

Dirty-Handed Christians...A Dirty Beginning!

Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7

September 8, 2019

We live in a society that is obsessed with clean hands. For most of us this obsession began as a young child. Your mom called out that dinner was ready. You rushed to the table only to be asked the question, "Did you wash your hands?" Anyone here ever try to fake your parents out by going into the bathroom and running the sink water but never getting your hands wet? Or maybe you at least ran your hands under the water but never used soap!

When you go into a restroom at a restaurant or store there is posted the sign,
"All employees must wash hands before returning to work."

Anytime you visit a family member or friend in the hospital there are sanitizer dispensers in the halls and in the patient's rooms. I get that!

Even in the grocery stores there are sanitizer wipes as you enter to wipe down the handle of the shopping cart!

How many of you have your personal hand sanitizer with you? Do you realize that one of the dirtiest things you handle out in public is a menu at a restaurant. Did you sanitize your hands before that meal?

Clean hands, free of contagious germs...I get that!
But when it comes to being a follower of Jesus we need to put away the sanitizer and get our hands dirty...Dirty-Handed Christians!

Today we begin a series of messages on "Dirty-Handed Christians." We will dig in to a dirty-handed: Creator, Healer, common laborer, ritual breaker, heavenly hands and dinner servant.

Leonard Sweet, in his book, "The Bad Habits of Jesus," wrote these dirty words about a dirty challenge for those who desire to be a dirty-handed follower of Jesus:

"For Jesus, clean hands reveal a dirty heart; but dirty hands reveal a clean heart.

In fact, our entry into the Pearly Gates may hinge on this question: 'Let me see your hands. Have you gotten your hands dirty for the sake of the gospel?'"

Take a look at your hands. Are they clean or dirty?
It is my prayer that by the time we finish this series of messages we will have dirty-hands! I want us to be dirty-handed Christians.

The best way to get your hands dirty is to do what?
Dig in some dirt! (Pull out the bag of dirt and dig in it)
My hands are definitely dirty now! This will be great for serving communion!

The reason this bag of dirt is here is not so we can come up and get our hands dirty before communion. This bag of dirt is here as a reminder of our dirty beginning!
In the beginning God created you and me out of dirt. You and I come from dirty ancestors. We have a family tree that is deeply rooted in dirt.

We read that God created man out of dirt. Adam was created from dirt. It is interesting to note that the word for man is "*a-dam.*" (Genesis 2:7)

The word for dirt or ground is "*a-da-mah!*"
Man and dirt come from the same root word.

This bag of dirt is our dirty beginning.
However, God didn't leave Adam in his dust. God created man in His image. (Genesis 1:26)

To be created in God's image doesn't mean we have some physical or similar biological make up as God. When you have a new baby born into the family people try to figure out who the baby resembles. They are checking out the outward physical features to see whose image they look like the most. This is not what we mean when we talk about being made in the image of God.

Being created in the image of God doesn't mean that we have some spark of the divine in us. We are not mini gods. We are humans. It is a pagan religion to think we can elevate ourselves to the Creator or the Creator to our level.

Jeremiah, the prophet, was quite clear about this when God told him to take a visit to the potter's house. (Jeremiah 18:2-4) The same word used about the forming of man is the same word used about the potter forming a vessel out of a lump of clay.

As the potter molded or shaped a clay pot on the potter's wheel, defects often appeared. The potter had power over the clay, to permit the defects to remain or to reshape the pot. Our response is to be willing and receptive to God's shaping and impact on our lives. He is the Creator. He is the Potter, we are the clay. As we begin to yield to God, He begins to reshape us into vessels He can use to bring Him glory.

To be created in the image of God means we have been given the capacity to think, to plan, to choose, to love, to hate, to pray, and to praise!

To be created in the image of God means we have been created to have a **RELATIONSHIP** with the Creator. We can speak with Him. We can hear Him speaking to us thru His Word. In this relationship we have the choice to obey or disobey.

This true relationship with the Creator can only be complete when it becomes a **REALITY!** That reality of a relationship happens when we accept God's image of love in us thru Jesus. We are to have the image of Jesus in our daily lives.

This image of a real relationship is to be **REFLECTED** in our daily. We are to reflect His image in our world. People are to see Jesus in us. We are to be holy as He is holy. We are to be true as He is true. We are to be faithful as He is faithful. We are to forgive as He forgives. We are to serve as He serves. We are to love as He loves. We are to be humble as He is humble.

None of this is possible without the BREATH OF GOD, the Holy Spirit, in us. God breathed life into Adam. (Genesis 2:7)
Without the breath of God in us we are nothing more than a bag of dirt...a bunch of dirt bags!

With the breath of God in us we become a living soul.
This bag of dirt should keep any of us from thinking we are all that!

Our dirty beginning should destroy all pretensions of self-sufficiency.

A bag of dirt minus the breath of God= Nothing

A bag of dirt plus the breath of God=A Living being with a dirty beginning.

In God, our Creator, we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28)

David, the dirty-handed shepherd, realized how amazing was his dirty beginning when he wrote:

"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor." (Psalm 8:3-5 NIV)

Have you ever had that "dirty beginning thought?"

You look at the amazing creation all around you and wonder, "Who am I but a bag of dirt?"

Then you stop and realize that God has breathed His life into you. You realize just how much He loves and cares for you as His creation. He sees you as more than just a bag of dirt. He sees worth and value in you. You realize, "I am a bag of 'miracle gro' dirt! I am a miracle creation that is to grow into the likeness of Jesus."

You and I have a dirty beginning. We have been formed into the image of God. We are called to reflect that relationship we have with Him to those around us. His breath of life gives us the choice to be a bag of dirt or a dirty-handed follower of Jesus.

Our dirty beginning also has a dirty ending.

"And the dust (dirt) returns to the ground it came from and the spirit returns to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7)

Stripped of God's Spirit our physical bodies return to dirt. With the breath of God in us we discover resurrection bodies that will live forever. We put God first over all we do and in all we do because without Him we are simply a bag of dirt. With God's breath in us, His Holy Spirit, we are given life...life beyond death...life forever. (John 20:22)

Our dirty beginning hearts pray the words of Edward Hatch the hymn writer:

"Breathe on me Breath of God fill me with life anew, that I may love what thou dost love and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me Breath of God, until my heart is pure, until with thee I will one will, to do and to endure.

Breathe on me Breath of God, till I am wholly thine, till all this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me Breath of God, so shall I never die, but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity."

As you celebrate communion, remember the sacrificial love of Jesus in your life.

As you do so give thanks to God the Father for your dirty beginning.

As you leave the altar go with the power of His Holy Spirit in you to live the life of a dirty-handed Christian.