

March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
**What Defiles a Person**  
**Mark 7:1-23**

**BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN**

Mar 10 Deut. 32-34	Mar 14 Joshua 12-15
Mar 11 Joshua 1-4	Mar 15 Joshua 16-18
Mar 12 Joshua 5-8	Mar 16 Joshua 19-21
Mar 13 Joshua 9-11	Mar 17 Joshua 22-24

**Lesson Introduction:** *Our lesson this week will focus on outward expressions of religion in comparison to the inward realities of our hearts. We saw many times last year as we studied Isaiah, how the Lord was repulsed with those who sought to justify themselves by their keeping of religious rituals. The Lord has always been more concerned with the heart of man than His outward appearance. (1 Samuel 16:7). The passage this week will show us how we often come up with things that we believe will justify us before God, all the while, our hearts are the root problem. As we go, we will consider traditions of man vs. genuine faith, and what truly defiles us.*

**FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:**

- Traditions of man cannot justify us before God (V. 1-13)
- The Lord judges based on the intentions of the heart (V. 6-7, 14-23)
- The heart of man is naturally wicked (V. 14-23)

**Mark 7:1-23**

1 Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, 2 they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. 3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, 4 and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) 5 And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" 6 And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

*"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; 7 in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."*

8 You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."

9 And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' 11 But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God)— 12 then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do."

14 And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: 15 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." 17 And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 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, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

**Discussion Section 1: Traditions of Man vs. Genuine Faith (V. 1-13)**

-What was the motivation of the Pharisees in questioning Jesus about His disciples' behavior?

-In what ways were the traditions of the Pharisees out of step with God's commandments?

-In what ways might we cling to our own traditions while ignoring (or making void) the commandments of God?

**Note:** One of the more common things we see in the ministry of Jesus are His confrontations with the Pharisees. The Pharisees were strict observers of the Law, and ultimately, they desired to be justified by how well they followed Jewish tradition. What we see in our passage today (similarly to what we saw in **Mark 2:18-28**) is that the Pharisees not only strictly observed the Law of Moses, but also added to it, seeking to justify themselves by an ultra-pious following of tradition. In this passage, they ask Jesus to explain why His disciples are eating without first washing. In his commentary on Mark, James Edwards explains that according to Scripture, only priests were required to wash before entering the tabernacle (**Exodus 30:19, 40:13; Leviticus 22:1-6**), and apart from that, the washing of hands was only required if one had touched a bodily discharge (**Leviticus 15:11**).

Amazingly, Jesus boldly calls out the Pharisees their hypocrisy! He first calls attention to the fact that they are only giving God lip service, while their hearts are far from Him (**Isaiah 29:13**). Jesus here makes it plain that efforts to buy God's favor by following man-made traditions are ultimately attempts at self-righteousness. When we find ourselves making up laws, just so we can justify ourselves before God, we reveal that we believe that we can work our way to God, rather than serving Him with a humble heart that is dependent on His mercy and grace. Jesus sees through our futile attempts at self-righteousness and looks to the heart. We are not fooling Him. He knows our motives and He will expose them.

Jesus then points out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees by showing them how their keeping of man-made traditions actually interferes with their ability to keep the Law of God! These religious leaders were so wrapped up in their self-righteous deeds, that they were more concerned with looking super spiritual than they were with obeying what God had commanded. Again, this exposes their hearts. Jesus made plain that the motivation of the Pharisees is not obedience to God's Law out of a love for God, but a propping up of self, based on a love of self. As we close out this section, consider how we often prop ourselves up while being disobedient to God. As we will see in our next section, Jesus knows our hearts, and we cannot fool him with religious devotion.

#### **Discussion Section 2: What Truly Defiles Us (V. 14-23)**

-What do we learn about the authority of Jesus in declaring all foods clean?

-What was His basis for declaring all foods clean?

-Why do the things that come out of us defile us?

-What do we learn about the condition of the human heart from these verses?

-How do we get an undefiled heart?

**Note:** Jesus explains that it is not the washing of hands, or outward keeping of laws that keeps a person from being defiled, but what is on the inside. In the middle of this section, Mark makes the note that "**(He declared all foods clean.)**" What a shocking statement this is for Mark to make! How could Jesus make such a bold claim about the dietary restrictions? The reason is because He is God Himself and He was saying that in Him, those regulations have been fulfilled. Jesus was making it known to those He was speaking to that justification would not come by keeping dietary laws, or making sure you ceremoniously wash your hands, but only through - faith in Him, the One who fulfills the Law (**Matthew 5:17-20**).

We then see Jesus say that "**What comes out of a person is what defiles him.**" Jesus here teaches us something very important. We see that, on the outside, we can look squared away as far as our keeping of the rules. But, on the inside, our hearts are wicked and that will always ultimately come out. When we sin sexually, we are showing our true selves. When we are deceitful, we reveal what is truly in us. When we steal or covet, the true nature of our hearts is revealed. Every bit of that is in us. We are not simply good people who sometimes lie, we are liars by nature. Our hearts are corrupt, and no amount of religious ceremony can wash them clean (**Jeremiah 17:9, Ephesians 2:1-3, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11**).

The good news is that, while our hearts are defiled and thus we are hopeless left to ourselves and our traditions; through Christ we have been made alive. God graciously gives us new hearts (**Ezekiel 36:26, Jeremiah 31:33**) and transforms us from dead people to heirs with Christ (**Ephesians 2:1-10**)! Praise God for the gift of His Son who has bought salvation for those who's hearts were once defiled. May we recognize today that our traditions cannot purify us, but the blood of Christ does.