

Message #24

Mark 7:14-23

We are living in a time in which there are cameras almost everywhere we go. There are cameras on our phones, there are security cameras in homes and businesses and it is even suggested that there are cameras watching us in our computers or from our television sets. Now you could take a camera and document your life from the moment you get up until the moment you go to bed. You could record everything you externally do all day. But no matter how great the camera, it could not actually see what was going on in your mind or heart. Truth is a camera could record the external, but it could not record the internal. From the external, things could look good; but from the internal, things could be a completely different picture. **No matter what one does externally, it cannot make one pure internally.**

We may recall that Jesus had just been challenged by a bunch of religious leaders who had come from Jerusalem. He had just rebuked them by saying you are more interested in your traditions than the Word of God. You are more devoted to men's teachings than God's Word and you are delusional because none of you have hearts that are right with God. They did a lot of external things; but their hearts were dark.

Jesus sensed the urgency to call the crowd to Him and take this as an opportunity to teach the people a very important lesson:

IT IS NOT EXTERNAL THINGS THAT MAKES ONE CLEAN OR UNCLEAN; IT IS WHAT COMES OUT OF THE HEART THAT MAKES ONE UNCLEAN AND WHAT COMES OUT OF THE HEART SHOWS THE NEED TO BELIEVE ON JESUS CHRIST FOR SALVATION.

This seems to me to be such a no brainer. But apparently the nation Israel and even His own disciples did not get this point. Every person on this earth should ask themselves this simple question: **if external things could make one clean, why in the world is Jesus Christ here on earth? What in this world is the Son of God doing here if people can become clean by external religion and man-made tradition and rules?**

There are three observations we want to make:

OBSERVATION #1 – Jesus called the crowd to Him again. **7:14a**

Jesus was tracked by huge crowds and only rarely does He call a crowd to Himself. In fact, in this Gospel of Mark, He only does this two times, here in Mark 7:14 and again in Mark 8:34. We must assume by the adverb “again” that He had done this previously, but this is a rare thing. Most of the time Jesus had to get away from the crowds, but this is so serious He calls the crowd to a meeting.

Now whenever Jesus does this in Mark, it is because He wants to teach the people something significant. Actually, all of His teaching is important, but there were certain moments when He specifically wanted to address the people and this was one of those moments.

These people were being brainwashed by a bunch of religious play-actor leaders who were leading these people to follow their man-made traditions and rules. Jesus knew He needed to address the matter of their impurity, because they were being told they were clean and pure by their external religious activity.

OBSERVATION #2 – Jesus demanded the crowd to listen to Him. **7:14b**

The verbs “listen” and “understand” are both imperatives. By combining these two verbs together, not only is Jesus demanding that they listen carefully to what He is going to teach, but that they also must understand what He is teaching. Notice that He says listen to me “all of you.” He wants His apostles and all of the people—the men, the women and the children—to understand this critical point.

What is at stake here is being clean in the sight of God. These people are not clean. They have sinful hearts and the religious leaders were telling them everything is fine.

The problem with the crowd is that they don’t understand His teaching. But that was a problem even with Christ’s own disciples and apostles. They heard all of His teaching, but did not understand it (6:52; **7:18**; 8:17, 21).

But when it comes to being clean before God, you do not want to misunderstand because all our eternity is on the line.

Now there are two critical, theological points of instruction that Jesus teaches this crowd:

Theological Point of Instruction #1 - It is not the external that makes one unclean. **7:15a**

Now Jesus is speaking spiritually, not medically. There are obviously things that you can drink and eat that will do you great harm and even kill you. Jesus is not discussing medical or physiological matters. He is discussing the spiritual matter of being right with God.

Being clean or unclean was completely a matter of externals to the religious leaders. If you followed their man-made traditions and religious rules, you were clean. If you didn’t, you weren’t.

Now under the O.T. law there were certain foods that were not to be eaten. But remember the last O.T. prophet John is dead and Jesus is putting an end to the law and all dietary codes. So this is critical instruction. The O.T. law did have dietary restrictions (Lev. 11, 17) but Jesus is presenting something here that theologically is revolutionary.

Now some have suggested that Jesus is not really abrogating the O.T. law; but we beg to differ. If you keep reading this very context, He is putting an end to all of the dietary restrictions of the law which is exactly what **verse 19** says.

Being right with God is not a matter of the externals.

Theological Point of Instruction #2 - It is the internal heart that makes one unclean. **7:15b**

Jesus' point is the thing that makes one unclean before God is his heart. What proceeds out of man proves he does have a heart problem and that is what makes one unclean.

Now **verse 16** does not appear in some of the earlier manuscripts, but it does appear in the majority of later manuscripts. Bruce Metzger, a textual critic, says this appears to be an "appropriate sequel to verse 14" (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 81).

The point of the statement is to "reiterate the thought" which is that all people need to carefully listen to this and understand this. One does not only need to hear this audible teaching; one needs to obey it.

What Jesus is ultimately getting at is that people have an unclean heart problem that cannot be resolved by external religion and the only way that is going to be resolved is by believing on Jesus Christ. In other words, Jesus Christ will need to be in the life or heart in order for one to be clean because no matter what one does externally or religiously, one cannot ever be clean.

OBSERVATION #3 – Jesus' disciples did not understand His teaching. **7:17-23**

When Jesus got done addressing this crowd, He entered into some house. There is no article before the noun house, so this was someone's house, who obviously had invited Him and His disciples.

When they got into the house, His disciples don't have a clue about what He is teaching. They are His closest men on this earth and they cannot figure out what He is talking about. So **verse 17** says they questioned Him. Actually, Matthew tells us that it was Peter who asked the question (Matt. 15:15). They think Jesus is teaching some parable. This is not true. This is not parabolic teaching. This is about as clear and as plain as it gets. He calls the religious leaders hypocrites, whose hearts are not right with God and who offer God empty worship by neglecting the Word of God and focusing on the traditions of men. That is as clear as it can be. But His disciples don't get it so Jesus responds to them by asking them three questions:

Question Response #1 - Do you guys lack intelligence? **7:18a**

When Jesus says are you so lacking in understanding, He emphatically is accusing His own disciples of lacking any intelligent discernment.

This is the same word Paul uses in Romans 1:21 & 31 to describe unsaved people who are so foolish that they cannot see the clear visible evidence for the existence of God. This is not a flattering noun to be used by Jesus Christ concerning His apostles.

Jesus had been teaching these men well over one year at this point and they still do not grasp grace. They still don't understand it. We have the same problem today.

Question Response #2 - Do you not understand that being unclean is not a matter of the external, what goes into a man? **7:18b**

What Jesus Christ is about to expose concerning the heart has nothing to do with what one does externally. One can go through all kinds of external religious actions. One can be involved in all kinds of religious rituals and man-made codes and traditions and will still not prevent the unclean things from being in his or her life.

Question Response #3 - Do you not understand that being unclean is a matter of the internal, what comes out of the heart? **7:19-20**

You apparently have forgotten that Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful." Now notice **verse 21** begins with a conjunction "for." This is an explanatory conjunction that carefully explains thirteen unclean realities that come out of the heart. Here is the true nature of our defilement, which shows our need for Jesus to give us a spiritual heart transplant.

If you are honest today, you will admit some of these things have been and perhaps still are in your heart. **Jesus' point of this list is to show all are defiled in their hearts, which is the very reason He has come into this world.**

As we work our way through the list, if we are honest and wise, we will admit some or all of these things have been in our hearts in our lifetime. Not one of these things in this list has had anything to do with any external you ever ate. You and I did not get these things because we ate a pork sandwich or MacDonald's hamburger or drank a Coke or Pepsi.

Jesus gives a list of 13 forms of unclean evil heart realities. The first seven in the list are plural actions that come out of the heart and the last six are singular attitudes that come out of the heart:

(Unclean Heart Reality #1) - Out of your heart come evil thoughts. **7:21a**

Why does one ever have an evil thought? It isn't just one; it is thoughts plural. The noun evil means bad, evil, perverse things. Why do we have these thoughts? Because we have an evil heart!

(Unclean Heart Reality #2) - Out of your heart come fornications. **7:21b**

Why does one ever have a desire to look at something pornographic or participate in something immoral? Why is one ever drawn to something that is sexually immoral? Because we have an evil heart!

(Unclean Heart Reality #3) - Out of your heart come thefts. 7:21c

Why does one ever have a desire to steal something that does not belong to them? Because we have an evil heart.

(Unclean Heart Reality #4) - Out of your heart come murders. 7:21d

Notice the noun “murders” is plural. Why does one ever wish someone were dead? Why does one ever commit a murder and kill someone? Because we have an evil heart! The plural would indicate that we are all a bunch of mental serial killers. We have probably wished many people would drop dead.

(Unclean Heart Reality #5) - Out of your heart come adulteries. 7:21e

There are multiple ways that one may commit adultery in the Bible. One can commit adultery by looking and lusting; by getting involved with someone else’s mate or by divorce. The question is why would one ever commit adultery? Because we have an evil heart!

(Unclean Heart Reality #6) - Out of your heart comes works of coveting. 7:22a

The noun “deeds” is plural so Jesus is saying men and women covet multiple times. The word has to do with a desire to have more and more so one may have an advantage over someone else (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 364). Why would one ever covet something someone else has? Because we have an evil heart!

(Unclean Heart Reality #7) - Out of your heart comes works of wickedness. 7:22b

The noun “works” is plural, indicating many works, and the noun wickedness has to do with an aggressive covetousness that would take advantage of people.

(Unclean Heart Reality #8) - Out of your heart comes deceit. 7:22c

The word means “evil deceptive lying and deceit.” Why would someone not tell the truth? Why would someone ever lie? Why would one ever shade or color the truth? Why would someone intentionally deceive someone else? Because we have an evil heart!

(Unclean Heart Reality #9) - Out of your heart comes sensuality. 7:22d

This particular word has to do with sexual and perverted debauchery that plunges into moral depravity. This word covers things like homosexuality, prostitution and all other kinds of perverse activity. Why would one ever get involved in this kind of activity? Because we have an evil heart!

(Unclean Heart Reality #10) - Out of your heart comes envy. 7:22e

Why would anyone ever be jealous of something someone else has? In fact, the word “envy” means to look at someone with an evil eye because of who a person is, what a person is or what a person has. Why would anyone ever do this? Because we have an evil heart!

(Unclean Heart Reality #11) - Out of your heart comes slander. 7:22f

The word “slander” is a word that refers to any impious speech specifically against God. This particular word has to do with speaking lightly or impiously about sacred things. It also includes the idea of evil speaking (*Ibid.*, p. 82). Now why would someone ever speak anything that is impious or evil? Because we have an evil heart.

(Unclean Heart Reality #12) - Out of your heart comes pride. 7:22g

The word “pride” is a word that has to do with a haughty and arrogant spirit that desires to show itself above others. This word refers to one who has a desire for preeminence (*Ibid.*, pp. 458-459). A proud person wants everyone to look at him and notice him and he will arrogantly even reject God and His Word. Why would anyone ever be proud? Because we have an evil heart!

(Unclean Heart Reality #13) - Out of your heart comes foolishness. 7:22h

The last noun Jesus uses in His list is one that refers to thinking in ways that are senseless, reckless and insane (*Ibid.*, p. 72). Why does one ever have foolish thoughts? Why does one ever begin to think in ways that are insane? Because we have an evil heart!

Now Jesus says in **verse 23**, all of these things defile the man. All of these things make people unclean. We all know what has been in our own heart and the assessment of Jesus Christ is dead on.

Now at this point what all should cry out is what is the solution to my unclean condition? How can I mend this broken and depraved heart of mine? What do I do because I am so wretched? My heart needs a radical change. How can I get it? There is only one solution—Jesus Christ.

One must have Jesus Christ in his life and be born again. There must be a new birth. God must create in us a new heart and a clean heart. That, my friend, is what the “grace gospel” is all about. Jesus Christ came into this world to change your status from being unclean before God to being clean. Paul said if you will confess to God that you believe Jesus is the God/Savior and will believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead as proof, you shall be saved.