

Defiled



Both James and Jesus (through Mark) teach about defilement in today's passages. You know, I don't think I ever heard a sermon about defilement. I don't remember preaching one in 30 years. Which is strange.

At a recent Ayahuasca ceremony I received a teaching about purging. I've written about it elsewhere, but briefly, if one is serious about the spiritual journey and being in relationship with G-d, then everything that is not love will need to be purged. In the context of this ceremony, that means something quite literal. You barf. Repeatedly. Along with twenty or so other pilgrims, who are actively being cleansed of impurities—physical, emotional, energetic, spiritual. It's quite a scene. Humorous in retrospect, but not so funny when you're in the trenches.

The word "defile" comes from the Old French "defouler", to foul, or to trample down. What is being trampled down is one's own essential nature, and the nature of the Source out of which we came. This is why another definition for defilement is desecration. We are desecrating what is most holy in the act of defilement.

Jesus gave a smack down to the religious guys, who believed themselves to be clean and pure, because they engaged in various purity rituals, all of which had to do with keeping *external* impurities out. But, Jesus clarifies, it's not about that. It's about purging *internal* impurities, attitudes, false beliefs, secret judgments about others, withering self-judgment, along with my personal favourite, pride.

Pride is the way the compensated self (ego), which does not feel special (because of trauma), reassures itself that it is special. Invariably this requires that I be more special than somebody else, that I be unique, and seen for my uniqueness—extra special.

The ceremony heals trauma, and with that compassion for self and others comes on line. This is how you know that ego has taken its proper place in the back seat, rather than the driver's seat. But after a lifetime habit of having to manufacture specialness I found as I was meditating in the following days and weeks, that thought would arise: "You said something really smart, there Bruce. I'm sure they saw how unique your experience was. The shaman will probably single you out for special attention" etc. But because the medicine had heightened my awareness, it took about a millisecond to recognize what was going on. I felt sick inside. That voice was actually offensive. It was defiling of my essential nature. I immediately purged.

But not in self-disgust. Not in self-judgment. This is the interesting thing. Once soul is in the driver's seat, you understand why the false self was conjuring up all this specialness. Somebody had to do it. And you did it because, wait for it, you were not being made to feel special by those whose job it was to do so. Your essential goodness and radiance and delightful self was not being mirrored back to you. So, you took on the job yourself. But when it is a compensating gesture, it is defiling. And it can be felt by everybody, on an energetic level.

Unfortunately, religious people are the best at hiding it. We hide it by being "good". But being good doesn't touch the inner defilement. The Pharisees and the priests were "good". But they leaked pride. We all do it if we're "religious". The pressure is on to be good. A lot of us join a church because we feel like we want to be better people. Fair enough. But when being "good" does little more than conceal our personal

and collective shadow, it desecrates. It does so because we don't give ourselves the chance to see the ways that our false selves compensated, which means we don't see how hurt we've been, which means we deny ourselves the opportunity of loving our broken selves, which means we can't love others genuinely, which means we are not expressing the essential nature of G_d, which is sickening, that is, it makes us sick. It is toxic. And it makes our gestures inauthentic, even if they look good. And everybody knows. Including ourselves, once we consent to the terms of the sacred covenant—to have taken from us everything that is not love.

Much more could be said about defilement. There is a direct connection, for example, between the defiling of our essential nature and the defiling of Earth. If we cannot feel from within when we have defiled self/G_d, there is no way to feel from within the indignity of our beloved Mother. For another post...

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

7:1 Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him,

7:2 they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them.

7:3 (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders;

7:4 and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.)

7:5 So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"

7:6 He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you

hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me;

7:7 in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.'

7:8 You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

7:14 Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand:

7:15 there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile."

7:21 For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder,

7:22 adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly.

7:23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

James 1:17-27

1:17 Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

1:18 In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

1:19 You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger;

1:20 for your anger does not produce God's righteousness.

1:21 Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

1:22 But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.

1:23 For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror;

1:24 for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like.

1:25 But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

1:26 If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless.

1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.