

Blindness and Scrupulosity Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time Tuesday,
August 26, 2014 8:15 AM 2 Thes 2:1-3a, 14-17; **Mt 23:23-26** (A lack of recognition
where there should be recognition. A tendency people have of over focusing on something
small and ignoring really major things.)

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites.”

The English word “hypocrite” has the connotation that does not necessarily come from the Greek. In English when we say someone is a hypocrite, we mean someone is deliberately duplicitous, saying one thing but doing another. That’s not implied here. Rather **what is being applied is that there is a blindness**—there is a blindness. **There’s a lack of recognition where there should be recognition.** There is a paying attention to what is external, the outside of the cup, and no awareness of what’s going on inside the cup.

This of course is a metaphor for human consciousness. The outside of the cup is outward comportment, behavior, following the Law. The inside of the cup is one’s mind. **What is the origin of all evil? It’s the mind.** The mind conjures up evil way before it ever becomes an external act. This is what Jesus is getting at. If you really want to be holy, “Your holiness has to surpass that of the scribes and the Pharisees,” meaning **your holiness can’t just be outward. It has to be inside of you.** You have to have holy thoughts. You have to have holy feelings. And you have to therefore confront those that could lead you into, shall we say, murder or adultery or theft or whatever. **You have to confront them as thoughts. You have to confront them as feelings.** That’s the first part. **That’s hypocrite as actor,** which actually is the meaning of the Greek word—“actor.” An actor cares about the role, the words, the part he or she is playing, not what he or she is actually thinking inside. So that’s the first part.

The second part, **“hypocrite” can also mean “hypercritic.”** This hypercriticism is **“straining the gnat and swallowing the camel,”** also called **“scrupulosity.”** In scrupulosity, again, this is not something people choose to be; it’s something they are stuck with. But **it makes a person unfit to be a guide.** That’s the point in this whole text: blind guides. The blindness is not really blameworthy, but trying to be a guide is if you are blind. It’s not appropriate. And this is meant for the Church as much as for Jesus’ own group at his time. That’s why it’s in Matthew’s Gospel. It’s meant for Matthew’s Church. **It’s meant for our Church. Those who are blind have no business trying to guide others.**

Now this **scrupulosity**, what’s it about? Well, it’s **a tendency people have of over focusing on something, something small**, something petty, little, a gnat, “straining the gnat.” And that goes along with **ignoring really major things.** It is a kind of behavior that is actually in the books of modern psychology. They do talk about it. It’s a problem. It besets some people.

So what is the “camel”? **Here the camel is ignoring judgment and mercy and fidelity.** That’s something big. It’s being ignored. Some people say, “Well, we are not talking about the ‘elephant in the room.’” Well, this is saying **some people don’t see the elephant in the room.** Not everyone sees the same thing. **There are ways we can blot out all kinds of reality.** But in order to do that, **we have to overdo something else. We have to really focus on something small and insignificant.** Again, this is not something deliberant. No one would do this deliberately. But **it’s a flaw that one has to deal with; and not to deal with it, that’s a problem.** “Cleanse first the inside of the cup”—take care of all these issues; **face yourself**—“so that the outside also may be clean.”