

Mark 7:14-23

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[0 : 00] Mark chapter 7 If you are physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God from the gospel according to Mark.

The word of God says,

Deeds of coveting and wickedness as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We praise you for the privileged opportunity we have of gathering together with brothers and sisters in Christ.

We praise you that we have come together. We've been able to lift our voices up in song. We've been able to fellowship. We've been able to give. But Father, we praise you that now we have come to the word of God and we ask that you would speak to every heart and mind.

[2 : 25] We pray that by the power and presence of the Spirit that you would penetrate to the depths of our being and the truth of Scripture, not the opinion of man, would garner our attention, that it would mold us and conform us and shape us to be more and more like Christ for the glory of the Savior and his glory alone.

We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. In the text which immediately precedes this, we know that Christ is dealing with those who have come down from Jerusalem, the Pharisees and the scribes.

Last week we saw that they came and they were watching Christ and his disciples. They were actively, attentively observing how they ate their food after coming home from the marketplace. We know that they did not come and passively notice, but rather had actively taken interest in how it is that they were eating and the fact that they were eating with unwashed hands.

And Christ challenges the Pharisees and the scribes about their traditions. He declares to them that they were masters at keeping the traditions of men and therefore belittling the Word of God, setting aside the commandments of God in order to maintain their traditions, even the manner in which they cleansed their hands when they came home from the market.

[3 : 50] Very meticulous, very intentional. It was very traditional. They did it in such a way so as to ensure that they would not become defiled from that which they had come into contact with among the world.

They didn't want the defilement of the Gentiles to come into their lives and therefore remove them from being able to stand before a holy God. And Christ declares that in all of their actions and in all of their works, they were laying aside the commandments of God and keeping their own thoughts and their own opinions.

And now he transitions because now he is no longer just speaking to the Pharisees and the scribes. Now he wants to declare to all people. And it's a word we need to hear even today.

I'm so thankful, by the way, that God sovereignly, actively works through his word in intentional manners. I have told people over and over again that it is my practice, my habitual practice, to expositionally preach through books of scripture.

And very rarely do I ever depart from that practice. Some say, well, don't you look at current events and circumstances and don't you pay attention to holidays and seasons and then try to address that.

[5 : 09] I have found that when you open up the word of God, it addresses for itself every problem among mankind. I have found that when we see the fullness of scripture, that God has a way of dealing with the problem of man.

So I'm thankful we're looking at this passage on this day with the happenings of the past week within your minds. Maybe you're wanting for me to speak to current events.

Well, we'll speak to current events while we talk of an eternal problem. Maybe you want to speak of things that are going on politically. We can talk of political matters when we lift up the king of kings and lord of lords.

And we can look at the truth and it can answer every question we may have about society that we dwell within. And in particular, in this passage, Jesus wants to tell us the source of defilement. The source of defilement. How did we get here after all? Why is man so wicked? What makes him unclean and impure before a holy God?

[6 : 11] Not just before the watching world. Be careful, my friend, when you look at what's going on and you say, Well, how can people be so bad? Therefore, making it about someone else.

Maybe we need to look in the mirror and say, How can we be so bad? What is the source of defilement which exists among us? Because as one great, well-known preacher of past was marvelously quoted as saying, When he saw a wretched, miserable individual on the side of the road, But for the grace of God, there go I.

We need to understand the source of the defilement within every individual before we will ever know how we can address that source of defilement. And Christ here is speaking to the Pharisees and the scribes.

And he is speaking to the people gathered around him. And they are addressing the traditions. And in their traditions, they were seeking and hoping and longing to be clean. And yet he tells them that all they are doing are traditional methods.

All they are doing are traditional works which have been passed down from trustworthy sources, maybe. The elders who had went before them. And yet they are laying aside the command of God.

[7 : 25] Because, friend, listen to me. God's word never longs to make us temporarily clean. It longs and aims for an eternal solution to a temporary problem. And so now he addresses, quite literally, the heart of the problem.

He goes straight to the source. I have a quote written down in my office. And I wrote it down from reading a book written by A.W. Tozer.

And it is a quote that is worth being reminded of. It is a quote given to pastors. It's a quote given to every individual. And the quote is this. Water never rises above its source.

Now think about that. So whatever is supplying your power will be the level to which it rises. Now to pastors, it's telling you don't expect a greater holiness from your congregants than you see in your own life.

Water never rises above its source. So pastor, if you want to feed the congregation, make sure you're being fed yourself. In your own circle of influence, before you decry the people around you, the people that are in your circle, maybe for just a moment acknowledge that maybe you are the source of encouragement to those around you.

[8 : 37] And water never rises above its source. So you address the source before you can address the water level. If the water level is getting low, you need to see what's providing the stream into it.

And it is exactly what Christ is doing. He is showing us the source of defilement. Number one, I want you to see here the vanity of all external efforts.

The vanity of all external efforts. What does the word of God say? And he called the crowd to him again. Now, just in case we miss it, this is not something that should be reserved for the Pharisees and the scribes, those people whose job and occupation it is to, at least during that time, to study the Old Testament and to copy down the Old Testament.

No, he calls the crowd around him. This is a matter that is fit for all people. This is something that has application to everyone. This is something that is the answer to every individual you'll ever encounter, including yourself.

It has the answer to the problem that they're desperately seeking to meet. And he calls the crowd to them. He calls the crowd around him because he wants everyone to hear about it.

[9 : 49] And he declares to the crowd, he began to say to them, Listen to me, all of you, and understand. So there's the admonition of the Lord to pay attention to what he's about to say.

And he says, There is nothing outside the man which can defile him. Now, when the Word of God says nothing, the Word of God means nothing.

I am quite simply a literalist. I believe in taking the Word of God literally. Now, there are clearly passages in Scripture that we understand that they are giving types and pictures and foreshadows,

and there's imagery there.

But when something is best translated in a literal sense, it is best to translate it in a literal sense. And you get to the book of Revelations, for instance, and it speaks of horses with fire coming out of their mouth and all this power coming out of their tails.

And I'm not illiterate so much to say that some mystical creature is going to arise and these are going to happen because we are taking the genre of Scripture. It is a prophetic writing, much like Ezekiel's. And if you understand it, I'd love for you to talk to me about it after service.

[10:54] The wheels with the eyes all around and the wheel inside the wheel and everything spinning around and it's moving with the cherubim. I would love a great literal depiction of that. But most Bible scholars have no idea because Ezekiel is speaking in imagery.

We understand that. But when something is best translated literally, we take it literally. That is, when Jesus says nothing can defile the man that is outside of the man, then we need to acknowledge this.

Nothing outside of a man defiles the man. And ladies, don't get too carried away because that just means mankind. It doesn't mean men. You're like, oh yeah, I knew something was wrong with my husband.

That's not what that means, right? It means there is nothing outside of mankind that can defile mankind because the problem is not there. Jesus says there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him.

And then he repeats this refrain when the disciples gather with him in the house. And he says to them, do not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him because it does not go into his heart but into his stomach and is eliminated.

[12:02] And then there's this great phrase where it says, therefore Jesus declared all foods clean. And we ought to praise God for that because all foods are clean. And we can eat the things that they couldn't eat in Jewish society and all the sun-dry laws.

And we can have bacon and sausage and pork chops and all these wonderful things that are okay, right? We can have all these things that were unclean for a reason. Now there's a season and a reason for why they were there in the Old Testament.

But Christ is not just speaking about food here. Because in context, he's talking to individuals and the crowd gathered around him who used to ensure that they would wash their hands in such a way that when the food touched their hands, even the kosher food did not become defiled and therefore they defiled themselves.

So what they were implying was that society and the people they came into contact with would defile them, not even the food they were eating. Now think about that for just a moment. What Christ is declaring here is not even other people can defile you. You say, well, wait a minute. Scripture says what fellowship has dark and light?

[13:11] And Paul admonishes us to be careful who we hang around with, right? We'll get to that. It has a place and a purpose. It tells us that that is about our witness and our testimony.

But we are not defiled simply because of the people, other people we come into contact with.

Because the danger there is to imply that what is wrong with us is somebody else's fault.

Oh, if I hadn't have been in their company. Or if I had been raised in a better environment. Or if something had changed. Or if, if, if.

See, it's always easier. We call that blame shifting. To say that I am what I am because of those that I came into contact with. In our household, we have this thing called personal responsibility. That is, be very careful about blaming someone else because you are only in control of you. And if you hadn't put yourself in that position, maybe you couldn't be blamed by being around them.

[14:12] So the very first thing that happened is that you were there. That's just a reality. And the problem always begins with me. It always does.

I made a decision. You say, well, it wasn't my actions. It wasn't, we're not talking about physical temporary things that happened to us. We're talking about a defilement which makes us unclean before a holy God.

This is not declaring that everything that happens to us externally because of other people's poor choices and their decisions are our fault. That is not the implication. We're talking about spiritual realities.

And here, Jesus says, we do not become defiled simply because we eat with unwashed hands. So to say, that is coming to contact with unclean people. They don't make us wicked.

They don't make us bad. He said that there is nothing inside of us, nothing that comes from within us that makes us unclean. Because the moment we eat it and we take it into context, we eat that food even if our hands are filthy.

[15 : 15] Now, kids, that doesn't mean you don't have to wash your hands. We had that discussion last week, right? That doesn't mean you don't wash your hands before you eat and you can pass out your system and say, I'm okay. We're not trying to say that. But what we're saying is we need to realize that nothing that we put into us defiles us before a holy God.

So if that is the line of thought, if there is nothing that I can do to make me defiled, then friend, there is nothing I can do to make me clean.

That is, I cannot abstain from anything. I cannot pull away from anything. There is no work, no effort. If what I am doing and putting into me is not the thing causing the problem, then what I do and put into me or don't put into me is not going to be the thing that solves the problem.

And we see here the vanity of all of our external efforts. It is not by withholding and abstaining from this or that or by ensuring that we always go through all these right motions.

Every religion in all the world has this one question that it's trying to answer. How can I be right? Every religion. What is it that I can do? On our website, our church website, you know that it has the contact us tab.

[16 : 39] And I get emails that come from that. Some of them legitimate. Some of them very illegitimate. Just this past week, I kind of had to laugh at one because I had a contact. I almost responded. I didn't. I deleted.

I took the high road and didn't. And it was a contact from an individual who was representing Buddhism. And how Buddhism, they were seeking to take the middle road, not to the extreme of too much or not to the extreme of too little.

They wanted the peace of the middle road. My immediate thought was Jesus calls that lukewarm and he'll spew you out of his mouth. But to them, there is the peace of the middle road.

We don't want to go too far. We don't want to go too little. We don't want to have so much excess. And we don't want to decry ourselves. And we also say that that is called comfortable living, friend. But even the middle road will not cleanse the problem we have because there is nothing. No work, no effort, no labor. They could ever purify us.

[17 : 36] The washing of hands could not ensure that even the kosher food they ate would ensure their cleanliness. Then surely all of our efforts, all of our external efforts would never solve the problem.

We see the vanity of all external efforts because there is nothing without us that is defiling us. Therefore, nothing outside of us that we can do can cleanse us.

Which leads us to the second reality. We see the seriousness of our internal condition.

Notice the seriousness of our internal condition. And I say our internal condition. Verse 15 says, There is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him.

But look at the rest of that verse. But the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. But the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.

[18 : 45] And then he goes down and he explains it a little bit further to the disciples. In verse 20 it says, He was saying that which proceeds out of the man. That is what defiles the man.

For from within. Out of the heart. Here is the serious condition. Out of the heart. Of men proceed.

This listing of things. And so now he tells us that there is nothing which we can put inside of us which defiles us. Because that very thing which already defiles us already is in existence within us. It is not ensuring that we eat with clean hands and we remain kosher. It is not ensuring that we take all the proper steps and we remove this temptation. Or we stay away from this thing. Because the very thing which defiles us in the beginning is something that exists already.

It is something that is internal. And it is a very very serious condition. And we may we must never overlook the seriousness of this internal condition.

[19 : 53] Because he says that which defiles us already exists within us. Because it is from what out of the heart of man proceed all of this wickedness. And you say well pastor.

I'm not that wicked. Well before we get to this listing of events. And we see the wickedness which he is referring to. Let us just address for a moment.

See is this just a problem of some. You know scripture is very clear on this reality. Scripture says three times. That it is the heart of man which causes the problem.

Apart from this. At least three times. Psalms 14 says the fool has said within his heart there is no God. And then he begins to live in such a manner as he wants to. He begins to take actions.

Psalms 53 is a repetition of Psalm 14.

It says the fool has said in his heart there is no God. And therefore he begins to do all these wicked things. Romans chapter 3. Paul quotes Psalms 14 and Psalms 53.

[20 : 51] But if you read the remainder of that psalm. It will also say that God searched the land. And found that there was none righteous. No not one. That each one did what was desperately wicked. And that the heart of every man is wicked.

Here's the seriousness of our condition. It is not just that some people's heart is wicked. God himself has testified three times in scripture. That the heart of every individual is desperately wicked.

You say well pastor. I don't think my heart is wicked. I don't believe that it is that bad. I'm not as bad as some. Well are we calling God a liar. Because he has said.

Psalm 14. Psalm 53. Romans chapter 3. God searched the heart of every man. And there was none righteous. No not one. That it was the wicked condition of the hearts.

You say well pastor. I would never do what some people do. Well praise be to God. You haven't taken the wickedness that far. But it doesn't mean you're not as wicked. You say well.

[21 : 49] By the world standards yes. But I know me. I read that list. And in that list. I find words that are acceptable as foolishness.

And oh how foolish I have been. Over the years. How foolish I was. As a young man. Acting as if I knew there was God.

But living as if there wasn't one. How foolish I was. Living as if eternity didn't matter. That's foolishness. Which puts me in the same listing. As the vile.

And the murderer. And the adulterer. And the fornicator. And all of those licentious individuals. What about pride? One that we accept so often. To be puffed up.

To be exalting. In what we can accomplish. In what we have done. Oh how prideful I have been. I find that sin. Listed in the same listing. Of the most vile offenders. That I've ever found.

[22 : 48] Just because the world. Does not judge it accordingly. Does not mean that God does not. What if we go to the book of revelations. And we find those who will be cast. Into the lake of fire. We'll read there.

Of the the whoremongers. And the haters. And the murderers. And the fornicators. And the adulterers. And we'll read of the people. Who have all these great atrocities. And then at the very end of the list. You'll see the unbelieving.

The great sin of unbelieving. How often I lived my life unbelieving. Not taking God at his word. Thinking that I was in control of my own destiny.

That's unbelieving. Where does that arise my friend? That is from the depths of the wickedness of my own heart. I would dare say. That if we read the word of God. And we read it transparently.

That we will find. That each and every one of us. Have a very serious condition. Within our hearts. That from within our hearts. These things come. Nobody has to teach us to unbelieve.

[23 : 46] Nobody has to teach us. How to be prideful. Nobody has to teach us. How to be lovers of self. As scripture calls it. I don't know about you. But growing up. I sure loved myself.

Why? Because I always did what was best for me. It's a temptation. Nobody has to teach us that. Nobody has to teach us.

How to do those things. Because those things are natural to us. And they arise from within our hearts. Praise be to God. For the circumstances around us. That keep us from going to the extremes.

But also will be to me. When I think that just because. I haven't went to the extreme. I'm okay. Because. If I believe. Since I haven't went that far.

Then surely I'm an okay person. I describe myself growing up. As being the all-American good old boy. From all external appearances.

[24 : 47] I seem to be all right. Those around me seemed to like me. At least they pretended like they did. Everyone seemed to get along with me. I had no major issues with anybody.

But do you know that my heart was desperately wicked. Before a holy God. Do you know it wasn't until I saw the seriousness of my own sin. Just this morning.

Looking through the desk back there in my office. I came across this little memo notebook spiral. That I had when I was in high school. I was looking for something completely different. I saw that little green spiral.

And I knew what it was. And I pulled it out. And in that little green spiral. I had it when I was 16 years old. Which has been some time ago. And I'd written some things down. I'd taken a class. That said you need to learn how to build a resume.

You need to do these things right. So I'd had it there. And I was kind of thumbing through it. And I was seeing the dates of all the things in the past. And all of a sudden I got to about 10 pages in. And it just started being filled with Bible verses.

[25 : 45] And book of Romans. Starting the book of Romans. And my English was horrible. I wasn't writing really good. And I know it. And then I remembered. And you would see all these verses. And everything was underlined. And I was underlined. And highlighting and writing all these things.

That's when I was coming to Christ. I remember that. That's when he was drawing me through his word. And that's when I was reading. And I had that little notebook. And it's worn and tattered. And I remember seeing. But the just shall live by faith alone. That we're all desperately wicked.

There are none righteous. No, not one. What was God showing me? God was showing me the wickedness of my own heart. He was showing me the seriousness of the condition which exists within me. Because until I saw how serious it was.

I didn't think I needed a savior. Friend, don't let anyone ever convince you. You're okay without Jesus.

I said, Pastor, you preach a lot of old style hellfire and brimstone. You don't make me feel real good. Try to say this politely.

[26 : 44] I try not to make it a habit to be concerned about feelings. Because I don't feel good when I read scripture either. Until I meet the savior.

Then I can't quit shouting hallelujah. Praise the Lord. Because we see the seriousness of our own condition from within. Again, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting.

Oh, how I've done that. And wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. Look how serious it is, friend.

And don't let anyone tell you any difference. For the Son of God himself said, these are wicked things that come within and without the heart of man.

But it doesn't end there. Oh, this portion of scripture may end there, but we can't end there.

Because we have seen the vanity of all of our external efforts. We see the seriousness of our internal condition.

[27 : 55] But we also need to be reminded of the praise of the saints for their eternal redemption. Don't miss what is being highlighted here.

There is praise from the saints for their eternal redemption. The book of Psalms reminds us that it is the heart of man which is desperately wicked. In Psalm 14 and Psalm 53.

But you know, before Psalm 53, there's a psalm, just a couple psalms before that. Psalm 51. In which we find a man that the wicked things within his heart came to fruition. He did things that we never thought he would do.

His name was David. And in Psalm 51, David cries out. What does he cry out? Create in me a clean heart, O Lord. He knows the problem is within him.

His own hands have done it. He's seen it before him. He doesn't say, oh God, help me to eat bread or food. He doesn't say, give me something to do. His cry is, create in me a clean heart. Friend, listen to me.

[28 : 51] There is a person we can go to to take care of the heart within us. There's no individual that we know of. No man can pay the price of his own redemption, let alone the price of his brother's redemption, the word of God tells us.

No man can change his own heart. You can't change your heart for the good or the bad because your heart is already desperately wicked. But we understand this reality. While there's nothing that you can do externally to change the defilement that is in you internally, and while there's nothing that I can do to change who I am, there is one that I can call to and cry out to him and say, oh Lord,

create in me a clean heart.

There is one who can take the heart of stone and change it into a heart of flesh. And as the hymn says, he makes the leopards' spots disappear, right? He makes us as white as snow. He redeems us.

He renews us. And it leads us to an eternal praise of redemption for all of his glory and all of his honor because that within us is the problem. And we know the creator who knit us together in our mother's womb.

We know the one who knows us better than we know ourselves. And when he calls out to us and he woos us to himself, the cry of the desperate heart is, oh Lord, I can't do it, but would you give me a new heart?

[29 : 56] And praise be to God, he does. He does it in an instant. He does it in a moment. And he changes our actions and our activities. We do not have to worry about the things we do externally because once the heart is changed internally, then I assure you, my friend, the external actions take care of themselves.

Do we need to change the behaviors of individuals? Absolutely. But how do we do it? We cry out to the Savior, Lord, give me a new heart. Lord, give them a new heart. Lord, would you change the heart of men and women and boys and girls?

And would you draw them to yourselves? Because then and only then will the things that are done on the outside ever change. It is not reforms. It is not control.

It is not any action that we can take. But rather, it is the change of the heart of the individual by the maker and the redeemer and the Savior. So that when we gather around his throne and we cast our crowns at his feet, we can praise him for his eternal glory.

Because he has done the impossible. He has changed my desperate, wicked heart and given me a heart of flesh that I may love him eternally. See, it is the praise of the saints for their eternal redemption.

[31 : 01] Because once he changes the heart, he does it once and for all. That's why no longer can light have fellowship with darkness.

Because my heart is no longer what it used to be. That's why good company corrupts or good company is corrupted by bad morals is because my heart has been changed.

And now I put it around things which are no longer like it. But until my heart has changed, the problem is not those around me. The problem is the individual that I am within me.

But the praise is not that I got my act together. The praise is that there was a moment when I cried out, Oh Lord Jesus, would you create in me a clean heart? And wouldn't you know it?

He did it. He did it. Without me doing a thing, he did it. So whereas boasting, Paul would say, It's in nothing that I have done.

[32 : 05] Because everything I did didn't solve the problem. But in a moment of desperation, when I cried out to him, he did it. Saved me. Redeemed me in a moment.

And for the last 25 years now, he has been working out what he already put in.

Are all my external behaviors what they ought to be? No. But the heart within me has been changed.

And that sanctification is taking root. And he is beginning to shape and mold me to be like he has fashioned me for his glory and his alone. For the praise of the saints eternal is not that they wash their hands in the right way.

The praise of the saints eternal is that they, like David, cried out and said, Oh Lord, create within me a clean heart. And he did it so that he may lift up his name among the people of the Lord and God be praised.

[33 : 11] Here we see the source of defilement. But praise be to God. We also know the source of cleansing. Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for this day.

I thank you for your faithfulness and your goodness that you express towards us. We praise you for the opportunity of being gathered together with brothers and sisters. But Father, we also cry out there be one here today who does not know you as Lord and Savior.

Lord Jesus, that you would draw them to yourself. You would show them not the judgment of men. But show them clearly the word of God.

And in revealing that to them, would you exalt the Son of God. Christ, you be magnified for your glory and your praise and yours alone.

And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.