

In my garden I have several apple tree but one of them is a beautiful tree. You know if you draw a nice tree it is just like that, a perfect shape. Its branches are even, it is the first to blossom in spring and it is first to produce apples in early August. I don't know what variety it is because I bought it as a plum tree. When the apples come they are bright red and beautiful, they shine and glisten among the dark green leaves it is a beautiful sight. But when you taste the apples they are horrible and when you cut them in half they have maggots and flies in them.

This is just what Jesus is telling the pharisees and scribes it is not what you are outside that matters it is what you are like inside. Just like my apple tree they are first to get to the temple, they make a big show of their ritual cleaning, they are first in the temple they make a big entrance saying "look at me I do everything right, I am the best the most devout", but inside just like my apples they are rotten. They are mean, dishonest, deceitful, slanderous, wicked, full of pride and folly. They are not what they seem on the outside.

Well I don't waste my apples. I pick them and take them into the kitchen and cut all the bad bits out. Then I cook them to a pulp, strain them in a bag overnight then I make them into apple jelly. It is delicious. I think some of you know my grandson Barney from open the book at Yeoford, well it is his favorite he always has it on his toast when he comes to breakfast. Apple jelly from this particular tree has a sort of pinkish tinge because of the very red apples so it looks and tastes good.

Well Jesus can do this to us as well. He can take us and shake us up cut out all the bad bits and change us and then make us into something special. So when you cut us open you can see kindness, truthfulness, goodness, honesty, humility, faithfulness and happiness.

So would you like to be like the lovely red apples looking so good but not so good inside or perhaps you would like to be sweet and delicious like the apple jelly.

Jesus doesn't give up on anyone. There is always good in everyone even the Scribes and Pharisees. They follow the law to the letter not letting anything get in the way. To be honest the laws of cleanliness are very sensible. It is a very good idea to wash your hands before you eat especially as they did in those days and eat with their fingers. But they took it to the extreme and were so keen that everyone saw that they were so good washing and showing off that they were so good turning up at the temple first that they forgot about God's laws of being kind and good from the inside, so that God's love shines out of them. Jesus never tells anyone that the laws don't matter but they have to abide by God's laws and not make a big show of keeping the laws that people can see. It is much more important to be humble and follow Jesus teaching quietly and conscientiously, helping people and being kind in a unassuming way.

Jesus was kind and considerate, loving and generous, he loved us all and that is just how he expects us to be. To love each other just as he loved us.