

Ofsted for Religion!

Deuteronomy 4^{1-2,6-9}; Psalm 15; James 1^{17-end}; Mark 7^{1-8,14,15,21-23}

Make them known to you children and your children's children. [Deuteronomy 4⁹]

On Bank Holiday Monday I had to take two of our granddaughters back home and, having been persuaded to change my CD of Anglican Choral Music for something much noisier, they began to compare notes on their parents. I learnt so much about their respective home-lives and about what sort of parents two of our children had become. As a very wise man once said, *out of the mouths of babes and infants comes a lot of what they should have swallowed.*

Our children (and grandchildren) - or those who live closest to us - are the mirror in which we see our faith reflected back to us. What do you see coming back to you?

When the Pentateuch tells us to **give heed to the statutes and ordinances** upon which their access to God's promise is dependent, it is clear that the author expects that it will be something that will be envied by their neighbouring nations, adding to the reputation of the nation and of their God.

That is straightforward in its way, but living out our faith in a way that impresses our children and grandchildren (or your nephews and nieces or..), that is something more difficult - they know us and they see us when the doors are closed!

One of the things that anyone involved with education today knows is the constant shadow of the Ofsted inspections with its grading of schools, teaching and learning. If there was an inspector for how effective would our teaching and learning be?

The readings for today would break the terms of the inspection down to two things: how responsible we are for ourselves; and how responsible we are for others.

- ✦ The Psalm and the Epistle all contribute to an understanding of what Jesus calls **hypocrisy**, which is his summary of his quote from Isaiah, when Jesus quotes, **this people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.**
- ✦ Jesus takes the view, to show the Pharisees that their insistence on appearing to do the right thing is the wrong priority, that **evil things come from**

within. Whatever veneer we manage to create, eventually (especially to those closest to us) what will emerge (Jesus' sample list is in the text for us: **fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride and folly.**)

- ✦ James focuses on the stability and dependability of God and then gives me very practical advice. We are told to be **doers of the word and not merely hearers** and that if we want to have a religion that isn't **worthless** we should **bridle [our] tongues.** This is where those who live with us know best what we say when we think no-one else hears.
- ✦ A religion that is worthy of God is stated as: **to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.**

Children are like God - they aren't convinced by words, but by what we think important enough to live.