the things Jesus lists here,  
then these become the drivers of actions.

The Pharisees & Scribes are obsessed with ritual defilement  
and the external world.  
Jesus' attention is on the internal world  
& the moral havoc it unleashes,  
and he's intent on finding the drivers of immoral behavior.

Although Jesus authoritatively points to the human heart  
and lists its evil imaginings,  
the actual drivers of destructive behavior  
are often not easy to discover.  
This is especially true if you're trying to find your own -  
I know it's true for me.  
But often the drivers are unconscious...  
and not classically evil like the list of Jesus.  
They are more pitiful, benighted, and stupid.  
Still they unfold into dangerous actions.

Therefore, an ally in righteous living is self knowledge.  
Knowing the hidden holdings of the mind  
is usually a blow to any scrubbed-up persona,  
any idealized self-image.  
As we become more aware of what drives us,  
we become free to cooperate or resist.

Ask God for wisdom and it will be given you. James 1  
Christ is in you.  
You are the heart & center of God's love.  
You are the heart & center of Jesus' life.  
Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children,  
and walk in love, as Christ loved us. Ephesians 5.12