

WHAT COMES OUT OF A PERSON IS WHAT DEFILES THEM

Mark 7:14-23 (Key Verse: 7:20)

He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them

Today we look at the last part on what indeed makes a person unclean. The religious leaders had complained to Jesus that his disciples were not walking in traditions of the elders, because they had eaten with unclean hands. Last week, we learned the importance of honouring God with our hearts rather than man made traditions. Jesus revealed that what is in the heart is the most important not external things. In Today's passage Jesus teaches us that we should wash our hearts, not things from the outside. However, how do we even achieve this, how can we even reach our hearts and clean it because the bible does say, the heart is the most corrupt? How do we get OMO or Sunlight there? For David once sang in Psalm 32:2, "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit." How then can we make our hearts clean? May the lord grant us one word for the sake of our hearts today, Amen!

Look at verse 14-15, "Once again Jesus called the crowd to Him and said, "All of you, listen to Me and understand: "15Nothing that enters a man from the outside can defile him; but the things that come out of a man, these are what defile him." Jesus called the crowd again to himself so that he may protect them from the teachings of the religious leaders. The religious leaders had believed that they were clean and the outside world was unclean. To them there were dirty Gentiles, sinful tax collectors and prostitutes, cursed people with leprosy, etc. so they believed when they go outside, they may interact with such unclean things, defile their hands and therefore it was necessary for them to conduct a ceremonial washing of their hands to be clean. They believed in their tradition to make themselves clean. However Jesus told the people clearly, nothing that enters a man from the outside can defile them but rather the things that come out of a person. This was a parable, an earthly story with a spiritual or heavenly meaning. However, the disciples struggled to understand. And so after Jesus left the crowd, his disciples inquired about the parable [17].

Look at verse 18-19, "Are you still so dull?" He asked. "Do you not understand? Nothing that enters a man from the outside can defile him, 19because it does not enter his heart, but it goes into the stomach and then is eliminated." This means that though a person may have unclean hands, even if they ate something it would not defile their hearts. And this is because what they take in with their mouth goes right to the stomach and gets out or eliminated. However, the question still remains, what then makes a person unclean?

Look at verse 20-23, "Jesus continued: "What comes out of a man, that is what defiles him. 21For from within the hearts of men come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22greed, wickedness, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, arrogance, and foolishness. 23All these evils come from within, and these are what defile a man." Unwashed hands or eating food with unclean hands does not make a person unclean. What makes a person unclean is not on the outside but in our hearts. Due to the fall of man, we are born sinners, it is within our hearts where we find, all these things, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, arrogance, and foolishness. If there was any other evidence to prove that we are born sinners is the condition of our hearts or the things we find in our hearts. All these evils come from our hearts. I also remember growing up my mother use to say witchcraft comes from the heart. It is from the heart that a person aims to do evil things to another.

Since mankind forsook God and his word, his heart became a place for all these evils. In Psalm 14:1-3 we read, "1The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." they are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. 2The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. 3All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one." The prophet Jeremiah also said, Jer 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" The heart is filled with all kinds of things and among them are evil things, not only that we learn from Jeremiah that it can also deceive us and if it can deceive us, it will also deceive others. That is why this list of evil comes from the heart.

In recent year we may think that if we get rid of obscene web sites, dirty things in social media or the internet then our society will be clean. Well no, people were still sexually immoral in our society even in a generation that did not have social media or the internet. Though its good to wash what is on the internet and social media, the fundamental problem is our hearts. Though there is so much talk in the internet, social media and many books have been written on the subject. Yet we continue to see degradation in human moral life. Many of the suggested solutions have to do with what we need to do to rid our society with immorality. These human based solutions are basically saying, we can rely on this deceitful heart,

this fallen sinner to raise themselves to the occasion of living upright morally. The world has become its own enemy by rejecting God and placing faith in the goodness of mankind. The world rejects the truth that mankind is born a sinner and there is nothing he or she can do to make their hearts clean. How then can we wash our hearts?

In today's passage, religious leaders forsook God's commands, focusing only on their rules and tradition. They had put their tradition first and tried to wash their hands diligently in order to hear from others. "Wow, you are keeping the rules and traditions well." This is because it is easy to live a performance based Christianity, it's relatively easy to produce outward looks, whereas the heart is somewhere else. That is why even when you know you are not alright, we easily can pretend to others we are ok. We simply produce a fake smile and fake laughter. It is easy to perform but impossible to force a downcast heart to be happy. It is not by mistake or an exaggeration when Jeremiah says, the heart is **deceitful above all things and beyond cure, who can understand it?** God knew this, he knew that we needed a savior, and that is why he sent His son Jesus Christ to be a sacrificial lamb for us. Jesus did not come to improve our lives or to make us better. If that was the case, he would simply be improving a sinner and making a life of a deceitful heart better. No! through Jesus we died and were born again.

We read in 1 Peter 1:23 that "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (KJV) However, we still live in our sinful bodies and in our world that is governed by Satan who wants to win as many souls to hell. Our hearts can easily get corrupted. How can we keep our hearts clean? Psalm 119:9 says, "How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word." Jesus also once said, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." [John 15:3] It is the word of God that reveals the dirty things in our hearts. Not only that, the word of God also gives us desire and power to wash our hearts from dirty things. Obeying God's word is the practical way we can wash our dirty hearts.

In 1 John 1:9 we read, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." When we confess our sins, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts. The spirit burns all evil things in our hearts and cleanses us. This is how the blood of Jesus cleanses us. I was amazed this year through our Mark study, to realize that none of the religious leaders was chosen to be a disciple of Jesus. When I compare those who Jesus chose as his disciples, they had one thing in common with the religious leaders. They were all sinners. One big thing that was different was their attitudes towards sin. The disciples when they met Jesus for the first time fell on their knees and confessed they were sinners. Whereas none of the religious leaders could ever do that. Rather they wanted to kill and eliminate Jesus. In the book of Hebrews we read, "The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" [Heb 9:13-14] Let's praise and thank Jesus for His enduring love upon sinners like us. His blood still has power and will continue to cleanse our hearts.

If we ourselves should wash our dirty hearts, then we will have to give into despair. Because it is an impossible task. If we but confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Through Jesus we then have a living hope and can live a joyful life knowing that we are not dilutional but can live genuinely and honor God with our lives. We will be thankful even for things which made us unhappy and troubled. We will not covet what others have out of jealousy but rather bless them. If we cleanse our hearts with the blood of Jesus, we will stop living a proud, childish and lousy life but a humble, mature life. If we are washed by the blood of Jesus, we are going to stop thinking of a violent, outrageous life as ok, but rather long to live a kind, encouraging clean life.

One of my colleagues at work applied for promotion for associate professor. He is younger than me and immediately I grew a covetous heart. I became jealous even hoping he does not get the post at least before I do. This past week, he got his results and it was not good. He was told to re-apply due to some missing achievement. I could overhear him explain the situation next door my office since we are office neighbors. My deceiving heart told me, just listen and enjoy hearing the news of his unsuccess. Yet another thought said, just go to them and listen while your heart is dancing. I decided to go to them and listen, however as I was listening to him somehow I could genuinely sympathize with him. Most especially because I know he is very good and the reasons the committee were giving him was really ridiculous. In some areas they were really pulling on straws. I thank Jesus and His blood that, my heart could be called to order. I could genuinely acknowledge his credentials and still encourage him to re-apply early next year. I could identify one area that I believe had he achieved it he would have definitely gotten the promotion. He only had four master's students to completion whereas he needed to have five. And so that fifth student is actually busy finalizing her corrections.

As long as we are alive, our hearts are prone to deceive and be deceived. Sad reality is that sin in the heart is enjoyable at the time while its actually busy sending you to hell. It's one of the most powerful illusions of joy. We then easily use our performance, a form of self righteousness to think that we are clean just like the religious leaders. We then say, I do bible studies, or I attend church regularly, or say I don't still or murder. Whereas deep down in our hearts evil is ruling. In that way we will never be clean. Hypocrisy and lies will make us more and more dirty in the heart. We therefore need to be intentional about living in the word of God, meditating and studying God's word with the intention to obey it. Jesus is alive and through the power of the Holy Spirit he promised to be with us and help us.

In conclusion, things from the outside or other people do not make us unclean. It is what is inside our hearts that makes us dirty. Those things corrupt us and make us live a corrupt life. We should not blame the world but rather wash our hearts. Before we can try to be spiritual leaders or help others live before Christ, we first need to wash our hearts. A drunkard in a bar who never goes to church is much better than a Christian with a filthy heart busy living a performance-based Christianity not willing to repent. I pray that we may not deceive ourselves but come to Jesus for washing ourselves so that the joy of living as Jesus disciples may be in us. Amen!