

Mark 7:14-23

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 May 2014

Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0 : 00] Amen. Please take out your copy of God's Word and turn to the Gospel according to Mark chapter 7. The Gospel of Mark chapter 7. Our text for today will be verse 14 through verse 43.

! But before we get to reading that, let me just remind you that this is the summation of Jesus' Galilean ministry. He's no longer going to journey about the region of Galilee, preaching any longer. He's about to, you'll notice in verse 24, go off to the region of Tyre and Sidon, which is on the coast of the Mediterranean, never to return and preach in Galilee again.

And I think, fittingly, he closes up his time with a very important message, and that is a message of proper worship of God. And we addressed last week, if you'll notice in chapter 7, verse 7, he says of the scribes and the Pharisees and all of Israel, in vain do they worship me.

This is a prophecy from Isaiah 29, 13, and certainly it was being fulfilled in this day. In vain do they worship me because they were hypocritical, because they had their hearts distant from God, and because they placed the tradition of men above the commandment of God.

[1 : 18] This vain worship was such a concern in Jesus' time, just as it is in our time, that Jesus then addresses the larger crowd in our text together.

So let's read together. Mark chapter 7, beginning in verse 14. And he called the people to him again and said to them, Hear me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.

And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart, but his stomach, and is expelled?

Thus he declared all foods clean. And he said, What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person. This is God's word to us. It's written for his glory and our good.

[2 : 44] We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Let's pray together. Father God, it is certainly true that we need you in every hour of every day.

Lord, that we ask that you would come close to us now, because we certainly need you in the hearing and understanding, the application of your word to us. We thank you for it, that you passed it down through all the ages, that we might open it and read it in our language, and commune with you in the study of it.

Father, have your way with us this morning. Accomplish exactly what you intend to accomplish with us. Tear down barriers to your goodness in us. And we pray this in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. So, we observe here that Jesus continues this discourse on defilement. This was kind of the issue that was surrounding Jesus' accusation of the scribes and the Pharisees at the beginning of chapter 7, that some of the disciples weren't washing their hands.

They weren't going through this extra-biblical ceremony that the people of that day thought defiled them, thought set them apart from God. The truth of it is that it didn't at all, but they thought that it did.

[4 : 03] And Jesus uses this example of Corban, things that were committed to God, was a tradition in the day. And the way that was put on top of the command of God, which was to honor your father and your mother.

And so, so he broadens this. He continues this discourse on defilement with the larger crowd. We see this in verse 14, and he called the people to him again and said to them, hear me, all of you,

and understand.

Right? Such an important issue of the day that he draws everybody back together as he's had this side encounter with the scribes and the Pharisees. He then pulls everyone together and speaks this very simple and short parable to them that we find in verse 15.

There's nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him. And then he goes on to give further explanation of this comment to the disciples.

Note verse 17, and when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And we now get this further explanation of that with the parenthetical statement on the part of Mark.

[5 : 09] Thus he declared all foods clean, that there were no longer things that people ate that set them apart from God, but now people could eat anything and it wasn't necessary for them to divide up what they could and couldn't eat.

And for us to kind of wrap our minds around this, I think we need to first understand what was meant by defilement. What does it mean to be defiled? And this word in the Greek means to be dirty, to be unclean, to be impure, to be corrupt.

It is a word used often in the New Testament and its Hebrew counterpart is used over 200 times in the Old Testament. But it wasn't merely an exterior purification that was necessary.

In fact, the Levitical law was meant to teach us of our need of a deeper purification. The external purification was meant to show us of our need of a deeper purification, the purification of our hearts, because we cannot enter into the presence of God unless we have first been made clean.

It was designed to point to a cleansing that would come through faith in Christ. We now, on this side of the Testaments, get to see that and understand that.

[6 : 26] The writer of Hebrews wrote in chapter 10, verse 19 through 22, Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

Let us draw into the presence of God with true hearts and full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

It is this internal cleanliness that we need. It's a changing of who we are that is necessary in order to be in relation with the Lord God.

But the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Jewish culture at large had added literally hundreds, hundreds of extra laws to the Levitical law.

And in that process, right? And I think in the well-motivated process of trying to stack on laws upon laws upon laws upon laws, they had lost the point altogether of what the Levitical law was meant to accomplish, which was to point us to Christ.

[7 : 42] You see, they believed that purity was an exterior issue and not an issue of the heart. And Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for this. He does it time and time again. Let me give you one example.

Matthew chapter 23, verse 27 and 28. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Right? They had the appearance of righteousness. As far as anyone could observe, they lived rightly, but they were dead inside.

They did not have changed hearts that worshipped God. This is a serious issue in our day as well. And I would venture to say that even amongst us, there are people who come and sit in our audience thinking that it somehow gains them merit with God.

Insert joke about finals here, which Wes already took from me. Right? You would be better off studying this morning if you think that coming to church gains you favor with God so that you might do well on your finals.

[8 : 56] This is not the case. Right? The things that we do are an outflow. They're a response to what God has done already in our hearts. We do things because of who we are.

And this is heart worship. This is what it means to worship God from the heart. And God requires of us heart worship. Deuteronomy 6.5. Do you guys all know it now? You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

With all of our being we are meant to worship God. And how is this possible if we are born into sin, if we are utterly destroyed by sin, our image-bearing possibility has been torn down because of the effects of sin.

We cannot bear the image of God apart from Christ because of sin. We are enemies of God apart from Christ. Do you remember the rare scribe, Mark chapter 12, 28 and 34?

We spoke of him last week. And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another. And seeing that he answered them well, Jesus being answered them well, asked him, Which commandment is the most important of all?

[10:06] Jesus answered, The most important is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Jesus expands for us what that looks like, our being. Verse 31, The second is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

And the scribe said to him, You are right, teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. It is outward worship. Right? Much more than all of those things. And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God.

You see, the scribe understood it in his mind. He got the commandment of God in his mind, but it had yet to work into him and change his heart. He possessed the right knowledge, but he didn't possess heart change.

[11:07] I hope that this scribe was part of the kingdom soon after. Jesus teaches us that those who are part of the kingdom of God do not vary in degree, but in type.

There's two types. There's not somewhere in between. I'm more holy than you are holy. That we're gaining our holy points, but we vary in types. You are a child of God, or you are an enemy of God. Those are the only two categories. Put different names on them if you wish. Those are the only two categories that you can live in. You are a child of God, or you are an enemy of God.

There is no in between. This is something that I'm trying to teach my boys at a very early age. And Sam and I decided early on that we were going to use language when we punished them, and we're reconciling with them after the fact, after they were spanked and sobbed on the bed for a while, and we go into them to bring correction.

And I'm confident that they don't understand a word I'm saying at this point in their lives. But I hope they do when I say to Cade, when I say, Cade, you are my son, and I love you.

[12:12] And that is why I want you to obey. If we are children of God, our response to God's love for us should be obedience to Him.

Because we know He loves us. Because of our status. He is our Father. And I hope for my kids, I hope that they can get that with me, that there's nothing that they can do that will remove them from that.

They will never stop being my sons, that I love them with an unconditional love, that I'm always seeking their good, not perfectly, because I'm fallen as well, but I'm always looking to their best interest, to the best of my ability, and as such, they should want to be obeyed.

It should be the natural response of their status. I am a son of Nathan Rayner. Therefore, I obey, and I do what Nathan Rayner asks me to do. This is the way we function as believers, those who have regenerate hearts.

We get some great metaphorical pictures of this. Luke chapter 6, verse 43 and 45. Jesus says, For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit.

[13:18] For each tree is known by its own fruit. So see the category here is bad tree and good tree. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.

The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good. And the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

So you see, what we do is a result of who we are. What you do does not change who you are, but who you are changes what you do.

Jesus used another plant metaphor in the parallel passage to today's in Matthew chapter 15, verses 10 through 14. And he says, And he called the people to him, and he said to him, Hear and understand.

It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth. This defiles a person. Then the disciples came and said to him, Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?

[14:25] Of course they were. Of course they were offended because they thought all of their careful preparation and all their very, very careful observance of these extra laws that had been created is what made them righteous.

It's what set them apart. It's what kept them from being defiled. Of course it was an offense to them. Verse 13, He answered, Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone. There are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit. Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.

Rooted up plants are destroyed. Listen to what Jeremiah says of our hearts before they are changed by the grace of our Lord. Jeremiah 17, 9, And the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick.

Who can understand it? Jesus said in Mark 2, verse 17, Those who are well have no need of a physician. Those who see themselves as well. None of us are well.

[15:29] But those who see themselves as well have no need of a physician. But those who are sick, those who are humble, those who recognize their broken state, know that they need fixing. And then he says, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Jesus Christ is about the work of fulfilling the prophecy of Ezekiel. Where God spoke saying in Ezekiel 36, verse 24-28, I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into my own land.

I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols. I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers and you shall be my people and I will be your God. I will give to you a new heart. I will cause you to walk in my ways. You see that it is our identity that affects how it is that we live.

[16:42] Proverbs 4.23 says, Keep your heart with all vigilance for from it flow the springs of life. So good fruit comes from good trees.

Righteousness comes from people with changed hearts. Righteousness is the response of a heart changed by God. Now the opposite is also true.

Jesus states it here for us in the negative. I've been saying it in the positive. Jesus states it for us here in the negative. In verse 15 and then 18-23.

It seems a bit tongue-in-cheek even that He says in verse 18, Do you not see what will go into a person from the house that cannot defile him? Since it doesn't enter into his heart but a stomach and it's expelled and the Greek here literally goes into the latrine.

It passes through you. Right? It doesn't go into your heart. It just passes through you is what He's saying to us here. And then He gives us this list of things that come out of a person and those are the things that are the evidence of what kind of tree the person is.

[17:49] Right? It's an evidence of what their heart loves because they participate in these things. For from within, out of the heart of man, now just listen to these. I just want to read them to you slowly and just let these sink.

Come, evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, and remember Jesus says if you hate your brother, you've committed murder in your heart.

Adultery, if you look on a woman with lust, you've committed adultery in your heart. Coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness.

Beloved, we are all guilty of all of these things. And proper, humble hearts, regenerate hearts, those who understand the gospel get this.

I am guilty of these things. Praise God my righteousness comes from Christ. Praise God that He is working in me to make me new. I have a new heart and that overflows into righteous living.

[18:54] I don't do it perfectly, but that is the trajectory of my life. I'm headed away from sin and towards holiness. If you look at the graph of my life, it should be trending toward holiness.

If you zoom in on any one moment, I can't guarantee that it would be. But if you look at it in a whole, I should be moving towards holiness, towards Christ-likeness. As with people who don't have

changed hearts, we shouldn't be surprised when they sin.

It shouldn't be a shock to us that they have forsaken the ways of God to follow their own passions and their own desires. It shouldn't shock us a bit when our co-workers, our classmates, our neighbors, our friends, our family members sin.

It shouldn't shock us if they're not found in Christ. Because the unregenerate heart is a sin factory. That is what it's bent on doing. It's bent on generating sin, on doing things that say to God, I hate you.

I don't want to submit myself to your ways. I want to live in my way. My way is better than your way. I want to be like a God. This is what the unregenerate heart does. And if this is the trajectory of your life, if it doesn't lead away from these things listed here in verse 22 and 23, right, our evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness, right, then you are defiled.

[20 : 17] That's your stance. It's where you exist. That is your unclean. You're not set apart for the worship of God. You can't be in relationship with Him because you are dirty. If your life is generally characterized by any of the things our Lord has listed here, then this is the evidence that you are a bad tree.

You are a bad tree. If you're a bad tree which produces evil, then you're not one of God's trees. You're not a child of God, but rather an enemy of God. And how damning it is to be an enemy of God.

What a frightful end you have if you are an enemy of God. God is love. He has extended to us grace in Jesus Christ. We can have our image-bearing possibility restored in Jesus.

God has done so much to lavish love on this world. In fact, He does it in every way in every day. His sustaining grace, the fact that any of us woke up this morning, whether we're a child of God or an enemy of God and breathed air and were automatically thrown into a pit of hell, is His extension of His love and grace.

I hate when the wrath of God is preached that people say, well, but God is love. Of course He's love. He's done so many things to show His great love for us. Stop for a moment and count for blessings.

[21 : 32] Even if you think there are few, there are so many. They abound to us in every way. But God must punish sin. For those of us found in Christ, He punished it in Christ.

He didn't just dismiss it. It must be punished. He punished it in Christ on our behalf. If you're not found in Christ at the end of all things, you will bear the wrath of God for your sin.

This is a scary thing. I would plead with you to avoid this judgment. In a broadening metaphor, Jesus says that anyone that persists in doing evil does not abide in Him.

John 15, 6. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. And the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

If this is your final resting state, you will know in that day, you'll fully comprehend and get that the only thing that put you there was your unbelief. This will be the damning thing for you, will be your unbelief.

[22 : 32] You will not blame God for it in that day. You will not stand in judgment over Him. You will see Him as a right, a just judge, properly punishing your sin.

Repent and believe. Please repent and believe. This is an eternal matter that we have before us. That we might have life and life everlasting. And not judgment everlasting.

It's a serious, serious issue. And this is why sin is so serious. It's persistent sin that leads to death. Persistent sin leads to death. And now hear what I'm saying here, that if your life has this trajectory of sin, that's an issue, that's an evidence of where your heart is which leads to death.

Right? If your trajectory is different than this, if you are hating sin by the grace of God and turning to Him, then this is not the trajectory of your life. Then your heart is, in fact, regenerate.

[23 : 31] But persistent sin leads to death. And Jesus has stark words to say about it. Mark chapter 9, verse 43 through 48. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.

It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell to the unquenchable fire.

And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell.

And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell where their worm does not die and the fire is not

quenched.

Cutting off your hand and tearing out your eye does not solve the issue of sin. Jesus is not suggesting to us that we mutilate our bodies. But what He is suggesting to us is that we put to death sin in our life by the power of Jesus Christ.

This is what He's teaching us here. Brian Hedges in his book License to Kill says, we will not exert holy violence against our sins until we're convinced that they really are dangerous.

[24 : 36] We're all so comfortable. We're all so lulled to sleep by how easy life really is. Sin is serious. And there are serious consequences for it.

Please hear that from the Word of God today. There's encouragement to those of us who find ourselves in Christ for the serious nature of sin.

Paul says in Philippians 2, verse 12 and 13, Therefore, my beloved, he's recognizing they are Christians, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as my presence, but much more as my aspens.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Give evidence to the fact that you are regenerate by the things that you do. Be about the work of God, proving time and time again that He has given grace to your heart.

For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. If sin is not being put to death in your life, then you are not God's.

[25 : 41] Then you are not God's. But you can be. So don't hear me just speaking condemnation down on you. If you're not found in the faith, if you're not a child of God, I need to tell you I love you.

Don't go to hell. You have to leap over my body to get there, as Spurgeon said. Repent and believe. Believe in the Gospel. Believe that Christ bore your wrath on the cross.

Ask that He would change your heart. That He would make you new day by day into His image.

Believe that Jesus is who He said He is. He is the Christ, the Anointed One, the Son of God, who came and took away the sins of the world.

Examine yourselves. 2 Corinthians 13:5 Paul says, Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves, or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you fail to meet the test.

Examine yourselves. Ask God to search you, to try you, and to lead you. Psalm 139, 23, and 24 says, Search me, O God, and know my heart.

[27 : 01] Try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Ask that God would expose to you those things that you can't see yourself.

Ask that God would get inside of you and shed light into dark places, to see if there's anything grievous in you that you might repent and believe. We want to find ourselves in the state that John encourages in 1 John 2, 28-29.

And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him.

Beloved, we have great charge placed out before us. A great deal of conformity to bring ourselves in with. There is so much teaching in the Scriptures about the things that we ought not do, and the things that we should be doing.

But so many of us miss the point that when we're not doing the things we see the Scriptures teaching, we've got to behavior change or modification. We've just got to get in there. We've got to work a little bit. We've got to do a little better. We've got to do a little more. When what needs to happen is our hearts need to change.

[28 : 17] Even those of us who have regenerate hearts, our hearts can grow cold sometimes to the truth of the Gospel. We can forget the realities of it. We can stop believing it at times.

Stop understanding what it is that God has done for us in Christ. Recognize that all sin is an issue of the heart. Who we are at our very core.

In our essence. And the response wherever you find yourself today, wherever you find yourself, is to repent of that sin and to believe. Turn from sin and turn to God.

This is the call for those of you who don't know if you're found in Christ. You don't know where your eternal end is. You may find that you're feeling some conviction that it may be destruction. That you have been living life your way and that your heart has not changed.

The answer to you is repent and believe. Turn from your sin and turn to God. And for those of us who find ourselves in the faith, as you mature in your faith, you will realize that our lives are this constant cycle of repentance and belief.

[29 : 23] Messing up and being made right. And messing up and being made right. But at least we know when we fall, we fall in the right direction. We know that our trajectory is set heaven bound.

That we are being made into the image of Christ. It is a heart issue. It's not what goes into us that defiles us. It's what comes out of us that defiles us.

Let's pray together. Thank you. Thank you.