

## **"THE REAL SOURCE OF ALL OUR TROUBLES."**

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**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden**

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**Texts for the Sermon: Mark 7:14-23**

### **Introduction.**

What's wrong with our world? Why is our world so messed up? Why do people keep doing bad things to each other? Why are there constant reports of shootings and killings? Why is there so much filth and immorality? Why do relationships keep breaking and falling apart? Why is there so much self-centeredness and selfishness?

People have been looking for the answers to those questions in all kinds of places.

Some say bad company corrupts our morals, peer pressure, our environment, our upbringing, our culture, the internet, too much violence and sex on TV and in movies. We look to blame someone, our parents, our teachers, our bosses, our friends, our friend's parents, the media, the government. My parents didn't love me enough, my luck was bad, I have issues.

Our government tries to solve the problems with better education, better social programs, welfare reform, better jobs. Economists argue that capitalism will make us better people or socialism will.

We try religion. Go to church, pray, read the Bible, do good deeds, and we still feel it deep inside, that we aren't good enough. We feel unclean and end up like Lady Macbeth trying to scrub off the blood of her murder yelling, "Out, out, damned spot."

**Jeremiah 2:22** Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me, declares the Lord God.

The problem with all these solutions is they are working from the outside-in and not from the inside-out.

People hear about what happened in the theater in Denver a while back or in NYC this past week and say how could that happen, how could anyone do such a thing? It never occurs to them to look in the mirror. The seeds are in my heart and yours. There but for the grace of God go I.

I am reminded of the story of the London Times asked a bunch of great intellects and prominent authors to write an essay answering the question, "What's wrong with the world?" The great British writer G.K. Chesterton wrote this reply. "Dear Sirs, I am. Sincerely yours, G.K. Chesterton." He got it.

So did Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who wrote about his insight gained from doing hard labor in Siberia, "The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart" (The Gulag Archipelago).

### **Mark 7:14-23**

The Jews believed that eating unclean things from unclean vessels or with unclean hands made you unclean. The Pharisees taught that holiness depended on ritual washings and purifications. They strictly observed all the traditions passed down that they might be pure in God's sight.

Jesus once again turns things upside down. He refutes this horribly misguided and shortsighted doctrine. He redefines what is clean and unclean. The question is what defiles a person? Meaning what is it that breaks a right relationship with God? What interferes with our fellowship with the Father?

It isn't unwashed hands that make you dirty, it's an unclean heart. It's what's already on the inside that makes a man unclean. It takes more than dirt to get dirty and it takes more than water to get clean and right before a holy God.

Jesus actually used their own belief system against them. They were fastidious about cleaning the insides of vessels, of pots and pans, of cups and dishes.

If dirt on the inside of a vessel makes it unclean, then how much more if the inside of a person is unclean? Defilement is a matter of the heart, not rules and rituals and external behavior.

Remember in Mark 5 when Jesus encounter three unclean people, one with an unclean spirit (and unclean animals), one with a blood flow and one as a corpse. Jesus wasn't afraid of contact with any of them. He knew that what was outside couldn't defile you on the inside.

What goes into your mouth at the very worst can only harm your body. Food and drink enter the mouth and eventually all end up back outside of the body. Food and drink don't enter the heart, they enter the stomach.

### **Mark 7:19.**

I guess the translators of the ESV and the NIV thought Jesus was being a little too indelicate for polite company because they don't translate the whole phrase which is "expelled into the latrine." Jesus is saying what ends up in the toilet is not nearly as bad as what comes from the heart. One pastor went so far as to title his sermon on this text, "Spiritual Excrement."

Next time you change a babies toxic diaper remind yourself that what you are seeing and smelling is nothing compared to what comes out of our hearts. And just so we know what defilement looks like and smells like Jesus gives a big list.

### **Mark 7:21-23.**

The Amplified Version reads: "For within, that is out of the hearts of men, come base and wicked thoughts, sexual immorality, stealing, murder, adultery, coveting (a greedy desire to have more wealth), dangerous and destructive wickedness, deceit; unrestrained or indecent conduct; an evil eye which is envy, slander which is evil speaking, malicious misrepresentation, abusiveness, pride which is the sin of an uplifted heart against God and man, foolishness which is folly, lack of sense, recklessness, thoughtlessness. All these evil purposes and desires come from within, and they make the man unclean and render him unhallowed."

What a sad and fearful list of the evils that lurk in the human heart. Surely Jesus must be talking about notorious sinners here, people in prisons, people who live in the bad part of town or people who make the news headlines. Surely not people in Lynden, not us or our kids, right?

Jesus is talking about every human heart, mine, mine families, you and your families. Those who are rich and poor, famous and common, those with PhDs and those with high school educations, those from the city and those from the country.

This list is what defiles us and our world and separates us from God. This list is the explanation for the foul stench in our hearts and lives and world. It isn't from out there, it isn't someone else's fault, it's us.

In the words of Pogo, "We have met the enemy and he is us." I am what's wrong with the world, I am what's wrong with my world.

The Pharisees tried to say that what was pleasing to God was outward conformity to human rules and observances of particular rituals. The issue is the condition of our hearts and not our dishes or windows or lawns or cars or checkbooks. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

### **Application and conclusion.**

*First*, we see in this text how far we have fallen into sin. The fall has corrupted our mind, our memory, our understanding, our discernment, our judgment, and comprehension. It's all corrupted. We are not basically good.

Don't be proud and unteachable like the Pharisees. Don't be dull and misunderstanding like the disciples. Do we get that Jesus is saying and what Jesus is calling us to? Don't major in minors, don't get put off the trail, don't miss the heart of the matter.

Don't be like the dog that looks at his master's pointing finger and not at the object. Jesus is pointing at the heart.

We are blind and deaf without the help of God's grace. Grace is when Jesus comes and takes us aside like the disciples and gives us His Spirit and enables the unspiritual to understand spiritual things. Grace is when He opens our eyes to the truth about ourselves.

*Second*, we see in this text how we try to deceive ourselves and others from seeing the real condition of our hearts. We clean up the outside and put on the appearance of being good and decent folks. Our wives and children know the truth. But under our wrath, they have vowed silence. Don't be a hypocrite, one thing at church and another at home.

Don't say your wife or husband or kids make you angry. No, the anger is already in your heart and you chose this opportunity to let it out. Don't point the finger at someone else to cover up or excuse the sin that is in your own heart. Don't deceive yourself.

Don't say it's your wife's fault you look at porn. No, the lust is already in you and you are giving it life. Don't say it's your husband's fault you overspend; or it's the other drivers fault or the cows fault you are impatient or annoyed; or it's the teachers fault you got a poor grade.

Grace is when we admit the truth and take responsibility and repent and seek a new heart.

*Third*, we see in this text how unclean our own hearts are. Our hearts are idol factories, constantly making idols, things that attract us and pull us away from God. ***We can only export what we already manufacture.*** Want to know what your factory is producing? Just look at what's being shipped out the door of your mouth.

There is a fountain of wickedness in each of us. It's as if we have the plague. We all fear the "c" word, cancer, and yet we all have a much worse cancer, the cancer of defiling sin. It's a serious heart disease, far more serious than anything caused by cholesterol or blocked arteries. The seeds to every sin ever committed by mankind are in my heart and yours. We don't need peer pressure or the devil or the neighbor, we are fully capable all by our self.

It's not enough to keep your children safe at home and in a Christian school and in a Christian church in a Christian community in a Christian nation. Even if you could keep them completely free from all the bad influences of the world, they already carry in their hearts the seeds of every sin. It does them no good to blame their sin on the world, the devil, TV or bad relatives.

Parents, don't fear the pollution of the world, fear the pollution in their heart. When we discipline our children for sinful actions or attitudes we do so not just to improve their behavior but to drive folly from their hearts and to change their hearts.

Grace is when we see exports improving because production has changed by the Spirit's power.

**Fourth**, we should be humbled by the teaching of Jesus and see how crucial is a humble and contrite heart.

**Psalm 51:17** The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

**Psalm 139:23-24** Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!  
24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Grace is when we have the courage to pray that prayer. Grace is when God answers that prayer and we see progress in holiness as we submit to the Spirit's sanctifying work.

**Fifth**, we must with all due diligence guard and keep our hearts and minds from evil and in Christ Jesus.

**Proverbs 4:23** Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Everything in life depends on this. What flows from our hearts effects everything.

There is a constant battle going on that seeks to draw us in and destroy us.

**Proverbs 3:5-7** Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.  
6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.  
7 Be not wise in your own eyes; **fear the Lord**, and turn away from evil.

Cultivate a deep fear of the Lord, and a deep desire for holiness without which no one will see God.

Keep watch over your souls. Let us take captive every evil thought, for our thoughts give birth to words and actions and attitudes.

**Romans 8:5-6** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

**Philippians 4:8-9** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Remember, you can only export what you manufacture. What are you making in your heart?

Let us pray daily for God's enabling grace to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, to keep our thoughts from leading us into sin, to earnestly pray that we are not led into temptation.

**Matthew 12:34-37** ... For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. 36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

*Sixth*, worship God for so great a grace that saves you from so great a hell.

Luther said: "I am more afraid of my own heart than of the Pope and all his cardinals."  
J.C. Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool, "Sin and the devil will always find helpers in our hearts."  
C.H. Spurgeon: "There is enough [gunpowder] in the heart of the best of men in the world to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell, unless God should quench the sparks as they fall. There is enough corruption, depravity and wickedness in the heart of the most holy man that is now alive to damn his soul to all eternity, if free and sovereign grace does not prevent it."

Except a man be born again, He will never see God. Except a man be given a new heart, he will never be able to bridge the gap that separates him from God.

There is only one solution to man's greatest problem. Only one solution has ever been offered to mankind, only one fix that works. It's the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His salvation purchased on the cross for our sins.

Jesus comes as the one who can bring the inner change so that we can please God by being holy as the law requires but no one can do apart from Christ.

Do you want to hear cause for worship? I'll give you cause for worship.

**Titus 3:5-7** He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness [not by external behaviors or rituals], but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

### **Prayer:**

Holy Father, I pray that there would be some here today who would recognize where true corruption and sin lies and would admit their need for your help and open their hearts to that cleansing which comes to those who put their trust in Jesus. Wash us all with the water of your Word and Spirit in the name of Him by whose blood we are rescued and redeemed from all sin. Amen.